

GASTRONOMY IN THE MEJOTAN TRADITION AS A TOURIST ATTRACTION IN ABIANSEMAL DISTRICT, BADUNG REGENCY

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Submitted : 10-09-2025, Accepted : 08-10-2025, Published : 13-11-2025

Abstract

Understanding the advantages and characteristics of gastronomic tourism, as mentioned, will greatly assist planners in developing it. Synergy with agriculture and livestock can be fostered in coastal areas with beautiful beaches, creating synergy between upstream and downstream sectors. Developing agricultural and livestock products in upstream areas, packaged into engaging activities, can also become a tourist attraction. One culinary product development well-known among Balinese people is preserving the mejotan culture as an authentic Balinese gastronomy. In contrast, tourism practitioners reported that they were aware of the mejotan tradition, but lacked any idea of how to package and sell it in villas or restaurants in the Abiansemal District of Badung. This is truly a missed opportunity, without providing the intended benefits. The food ingredients used as offerings in the mejotan tradition are sourced locally, such as rice, cassava, and pork, along with other equipment needed to process these ingredients. These ingredients, derived from local agriculture and livestock, undergo a traditional processing process, and are then used in the mejotan tradition. The purpose of this research is to develop the gastronomic potential of the mejotan tradition as a tourist attraction in the Abiansemal District of Badung, Bali. The approach used in this study is qualitative. In qualitative research, the phenomena used to determine the variables to be studied are holistic, so the research will not be determined based solely on the research variables, but rather on the entire social situation, encompassing the place, actors, and activities that interact synergistically.

Keywords : gastronomy; culinary; mejotan; tradition; tourism

Introduction

Synergy with agriculture in the context of agro-tourism has not yet demonstrated true agro-tourism, where tourists can see various types of crops and participate in agricultural activities at the agro-tourism sites. In reality, tourists are only treated to views of neglected plantations, and ultimately, they are offered various agricultural products that are not the products of the agro-tourism sites. Synergy with fisheries and livestock (marine and gastronomic tourism) in several locations, such as Jimbaran, Kedonganan, Nusa Dua, and Sanur, can be said to have a multiplier effect, enjoyed by local communities in the form of marine tourism and fish-based gastronomic tourism. However, these activities are only found in well-known tourist areas or in South Bali, more specifically in South Badung.

Gastronomic tourism is often mistaken for culinary tourism, a narrowly defined concept. Culinary tourism is limited to the desire to enjoy well-known dishes such as Gianyar's suckling pig, Yogyakarta's gudeg, Bandung's sio may, and so on. So it does not include activities as described previously according to what was stated by Evirasanti, (2016), Gastronomic tourism, synergized with other development sectors such as agriculture and livestock, can be used as an alternative to address issues related to the synergy between tourism development and agriculture, fisheries, and livestock. Synergy with agriculture and livestock can be developed in coastal areas with beautiful beaches, creating synergy between upstream and downstream areas. In upstream areas, such as mountainous or agricultural areas like northern Badung or northern, western, and eastern Bali, agricultural and livestock products can be developed to meet the needs and desires of downstream tourists. Developing agricultural and livestock products in upstream areas, packaged as an engaging activity, can also become a tourist attraction.

One product that can be developed and has become a tradition passed down from generation to generation in the Abiansemal District is mejotan. The purpose of this tradition is to express gratitude to ancestors and the community for their assistance in the fields of religion, agriculture, and livestock, and to express the hope that they will continue to be supported in future humanitarian activities. The main ingredients for mejotan are raw foods such as sweet potatoes, bananas, cassava, and other agricultural products. The cooked dishes include various types of satay lilit (satay) and lawar (traditional Balinese dishes). These ingredients are used to make tum/brengkes (rice cakes), urut (rice cakes), dendeng (dried meat), fried foods, and crackers (crackers) for the mejotan tradition.

