

The values of the traditional culinary practices towards the modernization as perceived by the Malay Chefs in Klang Valley

Ismail, N. A., *Ab. Karim, M. S., Othman, M. and Abd. Halim, N.

*Department of Foodservice Management, Faculty of Food Science and Technology,
Universiti Putra Malaysia, 43400 UPM Serdang, Selangor*

Article history

Received: 9 February 2013

Received in revised form:

20 March 2013

Accepted: 23 March 2013

Keywords

Mass-produced

Commercial kitchen

Originality

Technology and knowledge application

Abstract

The central question to be examined in this study is associated with the value of the Malays traditional culinary practices of Malay chef in preparing the traditional food in Malaysian hotels. Present understanding highlighted that hotels are giving high priority on their superior services, such as luxury accommodations and intimate hospitalities. As such, promoting local foods in their dining establishment has taken a back seat. Research from past scholars indicated that hotel in Malaysia can be the one stop center for the local and international tourists to get the first hand information about local food specialities. On the hindsight, very limited efforts have been put into practice on the promotions of local food especially Malay cuisines in hotels. Main issue such as mass-produced Malay cuisines in the commercial kitchens, for example, should be highlighted to ensure that hotels are not jeopardizing the originality of traditional food preparations. Therefore, a qualitative research focusing in in-depth interview with 10 Malay chefs was conducted in hotels around the Klang Valley. The results are so profound that majority of the Malay chefs under study shared similar understandings on technology advancements and modernizations that have taken place in their daily food preparations. Another finding revealed that one of the most challenging factors in preventing the Malay chefs to prepare the Malay food as it has been done traditionally is the attitude and awareness of the young generations to understand the values in traditional culinary practices. This study concludes with suggestion that aggressive knowledge sharing and information dissemination among the Malay chefs in hotels are needed to effectively market the traditional Malay food.

© All Rights Reserved

Introduction

The hospitality industry comprises of hotels, lodging, restaurants, catering services, transportations, theme parks and additional fields within the tourism industry. This industry has been identified as the main revenue contributor for the country under tourism service sector in Malaysia. The announcement of the Malaysian Budget 2012 for instance, has indicated that the government will provide various initiatives and incentives that focus on high-yield visitors like the hotel industry. One of the incentives is to keep the 4-star and 5-star hotel categories at the forefront of the development opportunities. The hospitality market performed better in the last quarter of 2011 in overall occupancy rates for 3-star to 5-star hotels (The Star, April 2012). The development opportunities are not only meant for accommodations, but also for other hotel services like food and beverages, laundry, cafe, internet and a wide range of modern facilities and amenities.

Hotel industry is described as one of the main components in the tourism industry as Malaysia aims

to become a developed country by the year 2020. It is among the important touch points for the first impression for the local and international tourists in serving the highest quality food, as well as acts as the center of information for Malaysia delicacies. Therefore, the information and the experience served to these tourists, be it local or international, must be of the highest importance, accurate to display the traditional values and the exquisite choices of materials used in delivering the products to achieve the required traditional taste. As such, this study focuses on the authentic preparations of traditional Malay foods in hotels from the perspective of traditional values and cultures. There is a misconception that Malay food is nothing but its superior service. There is almost no initiative by the hotel chains to include brief information on how the food is made, especially the processes take to deliver its acquired taste.

Explaining the process to produce such delicacies require knowledge information, materials research as well as cultural values attached to each process. This information is rarely being focus, even by the Ministry of Tourism, as the main activities by the

*Corresponding author.

