

Revitalizing Local Food and Wisdom: A Case Study of Ban Muang Klang, Ban Luang Subdistrict, Chom Thong District, Chiang Mai Province

การฟื้นฟูอาหารพื้นบ้านและภูมิปัญญาท้องถิ่น: กรณีศึกษาบ้านเมืองกลาง ตำบลบ้านหลวง อำเภอจอมทอง จังหวัดเชียงใหม่

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คำสำคัญ: ภูมิปัญญาท้องถิ่น,
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Abstract

Background and Objectives: Traditional local food represents a form of cultural heritage that reflects the identity, way of life, beliefs, and wisdom of local communities. However, contemporary economic, social, and cultural changes have increasingly affected the transmission of knowledge related to traditional food, particularly the intergenerational transfer of culinary practices and local wisdom. Consequently, the preservation and revitalization of traditional food knowledge have become important issues that warrant further study and promotion in order to safeguard cultural identity and strengthen communities in a sustainable manner. The objective of this study is to examine local wisdom related to traditional local food, with the intention of contributing to the support of community learning, transmission, and revitalization of traditional local food wisdom. This is because food represents local identity, reflecting the way of life, beliefs, and relationships among people in the community. The development of this body of wisdom will help promote and revitalize traditional local food so that it continues to exist.

Methods: This study employed a qualitative research approach. The data were collected from academic documents, research reports, scholarly articles, and related studies, together with fieldwork. The field data were gathered through interviews with 10 key informants, including monks, teachers, local wisdom holders, members of women's groups, and both formal and informal local leaders. The research was divided into two main phases: Phase 1 involved qualitative ethnographic inquiry, and Phase 2 employed participatory action research (PAR).

Results: The findings reveal that local food is integral to fostering community learning, transmitting knowledge, restoring cultural practices, and ensuring practical application in daily life. As a marker of local identity, it embodies the community's lifestyle, belief systems, and social relationships. The cultivation and preservation of culinary wisdom not only strengthen self-reliance but also enhance learning capacities and further develop the community's body of knowledge derived from its food-related wisdom.

Application of this study: This research resulted in the development of a comprehensive learning tool on local food, available in both video and manual formats. The tool is intended for dissemination and integration into the school curriculum within the Ban Luang Subdistrict Municipality, Chom Thong District, Chiang Mai Province.

Conclusions: This research aimed to study, document, and revitalize local wisdom related to traditional food, which reflects the identity, way of life, beliefs, and social relationships of the community amid ongoing social and cultural changes that have affected the transmission of such knowledge. The study employed a qualitative research approach combined with participatory action research, drawing upon documentary sources and fieldwork involving key community informants. The findings indicate that traditional local food constitutes a significant foundation for the learning, transmission, and application of local wisdom. It contributes to the promotion of self-reliance, the development of learning skills, and the extension of the community's body of knowledge. Furthermore, the study resulted in the development of learning resources in the form of videos and a traditional local food manual for dissemination and for supporting teaching and learning within the local curriculum. These resources serve as an important means of preserving and sustaining the community's cultural heritage.

บทคัดย่อ

ที่มาและวัตถุประสงค์: อาหารพื้นบ้านถือเป็นมรดกทางวัฒนธรรมที่สะท้อนอัตลักษณ์ วิถีชีวิต ความเชื่อ และภูมิปัญญาของชุมชนในแต่ละท้องถิ่น อย่างไรก็ตาม การเปลี่ยนแปลงทางเศรษฐกิจ สังคม และวัฒนธรรมในปัจจุบันส่งผลให้การสืบทอดองค์ความรู้เกี่ยวกับอาหารพื้นบ้านลดลงอย่างต่อเนื่อง โดยเฉพาะการถ่ายทอดจากคนรุ่นสู่คนรุ่น การอนุรักษ์และ

ฟื้นฟูภูมิปัญญาด้านอาหารพื้นบ้านจึงเป็นประเด็นสำคัญที่ควรได้รับการศึกษาและส่งเสริม เพื่อธำรงรักษาอัตลักษณ์ทางวัฒนธรรมและเสริมสร้างความเข้มแข็งให้แก่ชุมชนอย่างยั่งยืน วัตถุประสงค์ของการวิจัยนี้เพื่อศึกษาเรื่องภูมิปัญญาท้องถิ่นที่เกี่ยวกับอาหารพื้นบ้านโดยมีความต้องการที่จะมีส่วนในการสนับสนุนให้ชุมชนได้เรียนรู้ สืบทอด ฟื้นฟูภูมิปัญญาด้านอาหารพื้นบ้าน เพราะอาหารเป็นสิ่งแสดงถึงอัตลักษณ์ของท้องถิ่นที่สะท้อนภาพวิถีชีวิต ความเชื่อ ความสัมพันธ์ของคนในชุมชน การพัฒนาภูมิปัญญาชุดนี้จะเป็นการช่วยส่งเสริมและฟื้นฟูอาหารพื้นบ้านให้ยังดำรงอยู่

วิธีการศึกษา: การวิจัยครั้งนี้เป็นการวิจัยเชิงคุณภาพ (qualitative research) โดยได้ทำการศึกษาข้อมูลจากเอกสาร วิชาการ รายงานการวิจัย บทความทางวิชาการ และงานวิจัยที่เกี่ยวข้อง ประกอบกับการศึกษาวิจัยภาคสนาม เป็นการรวบรวมข้อมูลที่ได้จากการสัมภาษณ์กลุ่มตัวอย่าง ได้แก่ พระ ครู ราษฎรชาวบ้าน กลุ่มแม่บ้าน และผู้นำท้องถิ่น ทั้งที่เป็นทางการและผู้นำที่ไม่เป็นทางการ จำนวน 10 ท่าน การวิจัยในครั้งนี้แบ่งออกเป็น 2 ระยะหลัก ได้แก่ ระยะที่ 1 การสืบสอบเชิงชาติพันธุ์วรรณนาเชิงคุณภาพ (qualitative ethnographic inquiry) และ ระยะที่ 2 การวิจัยเชิงปฏิบัติการแบบมีส่วนร่วม (PAR)

ผลการศึกษา: จากการศึกษาพบว่า อาหารพื้นบ้านมีส่วนสนับสนุนให้ชุมชนได้เรียนรู้ สืบทอด ฟื้นฟู และนำมาประยุกต์ใช้ในชีวิตประจำวัน อาหารยังสามารถแสดงถึงอัตลักษณ์ของท้องถิ่นที่สะท้อนภาพวิถีชีวิต ความเชื่อ ความสัมพันธ์ของคนในชุมชน การพัฒนาภูมิปัญญาชุดนี้นอกจากจะช่วยส่งเสริมให้ประชาชนรู้จักพึ่งพาตนเองแล้ว ยังเป็นการพัฒนาทักษะในการเรียนรู้ และสามารถพัฒนาต่อยอดองค์ความรู้ของชุมชนที่มาจากภูมิปัญญาด้านอาหารของชุมชน

การประยุกต์ใช้: ในการวิจัยครั้งนี้ได้พัฒนาให้เกิดชุดการเรียนรู้ทั้งในรูปแบบวีดิทัศน์และคู่มือเรื่องอาหารพื้นบ้านที่สามารถนำไปเผยแพร่และใช้ในการเรียนการสอนในหลักสูตรท้องถิ่นของโรงเรียนในเขตเทศบาลตำบลบ้านหลวง อำเภอจอมทอง จังหวัดเชียงใหม่