Email: shahrim@putra.upm.edu.my

hotels are gearing towards occupancy rates of the hotel predominantly. In any case, hotel should provide first-hand information on the traditional dishes that they serve in the hotel. This information should be described in details to give tourist better information and experience on the local cuisine especially to those who quest for 'authentic' food. Ledesma *et al.* (2003) argued that food is ultimately pricier in hotels and the preparation can be batch cooked and frozen, then reheated. This would lend the argument whether the local foods serve in Malaysian hotels just to meet the demand or to emphasis the authenticity of the foods. To put it in another way, the definitions of authenticity are often convoluted and contradictory (Beer, 2008). As Mohammad (2011) cited the work of Sukalakamala (2004) in his study, an interesting results emerged that "*most customers never experience the authenticity of a cuisine. They may not know the difference between what is authentic and what blended cuisine of Western styles.*"

The absence of authenticity might be related to the evolution of new technology and structural changes in preparing traditional Malay food in hotels. As a matter of fact, the originality of the traditional food has gradually been altered due to the transformation of food practices by the Malay chef in the commercial kitchen production at the hotels under study. As Zahari *et al.* (2011) explained in his study about *the level of alteration of ethnics native food in Sarawak*, the alteration of food had caused many changes in their food preparation, equipments, ingredients, processing methods as well as the existing eating decorum and other related matters. This would appear to be supported by Zahari *et al.* (2011) in another study about the *modernization in Malay matrimonial foodways* that modernization symbolizes advancement, the evolution of a community and society via the changes in socio-economics, lifestyle and community cultures. Therefore, the most possible explanation for the researcher to conduct this study is to investigate the level of changes in the traditional Malay food preparation practices of the Malay chef in hotels.

Furthermore, the points discussed above provide strong evidence for the researcher to fully understand; (1) the values of the traditional culinary practices by the Malay chef towards the impact of modern technologies; (2) the barriers for Malay chef to prepare the Malay food in the traditional way in hotels and; (3) to examine the problems associated with knowledge sharing and information dissemination to the young generation of chefs in hotels. To answer these objectives, qualitative approach focusing on in-depth interviews with "present Malay chefs" was

carried in hotels in the Klang Valley.

Literature

The promotion of Malay food at the hotel

Currently, most of the promotions done in hotels are focusing on their accommodations and other hotel facilities. The monthly promotion at any given hotel, for example, highlighted mostly their luxurious amenities and finest quality of services in accommodations and dining facilities. Very limited marketing efforts were given to the promotion of local and traditional foods except during the fasting month, festive season, and Malaysia's Independence Day. In fact, the promotion for traditional Malay foods in hotels has taken a back seat since the concerted efforts of using experienced women chefs to cook for special dishes during state-wide promotions not so long ago. Their motherly touch and their *kampung* style cooking stood out during the promotion where everybody was looking forward to enjoying traditional Malay dishes. As of today, these types of promotions have not been practiced in the hotel due to the lack of incentives from the government, as well as the current trends in socio-economic and lifestyles.

Although, it may be true that changes in economic, lifestyles and culture could have an impact towards the promotion of local food at the hotel, it is important not to overlook at the commercial demand in the hotel itself. Changes in the trends of consumption among the younger generations have led to the emergence of a post-modern circuit of food and the rise of a new culture of consumption among the consumers (Zahari *et al.*, 2011 as cited in Miele, 1999). Yoshino (2012) suggested that the new trends of consumption is more towards the other Asian foods such as Japanese, Chinese, Thai, and Indonesian cuisines and not forgotten the globalization of American fast food. The global spread of this culinary diversity relatively has an indirect impact towards the consumption patterns for Malaysians, in general.

The main issue is information and knowledge of traditional Malay foods. This is manifested in the hotels website whereby information about traditional Malay food is barely made available. Even if the information is made available, it is just general information, segregated according to ethnic races. This is consistent with Jalis *et al.* (2009) findings that most of the food promotion in Malaysia has been segregate into a different race and culture. As a result, the information about the local cuisine, the channel to disseminate the information and its purpose may not work to the targeted audience which is in this context are the international tourists.