บทสรุป: การวิจัยเรื่องภูมิปัญญาท้องถิ่นด้านอาหารพื้นบ้านมีเป้าหมายเพื่อศึกษา รวบรวม และฟื้นฟูองค์ความรู้ที่สะท้อนอัตลักษณ์ วิถีชีวิต ความเชื่อ และความสัมพันธ์ของคนในชุมชน ท่ามกลางการเปลี่ยนแปลงทางสังคมและวัฒนธรรมที่ส่งต่อการสืบทอดภูมิปัญญาดังกล่าว การศึกษาครั้งนี้ใช้กระบวนการวิจัยเชิงคุณภาพร่วมกับการวิจัยเชิงปฏิบัติการแบบมีส่วนร่วม โดยอาศัยข้อมูลจากเอกสารและการศึกษาภาคสนามร่วมกับผู้มีบทบาทสำคัญในชุมชน ผลการศึกษาพบว่าอาหารพื้นบ้านเป็นฐานสำคัญของการเรียนรู้ การสืบทอด และการประยุกต์ใช้ภูมิปัญญาท้องถิ่น ซึ่งช่วยส่งเสริมการพึ่งพาตนเอง การพัฒนาทักษะการเรียนรู้ และการต่อยอดองค์ความรู้ของชุมชน นอกจากนี้ งานวิจัยยังนำไปสู่การพัฒนาชุดการเรียนรู้ในรูปแบบวีดิทัศน์และคู่มืออาหารพื้นบ้าน เพื่อใช้เผยแพร่และสนับสนุนการจัดการเรียนการสอนในหลักสูตรท้องถิ่น อันเป็นแนวทางสำคัญในการอนุรักษ์และสืบสานมรดกทางวัฒนธรรมของชุมชนให้คงอยู่อย่างยั่งยืน

Introduction

Research on local food systems and indigenous cuisine has gained greater scholarly and policy attention over the last two decades, as food is now understood to be not only a material need but also a cultural, health-related, and developmental concern. Globalization and socio-economic shifts have disrupted established food practices and increased pressure on local food heritage, which has raised concern about the loss of traditional knowledge and the weakening of collective identity through food (Anderson, 2014; Thai National Food Committee, 2011). Within Thailand, food culture has drawn sustained interest from researchers and policy actors due to its cultural richness, biodiversity, and value for human well-being and sustainable local development (Boonchaisri & Pongpattanasiri, 2011; Tangtrakul et al., 2014).

Previous research has indicated the diversity of Thai cuisine, including its dependence on easily available resources and local vegetables and herbs, as well as its congruence with health-promoting practices, to the extent that daily food constitutes a medicine in folk epistemologies (Department of Thai Traditional and Alternative Medicine, 2023; Duennapa, 2007). Anderson (2014) argued that foodways are an essential aspect of cultural expression and are deeply rooted in social life within communities. Field observations in Thai areas have recorded how cuisine culture is part of rich affiance with periodic cycles of the seasons, ritual practices, and indigenous environments as a storehouse of knowledge about biodiversity, nutrition, and medicinal plants (Boonchaisri & Pongpattanasiri, 2011; Sangwasi, 2006).

Food also functions as a form of social capital that strengthens intergenerational ties and supports community cohesion (Aromklang & Chatraphorn, 2014; Trakulwaranon, 2009). The retention and transmission of food knowledge are vital for local economies and grassroots innovation, particularly in rural areas, where community-based tourism and

niche food products create alternative sources of income (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992; Tangtrakul et al., 2014). The erosion of culinary knowledge would weaken both social continuity and economic resilience. Thai policy has recognized that risk through the Strategic Framework for Food Management in Thailand and the 20-Year National Strategy Plan (2018–2037), which call for coordinated action linking food heritage with human development, self-reliance, and natural resource conservation (Secretariat of the National Strategy Committee, 2018; Thai National Food Committee, 2011).

1. Critical Analysis and Research Gaps

Although these studies have been rich, gaps in the literature remain large. First, although a great deal of research has been invested in documenting the traditional food, nutritional profile, and economic value of local food, fewer studies have conducted a comprehensive examination of how local food systems operate as an interface of knowledge exchange, identity-building, health habits, and community resilience. Much of the previous work is documentary in nature, with emphasis on reportage rather than critical appraisal of questions of continuity, adaptation, and innovation against the backdrop of modernization and transformation of ways of life (Boonchaisri & Pongpattanasiri, 2011; Duennapa, 2007). There is a comparative dearth of understanding of the dynamic mechanisms by which indigenous food knowledge is renewed, remade, and applied for rural community development, especially in rapidly changing rural environments.

Second, the interplay between local food, belief systems, and ritual practices, particularly cultural resilience and social capital, has generally been treated as a secondary theme, not a point of focus for rigorous analysis (Aromklang & Chatraphorn, 2014; Trakulwaranon, 2009). The roles of major actors, such as elders, housewives' associations, religious figures, and teachers, in negotiating and transmitting culinary knowledge have been under-theorized. Further, although policy documents like the National Strategy Plan and municipal-level development plans at local levels put a very high value on local wisdom, there is not enough empirical work that traces how such policies are implemented at the grassroots level or how people navigate such outside influences like convenience foods gaining popularity, commercialization, and youth lack of interest in preparing food to uphold culinary heritage (Secretariat of the National Strategy Committee, 2018).

Lastly, past research has infrequently interacted with the real concerns and creative approaches to mainstreaming indigenous food knowledge in formal schooling, public health, and local economic growth. Most research does not involve a participatory dimension with an emphasis on community actors' agency as co-producers, not simply receivers, of knowledge (Tangtrakul et al., 2014; Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). Consequently, chances for action-oriented, community-driven solutions to culinary preservation and revitalization are mostly unused.

2. Addressing the Gaps: This Study's Contribution

As a response to these limitations, the present research critically examines food culture and local knowledge in Ban Muang Klang, a community in Ban Luang Subdistrict Municipality, Chom Thong District, Chiang Mai Province. Using a qualitative and community-based approach, the research gathers detailed accounts of the links among food, identity, health, social relations, and local belief systems. Drawing on academic works, local media, interviews with community stakeholders, and field observations, the study investigates how food practices are maintained, adapted, and recreated in contemporary rural life.

The research further investigates how the transmission and revitalization of local food knowledge functions as core parts of community learning and local innovation, helping rural communities remain resilient under socio-economic pressure. Elders, local intellectuals, women's groups, and teachers occupy a central position in the study, which examines how culinary knowledge is jointly produced, negotiated, and shared. Special attention is given to the connection between food and ritual, as food practices express identity and sustain social capital, in line with Bourdieu (1992) and Trakulwaranon (2009).

The research aligns with local and national policy agendas that view local knowledge as a basis for sustainable development, public health, and economic self-reliance (Secretariat of the National Strategy Committee, 2018; Thai National Food Committee, 2011). Its critical and participatory assessment is intended to support policymakers, teachers, and community practitioners with practical insight into ways of incorporating local food knowledge into school curricula, public health programs, and local economic initiatives. The wider aim is not only to document and sustain traditional culinary knowledge but to strengthen its creative use in present-day community life.