Authenticity representation of the Malay food

The choices of traditional Malay foods available at hotels were not comprehensive to create the classic and elegance Malay dining experience. Even the presentation side of the Malay food at the buffet counter has lost its novelty and need to be redefined in order to sustain the values of the traditional Malay food serve for the high-end market. Unlike the promotion of other ethnic food like western and Japanese for example, hotel normally hosted an aggressive presentation at the dining hall, to the extent of live cooking show. On the contrary, little attention has given to the traditional Malay food serve in the casual dining at the coffeehouse. This point is particularly relevant to the presentation of the Malay food at the buffet counter and a la carte. It is of interest to note that lack of initiatives are found in the Malay cuisines presented at the coffeehouse in hotels. The buffet breakfast, lunch and dinner that were served in the coffeehouse were not properly presented to depict the traditional Malay environment from the food presentation, all the way to the dining experience. Thus, hotels should adopt the unique traditional Malay concepts from the food presentation, all the way to the architecture of the buffet's place to ensure memorable experience for their customers, be it local or international.

The increasing consumption of convenience food products in the market has indirectly affected the level of authenticity of the traditional Malay food in hotels. The concern about this convenience food is not *whether* to use the convenience foods but *when*. Fine (2008) in his book *kitchens: the culture of restaurant work* argues about the value of convenience food to be served in hotels. As a matter of fact, using the product can speed up their job but scar their reputations, and later at the end of the day transforming them from skilled craftsmen to manual laborers – culinary de-skilling (Fine, 2008). On the other hand, the chef has to be realistic with the nature of their work by considering on the large quantities of food that they have to prepare in the commercial food production. Therefore, this study will pose a question whether these convenience foods would be an advantage or conversely affect the preparation of traditional foods by the Malay chef in hotels.

The challenges in sustaining the traditional food

A study by Zahari *et al.* (2011) explained that technology advancement in the kitchen, has brought a new dimension to the food industries. The utilization of modern equipment is identified as the

catalyst for better preparation and cooking to meet the demand and supply in the hotel industry. Besides that, the applications of these modern technologies also help the Malay chef in converting the traditional cooking methods to the modern environment which can facilitate their cooking and speed up the time of cooking. However, Short (2003) disclosed that modern technologies affect directly the people's abilities to cook. This is supported by Zahari *et al.* (2011) study that according to Li, Yin and Saito (2004) the traditional food practices are on the verge of being lost due to the modernization of food service industries in the commercial production environment like hotels and restaurant. As a whole, this can be summarized that too much dependent on modern technologies could contribute to the decline of cooking skills among the chefs.

Despite the use of modern equipment and technologies, a study by Engler-Stringer (2010) speculate that changes in cooking skills has a direct effect from reliance on processed food. In addition, Engler-Stringer (2010) said that influences from globalizations, changing production and processing methods, the growth of ready processed/prepared foods and increase in take-out meals are all important reasons why food preparation practices are changing (Lang and Caraher, 2001). At the same time, Stead *et al.* (2003) claimed that very low food practical skills could limit a person's ability to handle basic food preparation. This is contrary to the fact that Malay food requires one to have good cooking practices in preparing the traditional food as it involves with a lots of tedious food preparation. These interpretations give an utmost indication that future technology could eliminate the need for skilled labour in industry due to the process of globalization.

Apart from that, Zahari *et al.* (2011) revealed that food modification or changes are influenced by the new trend in consumption. This lead to the findings by Warde *et al.* (2007) that changing of the food habits had arisen from declining family meals, the erosion of national culinary traditions and the growth of convenient and fast foods. Furthermore, they also stressed that the elements of eating practice like ingredients, meal contents, companions, temporal organization and sources of labour continue to provide the changes in food habits. This phenomenon raises some critical issue whether these influences could affect the Malay chef's practices in preparing the traditional food as it is a matter of ignoring the traditional elements in Malay food rather than adding to it.

Methodology

Sampling and instrument

As this was a preliminary study on the topic, the researcher plans to fully understand the phenomenon before conducting the research in the actual setting. Seidman (1937) quoted Gove (1971) for the definition of *pilot*, “to guide along strange paths or through dangerous places”. Seidman urged new beginners to conduct a pilot study beforehand to venture the complexities of their projects in order to be familiarised with the interview techniques that support the objectives of the study. After all, in this study, the researcher plans to identify the practices of the present Malay chefs in preparing traditional Malay foods in hotels. In addition, their belief systems and values about traditional Malay foods in hotels are to be the main subject of this research.

Respondents for the study were selected based on the samples criteria. Hays (2011) claimed that these sample participants were selected because they meet some important, and pre-determined criteria. The most significant fact about most of them is, all of them had more than 25 years of experience. This criterion alone should be sufficient for this preliminary study.

In this study, semi-structured interviews were used for eliciting subjective descriptions from the live experience of the Malay chefs sampled. According to Fossey *et al.* (2002), the semi-structured interviews are used to facilitate a focused exploration of a specific topic - using an interview guide. The researcher prepared one set of interview guide as guidelines for the interview while informing the respondents beforehand about the objectives of the study. This interview guide normally will have a set of questions that designed to lead the interview in a focus, flexible and conversational mode, or manner (Fossey *et al.*, 2002).

Data Collection

In-depth, semi-structured interviews were used to explore the culinary practices of experienced Malay chef in the hotel industry. Furthermore, Seidman (1937) claimed that the purpose of doing in-depth interview is to understand the experience of those who are interviewed, not to predict or to control that experience. As this study is mainly based on phenomenology - the chefs' experience, and perception, the goal of the interviews is to give enough and sufficient information to the reader to connect with that experience (Seidman, 1937). Their beliefs and values in the traditional practices of preparing the Malay foods are the main subject of concern in this study. In addition, their motivations in sustaining

Malay cuisines in the hotel sector have been identified through their life experience. Indirectly, the problems in these areas faced by the past and present chefs also tend to differ.

These interviews took place in the vicinity of hotels in the Klang Valley as most of the international and local chain hotels are concentrated in this area. As Yin (2011) described, the venue of the interview depending on the location that readily convenient for each of the participants. Therefore, the interview session was set up according to chefs' preferable location and their availabilities to undergo the session uninterrupted. On average, each session took about hundred odd minutes depending on how the questions were asked and probed by the interviewer. As Yin (2011) explained that in a single interview, the conversational mode can last up to 2 hours. This is to encourage the participants to construct their words based on their own experience, in as much details as possible.

The entire interviews were recorded with the permission of the interviewees and verbatim transcribed manually by the researcher. This is done to ensure that all information captured were correct and to avoid losing data since some of the notes written down during the interview process might get lost, or conjured different meanings. Dainty (2006) stated this understanding by arguing that it is almost impossible to note everything that was said during the conversation due to the speed of the conversation.

Results

Informants demographic profile

A total of 8 males, Malay informants participated in this study. The participants were recruited through purpose sampling at first, and later, through snowballing and judgemental methods. Snowballing is a method to recruit participants who do not know each other. This is an excellent way of breaking the ice and helping members to get to know each other (Kanji *et al.*, 1996). However, the judgemental method was applied to make sure that all of them had similar working experience, which was working in the Malay kitchen and in the hotel industry. The participants' range of age is from 33 to 52 years old. The summary of the demographic profile of the participants involved are presented in Table 1. Six key themes emerged from the data analysis; Malay food in hotels, past practices, technology and convenient products, attitudes, and awareness.

The introduction of the traditional Malay food

The first research question began with “how did

Table 1. Informants demographics profile

No	Gender	Race	Age	Occupation
1	Male	Malay	52	Executive Chef
2	Male	Malay	48	Malay Banquet Chef
3	Male	Malay	49	Malay Banquet Chef
4	Male	Malay	32	Malay Sous Chef
5	Male	Malay	45	Malay Chef
6	Male	Malay	44	Malay Banquet Chef
7	Male	Malay	33	Malay Chef
8	Male	Malay	37	Malay Sous Chef

the traditional Malay food started in hotels?”. All five respondents explained similarly that it started with promoting traditional Malay food in hotels during the 70s. Informant 1 said: *“When I started working in 1979, most of the Executive Chefs and the top managements were foreigners or expatriates and because of that, most of the hotels in Malaysia served western food.”*