Research Objectives

The current study aims:

1. To investigate the local culinary wisdom of Ban Mueang Klang, Chom Thong, Chiang Mai.
2. To revitalize and transmit knowledge of local food wisdom in Ban Mueang Klang, Chom Thong, Chiang Mai.

Research Methods

1. Research Design

The research adopted a qualitative design to examine how local food supports cultural preservation, knowledge exchange, and community building in Ban Muang Klang, Ban Luang, Chom Thong, Chiang Mai. A qualitative approach was appropriate for the study of socio-cultural life and indigenous knowledge in natural community settings, as it enabled close attention to meanings, values, and practices embedded in food culture, which numerical methods have limited capacity to capture fully.

The study proceeded in two related phases. Phase one employed ethnography to document and interpret local foodways within broader community life. Phase two drew on participatory action research, engaging community members as co-researchers in identifying, revitalizing, and sharing culinary knowledge. The combination of ethnographic inquiry and participatory action research strengthened methodological depth, improved scholarly rigor, and kept the research closely connected to community needs.

2. Scope of the Study

2.1 Population Scope

The study focused on ten influential community stakeholders who were directly engaged in maintaining local food culture. These included official and unofficial community leaders, housewives' association members, Buddhist monks, and teachers and researchers as local scholars. They were chosen based on their experiential knowledge, cultural transmission roles, and influence in power within the community. Their different worldviews enriched the data and allowed the researchers to capture individual as well as collective aspects of food heritage.

2.2 Area Scope

Fieldwork was done in Ban Muang Klang village, which is a culturally diverse village found within the Ban Luang Subdistrict Municipality of Chom Thong, Chiang Mai. It was selected purposively due to historical heritage, active engagement of the community in traditional food systems, and multi-faceted representations of local knowledge in everyday life, ritual life, and celebration of festivals.

2.3 Thematic Scope

The study aimed to explore the multi-dimensional nature of indigenous food knowledge and how the knowledge is maintained, communicated, and transformed. Of special interest were the interrelation between food and identity, the incorporation of cuisine practice into routine health and rituals, and how socio-economic change and modernization present challenges. The study also aimed to explore prospects for utilizing local food practices to enhance community-based learning and self-reliance.

3. Research Phases and Methodological Framework

The study was structured into two main phases, as summarized below:

Table 1 Research Phases and Objectives

Phase	Approach	Methods Employed	Objective
Phase 1	Qualitative	Document analysis, participant/non-participant	To explore and document local food practices, beliefs, and social functions
	Ethnographic	observation, informal and in-depth interviews	
	Inquiry		
Phase 2	Participatory	Focus groups, community forums, collaborative	To co-develop strategies for revitalizing and sustaining culinary knowledge
	Action Research	planning, and stakeholder consultations	

Under Phase 1, the study sought to identify the social and cultural basis of local food knowledge. The data gathering stage employed document analysis, observations, and interviews aimed at capturing explicit and tacit knowledge. Field immersion for observing and interpreting food practice as expressions of lived culture was a priority under Phase 1.

Phase 2 shifted into participatory research, where residents worked together with the researchers in workshops and forums. These were used to offer mutual reflection and make decisions on how the traditional food culture could be brought back and transmitted to future generations. Participants were engaged in the identification of endangered culinary traditions, development of curriculum material, and suggestion of integration strategies for local and health promotion curricula.

4. Data Collection Methods

As presented in Table 2, the data collection utilized a series of qualitative techniques to achieve triangulation and gain an overall understanding of the research problem. All the techniques had been selected to find out various properties of culinary knowledge, ranging from individual experiences to collective practices.

4.1 Document Analysis

Relevant academic journals, theses, local development plans, research reports, and policy documents were accessed to ascertain the conceptual basis of the study. The data provided contextual details on food-related policy, previous usage of food, and existing academic perspectives on Thai culinary heritage and local wisdom.

4.2 Field Observations

Participant and non-participant observations were carried out during preparing food, communal celebrations, rituals, and daily cooking routines. Patterns of behavior, instruments employed, preparation process, and symbolic content integrated into these practices were observed by the researchers. Observations were systematically documented and supplemented with visual documentation where ethically appropriate.

4.3 Interviews

Semi-structured and qualitative interviews were carried out using key informants: elders, monks, women's group members, and local specialists. Interviews probed historical memories, food beliefs related to cooking, health-related food knowledge, and changes across generations. The interview transcripts were coded thematically to elicit recurring patterns and emergent themes.

4.4 Focus Group Discussions

The focus groups were structured to facilitate discussion among respondents regarding food know-how, issues around preservation, and revival concepts. The exchange facilitated cross-checking of evidence gathered from interviews and developed shared reflection on the social meaning of food.

4.5 Community Forums and Participatory Workshops

Community gatherings made room for more participation than informants. Employing participatory techniques like community maps, seasonal food calendars, and collective narrative, the gatherings offered co-construction of documentation, education, and transmission of culinary knowledge methodologies.

Table 2 Data Collection Techniques and Objectives

Method	Description	Purpose
Document Analysis	Review of academic, policy, and historical texts	To establish conceptual grounding and identify policy-practice links
Participant Observation	Immersive observation of food preparation and rituals	To understand food as lived practice and social performance
In-depth Interviews	Semi-structured interviews with monks, housewives, elders, and scholars	To access experiential, cultural, and tacit knowledge
Focus Group Discussions	Thematic discussions among stakeholder groups	To elicit collective views and validate emerging themes
Community Forums & Workshops	Collaborative engagement with broader community	To co-create revitalization strategies and promote community ownership

5. Ethical Considerations

This study strictly adhered to established ethical protocols for human research. It has received approval from the Human Research Ethics Committee of Chiang Mai Rajabhat University, Project Code: IRBCMRU 2022/282.13.11. All subjects had provided their informed consent after being completely informed about the aims and methodology of the research study.

Confidentiality and anonymity were maintained at every step of data gathering and analysis. Particular care was exercised during participatory sessions to be mindful of cultural considerations and to ensure that knowledge expressed by the community members was respected and reflected without distortion. Community ownership of the data was ensured and checking with the participants for findings prior to final reporting ensured validity.

Research Results

1. Community Profile and Historical Context

Ban Luang Subdistrict Municipality is situated at Ban Luang, Chom Thong, Chiang Mai. It is around 10 kilometers from the Chom Thong District office and around 65 kilometers from Chiang Mai city. The municipality occupies around 364 square kilometers, or 36.4 percent of the total area of Chom Thong District, which is 1,055.2 square kilometers. Ban Muang Klang is 235 square kilometers in size by land area. The population register indicates that the village has 508 inhabitants residing in 286 households. The village is of great historical importance and is roughly estimated to be around 700 years old.

It was reported that during the rule of the King of Lavo, Phraya Rawi took his army and established a residence in Muang Klang. Muang Klang was then a fertile and prosperous area, as evidenced by the abundance of abandoned temples. Today, signs of the past can still be seen. Muang Klang possesses some notable places such as Nam Bo Fa Faed, Doi Ma Ngaen, Doi Phra Chao, and Doi Kalok. The site now lies between Doi Inthanon and Doi Hua Suea. It is endowed with natural covers, local foods, and traditional and cultural beauty that constitute the community. The community is still practicing a traditional lifestyle, and vegetable farming, fishing, forest protection, and maintenance of local culture are some of the practices undertaken by the locals. They also maintain and make use of indigenous knowledge of using local herbs in medical care, passed down through generations.

Local food is regarded as a heritage that has been passed down from generation to generation. It is not merely a collection of recipes; it is the culture, way of life, and indigenous knowledge. The study found that the local food culture makes use of herbs and vegetables found within the locality, often plucked directly from the house garden, as the main ingredients in cooking. This practice encourages chemical-free consumption of food, lowers household costs, creates family closeness, and allows learning between generations. Certain foods have evolved over time, with the ingredients and methods of preparation changing to be in accord with modern times. Chili paste, curry, and fried foods are dominant for everyday food for community villagers. Ingredients consumed in food are mostly seasonal. Forest greens like wild betel (*Piper sarmentosum* Roxb.), elephant ear plant, banana stalks, Katuk (*Sauropus androgynus* L. Merr.), bamboo shoots, and fungi are frequently collected by the villagers from the forest, and also home garden vegetables for preparing food. The food of the area typically contains a minimal amount of added sugar because the sweetness is provided by sticky rice, the community's staple food, and by meat and other vegetables.

The local food can be categorized as follows:

1.1 Curry Dishes (Kaeng)

This type of dish consists of soups from boiling water and subsequently adding seasoning ingredients. In some families, sauté the curry paste lightly with some oil until fragrant, along with other ingredients like pork or chicken, before pouring in water and other seasonings. Chili, shallots, garlic, fermented fish sauce (pla ra), and shrimp paste (kapi) are typical seasonings. Curries made in mass quantities by the villagers are young green jackfruit curry (kaeng khanun on), bamboo shoot curry (kaeng nor mai), acacia leaf curry (kaeng cha-om), Northern spicy pork curry (kaeng om moo), spicy beef or buffalo curry (kaeng om nuea), and chicken curry with mustard greens (kaeng gai sai phak kat), among scores of others.



Figure 1 Green Jackfruit Curry

(Source: Prasopsombat, 2023a)

1.2 Salads

Thai salads are defined by the liberal use of pungent dressings in which ingredients are well combined. Dry chilies, shallots, lemongrass, shrimp paste (kapi), and fermented fish (pla ra) are typical ingredients in dressing for salad. Lime juice can be used in certain preparations to add sourness. Some of the popular salad foods among the locals are young jackfruit salad, freshwater seaweed salad, young mango leaf salad, bamboo shoot salad, and buffalo skin salad.



Figure 2 Young Jackfruit Salad

(Source: Prasopsombat, 2023b)

1.3 Tam

Tam or som tam dishes are like salads but made by pounding together different ingredients with a mortar. The blended ingredients in some instances are slightly roasted on medium heat to act as a source of flavor and aroma. Some of the most common dishes under this category are eggplant salad, jackfruit, and mixtures of chili pastes like namp ta daeng, nam phrik ong, nam phrik noom, and nam phrik pla.



Figure 3 Nam Phrik Noom
(Source: Prasopsombat, 2023c)



Figure 4 Nam Phrik Ta Daeng
(Source: Prasopsombat, 2023d)



Figure 5 Nam Phrik Pla
(Source: Prasopsombat, 2023e)



Figure 6 Nam Phrik Ong

(Source: Prasopsombat, 2023f)

1.4 Fried Dishes

These are cooked by frying or heating foodstuff and oil until the food is crispy or done to taste. Crispy pork skin and pork rinds are classic instances.

1.5 Grilled Foods

In this process, fermented or pre-cooked food is cooked on an open flame and seasoned with salt to add flavor and aroma. Typical foods are sai ua (northern Thai sausage), jin som mok (grilled fermented pork sausage), and jin haeng (dried meat).

1.6 Roasted Foods

This entails soaking new food in spices and incinerating them over an open flame until they are well cooked. It encompasses grilled fish, grilled chicken, pork, and others.

Research also revealed that modern local diets continue to depend on food materials from local sources, including vegetables produced in the home and fish cultivated in the local houses. Salt is also heavily utilized as the basic flavoring, with secondary flavorings emanating from sources such as garlic, chili, and most house vegetables and herbs. This strategy not only guarantees the intake of food free from chemical contaminants but also guarantees that expenses at home are minimized. Table 3 provides the typology of Ban Muang Klang local food.

The findings suggest that local food strengthens the community in two major ways. Local food represents a dense web of community relations, where stronger community life depends on lower reliance on outside sources and greater use of local resources. Local food also functions as a means of network building and social capital, as it supports the sharing of local wisdom through cooperation among community groups, including local authorities, women's groups, and schools.

Table 3 Typology of Local Dishes in Ban Muang Klang

Category	Key Features & Preparation	Representative Dishes
Curry Dishes (Kaeng)	Soup-based; seasonings (chili, shallots, garlic, pla ra, kapi); sometimes sautéed before boiling	Young jackfruit curry, bamboo shoot curry, acacia leaf curry, northern pork curry, spicy beef/buffalo curry, chicken curry with mustard greens
Salads	Mixed with rich dressings (dried chilies, shallots, lemongrass, kapi, pla ra, lime juice for sourness)	Young jackfruit salad, freshwater seaweed salad, mango leaf salad, bamboo shoot salad, buffalo skin salad
Tam (Pounded Dishes)	Ingredients pounded in a mortar, sometimes roasted first; aromatic, deeply flavored	Young jackfruit tam, eggplant salad, nam phrik (ta daeng, ong, noom, pla)
Fried Dishes	Ingredients deep-fried to desired crispness or doneness	Pork rinds, crispy pork skin
Grilled Foods	Pre-cooked/fermented foods grilled over open flame, lightly salted for flavor and aroma	Sai ua (northern Thai sausage), jin som mok (grilled fermented pork), jin haeng (sun-dried meat)
Roasted Foods	Marinated fresh ingredients grilled until cooked through	Grilled fish, chicken, pork, and assorted meats

2. Local Wisdom in the Use of Healthy Food

The research proved that the diet of elderly people is a direct consequence of their physical status. Most of the elderly are affected by physical issues like rigidity, constipation, numbness, and arm and leg weakness. The most preferred foods among the population group are typically a blend of locally grown vegetables, which have many health benefits. These encompass feeding tendons, aiding digestion, heat reduction inside the body, cardiovascular support, and promotion of interior wound healing. Additionally, the preparation of such food is physical work and an effective utilization of leisure time.

Kaeng khae is a northern Thai curry that has been characterized by a broad selection of regional vegetables as major ingredients, stewed together in a rich and aromatic broth. In the past, northern residents used various vegetables and meat to prepare it, reflecting the abundance of agriculture in the North. However, as it has become more difficult to find a variety of local vegetables and because preparing the dish is time-consuming, contemporary versions have been simplified and usually contain only one type of meat. The vegetables used are ones with delicate or non-bitter tastes, including acacia flowers, betel leaves, bamboo shoots, rat-tail radish, water mimosa, eggplant, Thai eggplant, and long beans. The choice of vegetables is largely dependent upon what's in season within the community.