In the early 1970s, according to Alatas (1972) in his critique paper for The Second Malaysia Plan 1971-1975, there were very few Malays employed in the hotel industry. After all, the hotels’ restaurants in Malaysia mostly concentrated on western food since their top management were all foreigners. However, according to Marzuki (2010), the momentum of tourism development began in the 1970s after the 1972 Conference of the Pacific Areas Travel Association (PATA) in Kuala Lumpur. Since then, the tourism industry received more attention from the government as well as the hospitality industry (Marzuki, 2010). Informant 3 agreed and supported by Informant 5 statement: *“In the 1970s, all the Executive chefs were foreigners. However, they respected our traditional Malay food. Even though they run the food and beverage outlet, the authority to manage the Malay kitchen and Malay food was given with full trust to the Malay chefs.”*

Informant 1 also informed the same situation: *“Rarely can we find a Malaysian, be it Malay, Chinese or Indian, holding a big position in the kitchen department at that time. The practice then, of course was more towards western food and not the Malaysian traditional food.”*

Informant 2 stated the impact towards the situation: *“That was also one of the reasons why Mara Institute of Technology (ITM) came up with a short course in culinary for the students to work in the kitchen and hospitality industry.”*

Past practices in the Malay kitchen

The next questions asked were about the previous practices of the Malay chefs in hotels. Most of the respondents expressed the same thoughts when comparing their past practices in hotels. Ready made items and ingredients that float in the market have influenced the practices of Malay chefs in the hotel

nowadays. The disappointment from some of the respondents could be viewed from the comments below; *“Previously in the Malay kitchen, we do all the preparations from scratch, on our own. But now, we have a lot of instant paste, premix items and instant coconut milk. So, which part do we call traditional!?”*

In other grievances, informant 3 emphasized that there was no supplier who could provide the ready-made items or ingredients in the past. He claimed; *“We used to prepare the spices on our own. There wasn’t any supplier who can supply instant ingredients. So, we have to come early and spend long hours doing the mise-en-place”*

Another chef described his difficulty to learn cooking from previous Malay chefs. He said; *“It wasn’t easy to get the original recipes from Malay chefs then. We have to carefully observe when they were cooking until we managed to do it on our own”*

Informant 4 argued about the new generation of Malay chefs in hotels who prepared the mise-en-place for their cooking. He voiced out; *“If we could prepare everything from scratch back then, why do they give a lot of excuses nowadays?”*

Informant 5 questioned about the authenticity of Malay food in hotels with regards to ready made items and ingredients used in cooking. He argued about the contents of these items that has chemical substances; *“The curry paste and chilli paste are no longer prepared from scratch. Everything comes from the supplier with additional preservatives and additives. Therefore the taste cannot be claimed as authentic.”*

Technology and convenience product

The next question asked was about the alteration and modification of the traditional Malay food in the commercial kitchen in hotels. A majority of the Malay chefs agreed that technology advancement and emergence of ready-made products have brought a new evolution in preparing traditional Malay food in large quantities. Some informants asserted that technology assisted them in daily food production. *“Compared to 20 to 30 years ago, present technology has brought about a tremendous change to our food production. It is just about how we make use of the technology to suit to the elements of traditional food in today’s cooking.”*

However, in general, technology helps them to speed up the process of cooking and overall preparation of traditional food in the kitchen. *“I can say that technology makes us very efficient in cooking and planning. The advancement in technology helps us a lot in the commercial kitchen especially in*

shortening our preparation time for cooking."