Kaeng Ho is a Northern Thai dish that is usually made after merit-making ceremonies, when a lot of food has been prepared. Overcooked curries, leftover vegetables, and leftover meats are all recycled in making this dish. "Gaeng Ho" is derived from the Northern language, "to gather," for the reason that the dish is a gathering of different ingredients. Thai individuals in various parts of the country also have varying methods of eating vegetables and are prone to modify their way of cooking to suit the regional situation. Gaeng Ho is made up of various kinds of vegetables and is similar to mixed vegetable dishes in other parts of Thailand. It is a dry curry, similar to stir-frying, which is typically distinctive of the dish (Duannapa, 2007). Food selection is of ultimate concern in the case of an injured person in recovery because the intake of foods that are defined as harmful to wound healing can lead to inflammation, infection, or even fatal tissue damage leading to amputation. In the community, preparation of nam phrik (chili paste) is distinguished.

In other families, chilies are dried in the sun over the fire and pounded with garlic and consumed with various vegetables and herbs used for healing wounds, like mustard greens, ivy gourd leaves, and immature galangal roots. Apart from food consumption, certain medicinal plants are utilized externally for wound healing, such as turmeric, *Plukenetia volubilis* (fish mint), and *Chromolaena odorata* (Siam weed). The pregnant and postpartum women need to eat normally and not eat fermented, pickled, or very spicy food because food intake during this period may have a direct impact on the health of the child. This is why they usually make boiled banana blossom soup (tom hua pli), steamed banana blossom (mok hua pli), or hot banana blossom tea to stimulate milk flow. Other foods that are normally eaten are boiled or steamed pumpkin as a source of nutrition and ginger tea to allegedly make the body stronger and cause perspiring and gas relief.

People with diabetes must carefully manage their diet because different foods can affect blood glucose levels. While villagers do not necessarily regulate their foods medically as such, they would typically turn to medical recommendations and choose the eating of vegetables, which are renowned for their health-giving qualities. The most widely consumed vegetables are acacia (cha-om), neem leaves (sadao), leucaena (krathin), Thai bitter cucumber (mara khi nok), Thai eggplant, and sesbania flowers (dok khae). All these are typically cooked as curries, dry stir-fries (khuar), or blanched and served with chili paste as dipping sauce condiments.

3. Food and Beliefs

The villagers of Ban Muang Klang, hold extensive beliefs related to their community history and temple construction, particularly regarding Wat Muang Klang (in the Muang Kang, Sang Khao region), which is considered sacred by the people. Food is thus utilized in religiosity and folk beliefs.

Food also becomes a symbol of a way of life, luxury, culture, and faith. Lanna people, inhabitants of the eight Northern provinces of Thailand, namely Chiang Mai, Chiang Rai, Lamphun, Lampang, Mae Hong Son, Nan, Phrae, and Phayao, are also known as Khon Mueang, a term used among themselves to distinguish their identity from other cultural groups. Khon Mueang are Thai citizens native to the Northern region who speak a distinct local dialect called Kham Mueang (Charoenmuang & Apavatjirut, 1986; Meechubot, 2014), which they highly value in a religious sense, preserving certain dishes cherished through both prosperity and hardship. Animistic beliefs accepted by most of the Lanna people are followed throughout the year. In June, in the Northern Calendar equivalent to Month 9, villagers celebrate masses of rituals of beliefs in spirits and ancestors. There are also offerings to the other spirits, like the ancestral spirits (phi pu ya), hairy water spirits (phi khun nam), spirits of teachers (phi khru), noble and ancestral spirits (phi banphaburut, phi jao nai), guardian spirits of villages (phi ban phi mueang), and minor spirits like phi mot and phi meng.

Most of the food that is consumed in these rituals has been transmitted from generation to generation according to family customs. The food is mostly obtained naturally, e.g., locally cultivated plants, vegetables, and fruits in season, chicken, pork, fish, and other animals. The food used in the 9th Northern Month rituals generally consists of whatever ingredients are available, and the same types of offerings are often used in many ritual ceremonies. Spirit-offering ceremonies have been a traditional practice of villagers as a way of representing homage to honored and venerated spiritual forces. These are performed most of all in June, the 9th Northern Month, and repeatedly each year. Generally, it is presumed that denial of such rituals can lead to social disturbance or disasters. Possession by spirits is the focal point of the ritual, in which a spiritual medium (jao nai) becomes possessed by guardian spirits who descend upon their relatives. The spirits share their desires for the future year as well as provide counsel, such as forecasts on the health of the individuals and the abundance of natural resources.



Figure 7 In-Depth Interview With a Key Community Stakeholder Regarding Local Food Culture
(Source: Prasopsombat, 2023g)

The spirit-feeding foods are usually put on display in several categories: salty foods, including boiled chicken and pig's head; classic sweets, including khanom thian (khanom jok) and khao tom mad; and seasonal fruits picked locally according to seasons. During the ceremony, individuals exchange food from the community—those with abundance give more, and those with less give what they have. This communal practice represents the abundance of the year's crops. Once the feeding ceremony to the spirits has taken place, the food offerings are distributed among villagers who have attended the ritual. Some bring the food home as a sign of prosperity for their homes, farms, and gardens, and others share it with neighbors and the greater community. Boiled chicken, for instance, is usually reworked as chicken curry, while pork heads, organs, and meat are utilized in the preparation of laab (minced meat salad) or curries, kaeng ka nun (jackfruit curry), chili pastes, such as nam phrik noom and nam phrik ong to serve guests. In today's custom, a lot of communities supplement other dishes to round out the menu to feed all the villagers. These often consist of khanom jeen nam ngiao (fermented pork curry with rice noodles) and local curry dishes of various kinds (Fongkaew Jeejommuang, personal communication, October 17, 2023).

The phi khun nam ritual is performed usually along creeks or streams that serve as a critical source of water for living and farming. The ritual takes the collective labor of villagers in the area, who assist in preparing the grounds, food, and ritual materials. Ritual materials consist of the following most important things: four candles, four flower cones, four pairs of betel leaves, four areca nuts, eight pieces of white paper flag strips (chaw khao), two clusters of coconut, two bunches of banana, two sugarcane stalks, sour curry (kaeng som), sweet curry, a pig's head, boiled fowl, liquor, and seven kinds of natural sacrificial things. Local staples such as cigarettes and miang are also added. All these items are prepared as per the traditional beliefs. These are placed on a tiered bamboo stand mounted alongside the river, typically in a cool, windy area with adequate supplies of fresh air. Subsequently, a ritual is performed to invite the holy spirits that are said to protect the river to accept the offerings. The ritual also entails prayers for bountiful water and timely rains, resulting in prosperity in farming and optimal health for human beings. When the ceremony is finished, the ritual articles and offerings are never touched until the candles fade, implying that the spiritual beings, such as forest spirits, mountain spirits, and guardian deities, have embraced the offerings and bestowed their favors. The villagers then gather and distribute the remaining articles among themselves as an indication of harmony and unity in the community. This phi khun nam ceremony adjusts harmony among the community members and realizes values of sharing, helpfulness, and respect for the protector water deities.

Rituals to worship phi khru (teacher spirits), phi banphaburut (ancestors' spirits), phi jao nai (master or noble spirits), phi ban and phi mueang (house and city guardian spirits), and phi mot and phi meng (family or clan guardian spirits) are key ritual activities in Lanna society. Such ceremonies, which may involve master, house, city, and ancestral spirits' spirit dances at times, are spirit-feeding or offering by sacrifice. Joyful and vibrant aspects are introduced to the rites to enhance community involvement as well as cultural presentation. These rituals are typically conducted during the 9th Northern Month, which is equivalent to June. Among these spirits, phi mot is a family guardian spirit—a family ancestor spirit who is responsible for protecting and caring for the descendants of the family. Fon Phi Mot (Family Ancestor Spirit Dance) is one of the rituals of feeding or sacrifice to the phi. Spirit-feeding rituals can be held within close families, where members raise funds that are left in the hands of the kao phi—the family spirit caretaker—and are not allowed to carry on with the ritual protocols. If the ritual is conducted as part of the tradition of extended cultural heritage meant to preserve tradition, the Kao phi will also be an elderly woman within the kin-group who also respects reverence of the same ancestral spirit. She is normally the matriarch of the household with the family spirit shrine, hor phi. There, she collects donations from relatives of her own clan to cover the expense of the ceremony. At the spirit shrine are included: a betel nut tray with 12 pieces of betel nuts, betel leaves, incense sticks, and candles; a jar of liquor; fruits; oranges; and seasonal sweets. The offerings differ depending on how the offerings are passed down from the elder members of the family.

Fon Phi Jao Nai is a ceremony dance to offer spirit to phi thep or phi arak—refuge deities or protective spirits that are believed to protect society and the kingdom. They are usually linked to great figures from history who were robust and aggressive, like Jao Nai and Jao Kham Daeng. The ceremony is performed conventionally at the hor phi (shrines or spirit house), where a ma khi (medium of spirits) performs the gesture of offering and ritual gift. A tray of respect (phan khruang kharawa) is presented to usher the spirit formally into the medium's body. In possession, the medium wears clothes preferred by the spirit and dances in a ritual manner in front of the hor phi. It may be an act of performance with music and dance, where traditional tools like the saw, a string instrument played on the bow, are employed to enhance the celebratory spirit and the social scene of the occasion (Krittiya, 2015).

Aside from the beliefs in offering spirits, the villagers also believe strongly in Songkran, or the Lanna New Year, which is celebrated starting April 13 and known as Sangkhan Long Day—the day when the old year departs. The villagers commonly fire guns and ignite firecrackers as symbolic acts to chase away bad luck on this day. They also sweep their houses, wash clothes, and bathe and shampoo their hair as part of a ritual cleansing meant to purge them of ill luck and prepare them for the blessings of the coming year. April 14th is called "Wan Nao" or "Wan Nao." Inhabitants on this day concentrate on being good—to speak nicely and well and refrain from negative speech or unkind words. They also cooked a variety of sweet and savory foods such as khanom thian (steamed coconut and flour dessert), khao tan (fried rice cake), khao tom mat (stuffed sticky rice with banana), hor neung (steamed packages), and other fruits for the ceremonies of merit-making on April 15 during the first day of the New Year. April 15, or the evening of "Wan Phaya Wan," is the holiest evening of the Songkran festival and actually signals the start of the New Year. Villagers visit the temple on this day to earn merit and give alms to the monks, a rite carried out as than khan khao, offered traditionally for deceased relatives. This is then followed by a water pouring ceremony (song nam phra) over ritual Buddha statues to purify them. Next, individuals undertake the traditional "rod nam dam hua" ceremony by pouring lustral water, turmeric water, or som poi (an ancient cleansing herb) onto elders' hands along with flowers, candles, and even new clothes, out of respect and to obtain blessings for the next year.

Today, it is possible to earn merit at your own will. For sprinkling water on the head of elders, the children must arrange the offerings, such as snacks, clothes, etc., to be used so that they may be put to practical use while still preserving the traditional practice. The villagers celebrate a procession of Bodhi trees on the 15th day of April annually

because they believe that these trees are included in the ritual of widening one's horoscope, infusing life into their lives for them to be viable, ensuring peace and happiness, and nourishing Buddhism. April 16th is also considered by local communities as Pak Pi and Pak Duen day, signifying a metaphoric start to a new generation and undertaking new ventures. On this day, most families traditionally cook auspicious food for their family members, including jackfruit curry, jackfruit salad, and other jackfruit dishes. Jackfruit has been known to symbolize support, growth, and success in life. But with changes in lifestyle and generation turnover, these food habits are now practiced primarily among those families who have aging members who still possess these habits.

Nearly every ritual has a set of core offerings, referred to as 'kruang tang,' as well as mandatory sacrificial items. All of them are symbolically significant: coconuts represent purity, growth, and dissemination of knowledge; bananas represent progress and ease of living with enough to eat; a pig's head, used during phi khru ceremonies, represents good living and prosperity; chicken, being a fast-growing creature that gives birth at a quick rate, represents wealth and wisdom; and liquor is used to invite spirits of the ancestors and make the ceremony productive. Fundamental curry spices—lemongrass, galangal, shallots, shrimp paste, and garlic—symbolize farm wealth and convey respect and honesty in providing preparation. The phor khru, or ceremony master, splashes som poi water at the conclusion of the ceremony, which is considered to repel evil and bring protection from calamity.

4. Promotion and Revitalization of Local Food

Through the acquisition of knowledge and collaboration with the Ban Muang Klang community, it was discovered that the community engages actively in promoting, supporting, and reviving local food culture. Such work is done through a community housewives' association, which educates other people on how much better they would be if they consumed local food and engaged in activities to maintain traditional cooking practices. Although progress in this era has altered food practices, e.g., unavailability of some foods, others have fallen out of favor among the masses over time. Some are confined to ritual usage, like Pintu or Madhupayas. Domestic food is still necessary because it has numerous advantages, especially for health. Nutrient value is also an important consideration because the majority of ingredients, such as vegetables and herbs grown locally, are full of nutrients, providing energy to the body that sustains it. Raw materials are also domestically grown, without chemicals, meaning they are a healthy and sustainable food source. Furthermore, in addition to this, food can also be utilized as basic medicine, most easily explained as "food as medicine", to provide members of society with good health and prevent sickness. This strategy also encourages local self-reliance in primary health care.

Economically, local food can also serve as a means of socio-economic income for people. Traditional food can be an income-generating source if marketed and promoted. Hence, it is imperative to conserve and promote traditional food ways so that they do not become lost. Local food, as part of the culture, is bound to vanish due to modernization, the popularity of convenience foods, and lifestyles. The dominance of Western food flavors and decreased home preparation among working individuals are major reasons for losing food culture. Transmission of food knowledge from generation to generation is crucial because local food is a part of cultural heritage. Without intergenerational transfer between older and younger generations, revival of old food cannot be sustained. Effective use of resources is a necessity for the revival of local food culture to be sustained. While animal ingredients can typically be acquired from markets, vegetables and herbs may be cultivated in small domestic spaces. This not only promotes independence but also enhances the value of small plots of land and lowers the cost of food preparation by keeping an eye on reliance on bought ingredients.