Meanwhile, the latest technology had helped most of the Malay chefs to have full concentration in their dish creation. The description was extracted as follows: *"The modern equipment gives us more freedom and concentration in our cooking. Before, we have to spend a lot of time to prepare the food because the equipment is not efficient like we have today."*

Other informants suggested that the freshness of the food were also increased due to the latest technology in the modern equipment. He stated: *"I would say that the quality of food increases with the introduction of new technology in modern equipment. We do not have to worry about the freshness of food especially when storing it for a long period of time."*

Similarly, another informant described that ready-made products saved their staffs' time and could easily be used when needed. He asserted that it is necessary to have ready-made products in the kitchen nowadays. *"In my opinion, the ready-made products are necessary in today's commercial kitchen. We do not have time to prepare everything from scratch. They eased a lot of our time in preparing Malay food such as instant coconut milk, ready-made toasted grated coconut, curry powder, korma powder, chili powder and so on."*

The same theme that emerged from the analysis is regarding the advantages in planning the manpower for the organization. Informants suggested that hotels can save their labour cost by applying new technology and use ready-made products for certain dishes. The quote is extracted as below: *"The advancement of technology help us mainly in manpower planning. Hotel always have high labor turn-over. For a short period of time, we do not have to worry about manpower as modern equipment and ready-made products help us in solving the problem. But still, we do need manpower services in the kitchen."*

Attitudes of young chefs

The third question is related to the attitudes of the young generations of Malay chefs in hotels towards the traditional Malay food. Some of the informants agreed that modernization of equipment and lack of knowledge contributed to the attitudes. For example, informant 3 was upset with what he had seen; *"I have seen in the Malay kitchen how they boiled a chicken in advance. Then, they just added the paste like rendang paste, korma paste and whatsoever to shorten the preparation time. That was totally wrong!"*

Informant 6 addressed his opinion about young Malay chefs who don't want to inherit the knowledge of traditional Malay food. He strongly believed that

lifestyles had changed the perception of young chefs towards the Malay food. He claimed; *"They are very young and they do not really learn much on traditional food but claim that they are cooking."*

Lifestyles, therefore, had lead to the behavior and attitude of some of the Malay chefs of practising unconventional ways in preparing Malay food. Informant 4 expressed his disappointment by saying; *"They use a lot of short cuts in the preparation of food whereas we know that traditional food requires long hours of preparation and a lot of patience in cooking it."*

This was supported by informant 5 who argued: *"They don't have patience in cooking the traditional Malay food. For them, provided that the dish is nearly similar in taste to the original, is enough to complete their cooking."*

Lastly, informant 3 concluded that social advancement lead to these factors. He claimed: *"The problem in the hotel nowadays is that most of the younger generation are not interested in eating Malaysian traditional food. The demands are not there compared to Western food."*

Awareness to sustain the values of traditional food in hotels

The last question investigated how awareness could sustain the traditional Malay food in hotels. The respondents revealed that Malay chefs and hotels should value traditional food by giving more appreciation to the priceless national heritage. Most of the participants agreed that enlightening the awareness could help to promote and sustain traditional food. One of the informants said; *"Traditional food should be given a great recognition from the Malay people itself before we could start promoting to others. We can always talk about the issues, but there must be a new concept on how to promote our traditional food."*

The introduction of western cuisine has an impact in the creation of fusion food by some of the food industries in Malaysia. The concept is to convert the traditional Malay food for the better. Yet, some of them were confused with the original idea and therefore lead to the lost of identity for Malay food. One of the informants claimed; *"Fusion food will never be part of Malay traditional food. It just makes people so confused about the originality and authenticity of the Malay food. There is no such term as fusion food when associated with Malay culture."*

Informant 5 emphasized that hotels should improve their marketing plan to attract more hotel guests to try traditional Malay food at the hotel restaurants. Informant 3 stressed out the idea further

based on his observation: *“The problem is about targeting people to eat traditional food in the hotel. Normally people who stay in hotels only eat breakfast during their stay. Then, they will go out and explore food that is offered outside.”*

Informant 4 supported the above statement by asserting: *“If we want to do it well, we will hold a Malaysian Traditional Food promotion during the fasting month, festival or special occasion but definitely not every month.”*