From the brainstorming of community members, it was found that local food is important as follows:

1. Health-related aspects of food are primarily concerned with nutritional value and essential nutrients that support the body's functions. Raw materials can be sourced from local vegetables or traditional herbs, which are often grown in home gardens and are generally free from harmful chemicals. Additionally, food can play a role in primary healthcare, commonly referred to as "food as medicine," helping community members maintain good health and prevent disease. This approach also encourages self-reliance in managing basic health needs.
2. Local food has the potential to generate economic income for communities. By promoting and elevating traditional cuisine to a wider audience, it can become a viable channel for increasing local income.
3. Each region's cuisine typically uses locally available ingredients, such as native vegetables and herbs. This gives the food its distinctive flavor and aroma, reflecting the unique identity of the area.
4. Many types of food are closely tied to local traditions and rituals, such as those prepared for merit-making ceremonies, festivals, or as auspicious offerings for good fortune.
5. Preparing traditional food together within families or the community fosters positive relationships and strengthens social unity.
6. Teaching traditional cooking to younger generations serves as a means of passing down local wisdom and preserving culinary culture.

In partnership with Ban Luang Subdistrict Municipality and Ban Muang Klang School, the Ban Muang Klang community, under the leadership of the village headman and the women's group, has taken active steps to preserve local food traditions. One major initiative involves educational activities on indigenous plants and culinary heritage. The school has formally included those activities in its extracurricular program, which strengthens the transmission of local knowledge to younger generations and supports the continuity of community food culture.

Conclusion and Discussion

1. Discussion

This research sought to critically examine the food practices of the Ban Muang Klang community in northern Thailand to explore how food is a source of cultural continuity, health promotion, and socio-economic resilience. Filling an important gap in the literature, the research goes beyond descriptive listing of dishes to investigate the everyday practices, belief structures, and coping strategies that underline food culture in the community. Previous research has focused on the symbolic and nutritional functions of Thai cuisine (Boonchaisri & Pongpattanasiri, 2011; Duennapa, 2007) rather than critically examining how indigenous food knowledge is being positively promoted, negotiated, and re-innovated to current pressures. This research responds to the lack of theory for the generative and participatory aspects of culinary knowledge required to safeguard cultural heritage in the face of modernization, youth migration, and growing convenience food dominance (Aromkhang & Chatraphorn, 2014; Tangtrakul et al., 2014; Thai National Food Committee, 2011).

The research shows that Ban Muang Klang food is not just a source of sustenance but also a multi-purpose cultural practice extending beyond health, ecology, religion, and identity. Customary food culture has an intimate balance between human beings and the environment, where seasonally available produce and household herbs are transformed into meals that serve as medicine as well as nutrition. Kaeng Khae and Kaeng Ho are typical of adaptive food cultures, utilizing readily available vegetables for digestive, cardiovascular, and anti-inflammatory functions. This is congruent with the ethnomedical model that serves as the foundation of Thai traditional medicine, where food and healing are one and the

same (Department of Thai Traditional and Alternative Medicine, 2023; Chuengsatiansup, 2007). Moreover, cooking by older adults combines physical activity with the transmission of traditional knowledge, contributing to improved psychosocial well-being and intergenerational skill transfer. These results are in line with previous studies on rural food culture being conducive to sustainable lifestyle and self-sufficiency in the domestic sphere (Trakulwaranon, 2009; Thai National Food Committee, 2011) and indicate that these activities are sustained not only by habit but also by deliberate curating, negotiation, and social engagement.

Most importantly, the research indicates that food is firmly rooted in ritual life, spiritual faith, and communal identity. The Phi Khun Nam, Phi Mot, and Fon Phi Jao Nai yearly rites express a cosmology where food is a sacred offering, an intermediary between the human and spiritual realms and symbolizing communal prosperity. The symbolic associations of food oblations (e.g., coconuts = purity, bananas = prosperity, liquor = appeasement of the ancestors) reflect a worldview where nature, society, and spirit converge. These observations support Anderson's (2014) assertion that foodways represent a hegemonic site of social solidarity and cultural reproduction. While earlier studies acknowledged food in ritual (Aromkhang & Chatraphorn, 2014; Sangwasi, 2006), they were inclined to view it as secondary to the more physical roles of survival or economy. This work, however, puts food-based ritual at center stage of cultural resilience, namely, in front of modernization, which is poised to undercut these deeply embodied practices. Their durability over the long term, through generations and technological change, is a testament to a shared, self-aware effort to hold on and transform tradition for the present.

One strength in situating the findings of this study within the context of existing research is that it synthesizes cultural, ecological, health, and economic aspects of local food systems as a whole. While Tangtrakul et al. (2014) were alluding to the economic potential of food tourism, and Bourdieu & Wacquant (1992) theorized food knowledge as symbolic capital, in this book it is shown how Ban Muang Klang culinary knowledge is not only preserved but recontextualized in real-time response to evolving socio-cultural trends. For instance, the modernization of heritage dishes such as kaeng khae results from a lack of time and availability of ingredients, but it also demonstrates a pragmatic approach to culinary literacy that balances heritage with adaptability. In addition, the research illuminates the gendered politics of knowledge dissemination, feminine groups not only act as culinary teachers but also as keepers of collective memory, guardians of food sovereignty, and drivers of economic innovation.

Sage's (2012) research explored the relationship between food and sustainability, positing that food identity is constructed within contemporary social contexts. As a consequence of globalization and significant socio-economic transformations, consumers have become increasingly disconnected from the origins of their food. In this context, local food systems become more significant, as they facilitate a reconnection with the raw materials, production methods, and geographical locations associated with food. Local cuisine is also tied to seasonality and indigenous resources. Its revitalization can be read as a human response to local ecological conditions and as a cultural refusal of the McDonaldization of taste. From that perspective, present-day interest in local food among younger people is not merely a matter of preference. It is also a social and political position that supports community economies and resists food monopoly.

Trubek (2008), in *The Taste of Place*, introduced the idea of *terroir* and argued that food carries the imprint of soil, climate, and local wisdom. The distinctive nature of local cuisine is rooted in its ties to a particular location. In a time when tastes are increasingly standardized and homogenized, local food preserves the relationship between the environment and community. Trubek further proposed that food can produce a *sense of place*. For example, jackfruit curry (*kaeng Kkanun*) is traditionally eaten during *Wan Phayawan* (Songkran) because its name signifies support. The use of green jackfruit, acacia (*cha-om*), and local cherry tomatoes (*ma-khuesa som*) creates a 'taste of origin' unique to the region.

Wilk (2008) argued that ideas of the “Global Village” and “common difference” are useful for reading local cuisine, especially under conditions where Northern Thai food has entered tourism and cultural markets. Modern food systems do not erase difference completely. A stronger pressure emerges for each locality to define and market its own distinctiveness. Northern Thai cuisine has thus been edited into clearer and more legible forms for tourists. The *Khantoke* set is a clear example, since dishes such as *nam phrik noom*, *nam phrik ong*, *sai ua*, and *kaeng hung lay*, have become a standardized package through which outsiders can quickly identify “Lanna” food. Wilk’s argument also helps explain why local cuisine cannot be treated as pure or fixed. *Kaeng hung lay*, for instance, carries traces of spice circulation from Myanmar and India. Traditional food, in that sense, is already hybrid. Foods, e.g., *nam phrik noom* and *kaep moo* now move far beyond village markets through processing, vacuum-packing, and sale in airports and department stores. Northern Thai cuisine now carries several functions. It affirms regional identity under globalization, turns everyday life into economic value, and absorbs new ingredients without losing its basic definition of Northern-ness.

Wilk’s discussion of home cooking also brings gender and culinary knowledge into clearer view. Women emerge as key guardians of tradition within domestic life. The preparation of *nam phrik noom* or *nam phrik pla* involves more than cooking skill, since it also carries memory, discipline, and cultural capital. Even with electric blenders now widely available, the mortar and pestle still hold greater authenticity in the moral logic of home cooking. Domestic food practices also connect household life with wider community relations and ritual obligations. Large portions of *kaeng khanun* are prepared for sharing during important occasions, and women hold a central role in sustaining those exchanges. Food work, for that reason, is closely tied to social care, belief systems, and household authority. Wilk’s idea of “mother’s taste” also explains how women adapt introduced ingredients and turn them into household identity. *Nam phrik ong*, with its sweet and sour taste, is one example, as tomatoes have been absorbed into local practice and linked with comfort, memory, and home.

The research also proposes a model for including food education in local learning systems in ways that strengthen health self-reliance and grass-roots economic development. Participatory practices observed in the community, including workshops, food documentation, and informal knowledge exchange, can inform wider efforts to renew intangible cultural heritage in other rural areas. This research contributes to the global discussion on sustainable food systems, cultural resilience, and development that focuses on people. The study, linking to the 20-Year National Strategy Plan (2018–2037) and the Strategic Framework for Food Management (Thai National Food Committee, 2011), argues that local knowledge is a practical foundation for sustainable development, social justice, and the preservation of cultural heritage. Therefore, traditional food should not be seen as just a thing of the past. It remains a living and dynamic community asset that supports shared well-being and socio-cultural continuity.

2. Conclusion

2.1 Northern Thai Food Identity From an Anthropological Perspective

2.1.1 Spatial and Aesthetic Dimension: Food as the “Taste of Place.”

Amy Trubek (2008) conceptualizes food as a relationship between “land” and “culture,” commonly termed *terroir*. Northern Thai dishes such as *nam phrik noom* and *nam phrik pla* exemplify this connection through the mild spiciness of roasted young chilies and the use of freshwater fish sourced from local streams and wetlands. These ingredients reflect the geographical characteristics of Northern Thailand, characterized by mountainous terrain and abundant freshwater resources. The technique of roasting chilies over an open flame (*ji*) exemplifies a form of craftsmanship highlighted by Trubek, as it enhances the intrinsic qualities of raw ingredients more effectively than industrial cooking methods. The inclusion of *ma-khuea som* (small local tomatoes) in dishes such as *kaeng kha-nun* (young jackfruit curry) and

nam phrik ong imparts a distinctive sharp sourness. This exemplifies the concept of the “taste of place,” wherein flavor expresses local identity. These tastes evoke a sense of “home” for Northern inhabitants while simultaneously signaling a distinct cultural landscape to outsiders.

2.2 Ecological and Ethical Dimension: Food as the “Politics of Choice.”

Colin Sage (2012) emphasizes sustainable food systems and ethical responsibility in consumption. The preparation and consumption of Northern Thai dishes such as kaeng kha-nun (young jackfruit curry) and nam phrik pla, which utilize seasonal ingredients and homegrown vegetables (e.g., cha-om and bai cha-phlu), reduce food miles and constitute a form of resistance to corporate food systems reliant on freezing and long-distance transportation. Regarding consumer identity, Sage argues that preparing these dishes at home or purchasing ingredients from local markets (kad) constitutes the construction of an ethical consumer identity. This practice sustains the relationship between producers (farmers and local fishers) and consumers, preventing its disruption by capitalist food systems.

2.3 Symbolic and Globalization Dimension: Food as a “Tool of Power.”

Richard Wilk (2008) conceptualizes local food as subject to selective revival and “reinvention” (Invention of Tradition) to establish cultural positioning in a globalized context. Northern Thai dishes such as nam phrik noom and nam phrik ong are incorporated into Khantoke sets for tourists or processed into branded souvenirs. According to Wilk, this reflects the process of “globalizing the local”—adapting traditional foods to meet global standards and communicate Lanna identity to an international audience. In this context, local cuisine functions as a means of constructing identity at the global level. The preservation of dishes such as kaeng kha-nun in festivals transcends taste; it constitutes a strategic act described by Wilk as the creation of cultural capital. This enables Northern Thai people to maintain a distinct cultural presence and resist homogenization in an increasingly globalized world.

This research illustrates the pivotal position of local food in maintaining cultural identity, advancing communal well-being, and upholding socio-economic resilience within Ban Muang Klang, Chiang Mai. Through a participatory and ethnographic approach, the research captures how foodways are inherently inseparable from indigenous knowledge systems, ritualistic beliefs, seasonality cycles, and intergenerational transfer. Local cuisine not only signifies biodiversity and autonomy but also spiritual and cultural values and collective memory, especially during festivities like Phi Khun Nam and Songkran. Active participation by women's groups, grassroots leaders, and older adults in publicizing and passing on culinary expertise underscores food as cultural capital and bottom-up innovation. With modernization, food transition, and eroding traditional ways of living, the relocalization of food systems appears to be a cultural necessity and a strategic move in sustainable development. This research adds to a deeper understanding of how local food is an intersection point for health, heritage, and community resilience in northern Thailand's countryside.

3. Limitation

Although this research is rich with ethnographic insight into Ban Muang Klang's local food culture, its conclusions are drawn from a single Thai community in a particular cultural and natural context, and therefore, do not necessarily apply to other Thai environments or Southeast Asian settings. Qualitative methods, although necessary for refracting lived experience, potentially excluded quantitative evaluations of dietary effect, health status, or economic value. In addition, the participatory nature of the research, as emancipatory as it was, may have introduced biases due to the closeness of community members to data production and interpretation. Cultural insensitivity and translation of language may also have undermined the validity of some of the findings, especially those that involved ritual beliefs and unconscious knowledge. Finally, seasonal prohibitions during the period of study might have limited the recording of certain food events, especially those agricultural or ceremonial in nature.

4. Recommendation

Future studies should take a comparative, multi-site strategy to explore how different societies in Thailand and the neighboring countries extend the potential and limitations of gastronomic heritage under globalization and climate change. Quantitative food consumption surveys integrated with ethnobotanical studies may shed more light on the nutritional effectiveness and eco-friendliness of local cuisine. Policymakers and educators must accord high priority to embedding local food culture into formal education, public health policy, and agroecological planning for maximum cultural continuity and food security. Entrepreneurial food and tourism ventures in communities can also complement the economic revival of local foods, especially among the youth. Web-based media can also be employed to document, store, and disseminate culinary culture to enhance cultural pride and wider accessibility. In general, local food revitalization must be considered a cross-cutting strategy that brings together cultural conservation, health promotion, environmental sustainability, and people-focused development.

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