Informant 1 suggested that hotels in Malaysia should be more aggressive in promoting traditional food in the hotel lobby to increase awareness amongst the hotel guest. A brief explanation by the hotel ambassador could assist the hotel in promoting traditional food to the guests. *“Hotel should play a role in giving a very specific and detailed explanation in every promotion that they are doing especially about the meaning of the authentic food and the nutritional content that we have in every traditional food.”*

In addition to these, promotion with other tourism agencies may support the hotels in promoting traditional food. Besides the special promotion, hotels could take a lead organizing food bazaars, for example in their hotel lobby to promote the traditional food. Informant 2 agreed by saying; *“Maybe we have to do a lot of promotions, disseminate information with tourism centres and then collaborate with famous hotel restaurants in town to give out special promotions.”*

Discussion

The results showed that the present Malay chefs valued Malay food by practising the traditional way of preparing them. However, these practices are gradually disappearing due to the process of urbanization and modernization. In general, the participants in this study had a clear objective of the meaning of “traditional Malay food” that has been practised in hotels despite the abstractness of its authenticity. Although the participants’ ideas or perceptions were qualitatively different depending on the participants’ experience and background, some similarities were detected. From a qualitative perspective, the concept of “traditional Malay food” in the hotel context is made up of five main dimensions: the introduction of Malay food in hotels, the past practices by the Malay chefs, the technology and convenience products in the Malay kitchen, attitudes of the young generation towards Malay food and awareness to sustain the value of traditional food.

Historically, the Malay food was created from natural resources. Every single food, from

the ingredients to the cooking utensils, was prepared naturally using resources from the forest. Understanding these traditional delicacies could guide the new generation towards the improvement of traditional food.

The findings described that the practices of former Malay chefs had slowly lost its touch due to technology advancement like modern usage of equipments and social changes among the new generation of Malay chefs. These include their lack of awareness and attitudes towards the traditional food. Advanced technology had increased the capability of people to work in a more efficient way. However, the significant impact could be seen in the preservation of cultural values. The alteration of recipes, ingredients and cooking methods cannot be tolerated. The inventions of new Malay food which altered the original taste have brought some devastation on traditional food.

The introduction of Malay food in hotels resulted from the locals’ values of it. The new generation should take a lead in sustaining the Malay food’s identity and cultures. For example, the young chefs in hotels should treasure the components of Malay food starting from food preparation to the presentation. Firstly, the attitudes of young chefs in hotels towards Malay food could be improved and intensified by providing specific information, such as the origin of the food. Secondly, the awareness towards traditional Malay food among the young chefs could enhance the elements of sustainability. Recognition should be given to those who are directly involved in sustaining the traditional food in this country, as well as the Malay chefs for their efforts in contributing to the development of Malay food in hotels. Their contribution of knowledge and practices to the younger chefs means a success in preserving traditional food.

However, these results need to be confirmed and validated in a qualitative study involving a larger number of current practising Malay chefs in hotels. In any case, empirical findings obtained from the in-depth interviews provided valuable insights for product positioning, innovation and new developments in the traditional Malay food market.

Conclusion

This study expects to fill up the gap in human-relating concepts by exploring the Malay chefs’ experience in practising traditional Malay cooking in hotels. Malay chefs should identify and be acquainted with the food that they are preparing from the culinary and cultural context, starting from the preparation to presenting the food on the platter. Therefore, it is

crucial to identify the Malay chefs' practices at the hotel while sustaining the knowledge of preparing traditional Malay food.

Acknowledgements

The authors are grateful to the Research University Grant Scheme (RUGS) for sponsoring this study as well as to the Department of Food Service, Faculty of Food Science and Technology, University Putra Malaysia for extending the research facilities for completion of this work.

References

- Alatas, H. 1972. The Second Malaysia Plan, 1971-1975: A Critique (No. 15). Institute of Southeast Asian.
- Beer, S. 2008. Authenticity and food experience - commercial and academic perspectives. *Journal of Foodservice* 19(3): 153-163.
- Dainty, A. 2006. *Communication in construction: Theory and practice*. Taylor & Francis.
- Engler-Stringer, R. 2010. The domestic foodscapes of young low-income women in Montreal: cooking practices in the context of an increasingly processed food supply. *Health education & behavior: the official publication of the Society for Public Health Education* 37(2): 211-26.
- Fine, G. A. 2008. *Kitchens: The Culture of Restaurant Work*, University of California Press.
- Fossey, E., Harvey, C., McDermott, F. and Davidson, L. 2002. Understanding and evaluating qualitative research. *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Psychiatry* 36 (6): 717-732.
- Hays, D. G. and Singh, A. A. 2011, *Qualitative Inquiry in Clinical and Educational Settings*, Guilford Press.
- Hock, T. E. 2009. Netizens argue over origin of dishes after M'sia plans to stake claim, <http://thestar.com.my/news/story.asp?file=/2009/9/23/nation/4762147&sec=nation>, Wednesday, September 23, 2009.
- Jalis, M. H., Zahari, M. S., Zulkifly, M. I. and Othman, Z. 2009. Malaysian gastronomic tourism products: Assessing the level of their acceptance among the western tourists. *South Asian Journal of Tourism and Heritage* 2: 31-44.
- Kanji, G. K. and Asher, M. 1996. *100 Methods for Total Quality Management*, SAGE Publications Ltd, London, United Kingdom.
- Lang, T. and Caraher, M. 2001. Is there a culinary skills transition? Data and debate from the UK about changes in cooking culture. *Journal of the Australian Institute of Home Economics* 8(2): 2-14.
- Ledesma, C. D., Lewis, M. and Savage, P. 1994, *Malaysia, Singapore & Brunei: the rough guide* (Vol. 1). Rough Guides (London and New York, USA).
- Li, L., Yin, L. and Saito, M. 2004. Function of Traditional Foods and Food Culture in China 38: 213-220.
- Lim, Y. T. 2012. another round of food fight, <http://thestar.com.my/news/story.asp?file=/2012/7/23/nation/11711542&sec=nation>, Monday, July 23, 2012.
- Marzuki, A. 2010. Tourism Development in Malaysia. A Review on Federal Government Policies. *Theoretical and Empirical Researches in Urban Management* 5: 85-97.
- Mohammad, T. and Chan, J. K. L. 2011. Authenticity Representation of Malay Kelantan Ethnic Cuisine, Paper presented at the 2nd International Research Symposium in Service Management, Yogyakarta, Indonesia.
- Seidman, I. 2006, *Interviewing as qualitative research: A guide for researchers in education and the social sciences*, Teachers College Pr.
- Short, F. 2003. Domestic cooking practices and cooking skills: findings from an English study. *Food Service Technology* 3(4): 177-185.
- Stead, M., Caraher, M., Wrieden, W., Longbottom, P., Valentine, K. and Anderson, A. 2004. Confident, fearful and hopeless cooks: Findings from the development of a food-skills initiative. *British Food Journal* 106(4): 274-287.
- Warde, A., Cheng, S. L., Olsen, W. and Southerton, D. 2007. Changes in the Practice of Eating A Comparative Analysis of Time-Use, *Acta Sociologica* 50(4): 363-385.
- Yin, R. K. 2011, *Qualitative Research from Start to Finish*, Guilford Press.
- Yoshino, K. 2010. *Malaysian Cuisine: A Case of Neglected Culinary Globalization*.
- Zahari, M. S., Kamaruddin, M. S. Y., Kutut, M. Z. and Langgat, J. 2011. The Level of Alteration of Ethics Native Food: (A Case of Sarawak, Malaysia), *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science* 1(6): 137-144.
- Zahari, M., Kamaruddin, M. S. Y., Muhammad, R. and Kutut, M. Z. 2011. Modernization, Malay Matrimonial Foodways and the Community Social Bonding, *International Journal of Human and Social Sciences* 6: 194-203.