Based on information obtained from several tourism operators who have taken guests to the Abiansemal District to see rice terraces, plantations, cocoa, and other products, it can be concluded that they have no idea about the mejotan tradition in Abiansemal District. Therefore, tourists are taken to villages simply to enjoy the panoramic views of the rice terraces and the plantations before continuing to a restaurant for lunch. In contrast, other tourism stakeholders (villa and restaurant employees from the local area) reported that they were aware of the mejotan tradition but had no idea how to package and sell it in villas or restaurants in connection with the mejotan tradition in

Abiansema District. This is truly a neglected opportunity, without providing the expected benefits.

The food ingredients used as offerings in the mejotan tradition are sourced locally, such as rice, cassava, chicken, and pork, along with other equipment used to process these ingredients. These ingredients, derived from local agriculture and livestock, undergo a traditional processing process and are then used as ingredients for the mejotan tradition. Observations revealed that the process of preparing offerings for the mejotan tradition, using simple methods and ingredients with their own unique characteristics, can be utilized as a tourist attraction synergized with other development sectors, namely agriculture and livestock.

A concrete manifestation of this synergy between agriculture and livestock is gastronomic tourism, which includes visits to the initial production sites, outdoor recreation, cultural activities, and other related activities. From the background that has been explained, and referring to the direction of development of destinations, attractions and tourism businesses in Bali, which must be synergized with other development sectors (agriculture, animal husbandry and fisheries), the gastronomic potential in the mejotan tradition in Abiansema District, Badung Regency is quite interesting and relevant to be studied so that it can become one of the tourist attractions.

Methods

This research is located in Abiansema District, Badung Regency, Data Type is a type of data in this study is a type of qualitative data. Data Sources in this study use primary data sources, namely informants and objects observed in the form of activities carried out by the community in Abiansema District in preparing various ingredients for processing traditional food for the mejotan tradition in the local village. While the secondary data sources used are literature and documents. Determination of informants is done purposively, namely informants who are selected with certain considerations and objectives and are considered potential to provide correct and relevant information with accountable quality, until the data obtained is considered saturated. The informants in question are Mr. Ida Bagus Putu Mas Arimbawa and several other informants. The data collection method in this study is by conducting observation methods, in-depth interviews and documentation studies. While

the data collection technique used in qualitative research is a recording technique using photographs. The data was obtained by recording all activities carried out by the community in Abiansemal District in preparing raw materials, preparing materials until they are ready to be cooked, processing materials until they are ready to be enjoyed and then offered for religious rituals, the community and to tourists.

The data analysis technique used in this study is descriptive qualitative, which is an analysis based on the data obtained, which will then be described using words that are adjusted to the theoretical basis so that a sentence is formed that can explain the actual events, then from the theoretical basis will also be described the things that should be so that they can answer the objectives of this study. The results of the data analysis will be presented formally and informally where what is meant by formal is the presentation of research results such as photographs, while the informal form is in the form of narrative text, containing a brief description to make it easier to understand what happened and then can be planned for further work based on what has been found and understood in the field.

Results and Discussion

Gastronomic Forms in the Mejotan Tradition in Abiansemal District that Can Be Developed into a Tourist Attraction

Variety or Types of Food Used as Offerings in the Mejotan Tradition

In discussing the variety or types of food used as offerings in the Mejotan tradition in Abiansemal District as a tourist attraction, this discussion focuses on a recapitulation of the variety or types of food, their symbols, functions, and accompanying philosophies. Explanations of these varieties or types are intended to avoid misinterpretation of the analysis results and to foster a clear understanding of the variety or types of food used as offerings in the Mejotan tradition as a tourist attraction in Abiansemal District. Gastronomy, also called reflective eating, is a reflection of the pleasures of eating and the art or science related to food preparation. Gastronomy, as the study of the relationship between culture and food, is used as a basis for an in-depth analysis of the variety or types of food in question. The variety of food offerings in the Mejotan tradition in Abiansemal District is divided into ajengan, amikan, and bekelan. Ajengan consists of jukut balung (a type of rice cake), lawar (a type

of vegetable dish), and suhur (a type of pork dish)—a type of pork dish that also accompanies rice, such as tum/brengkes (a type of rice cake), suhur (a type of rice dish), and fried foods. Amikan offerings include various homemade cakes, fruits from local farms and plantations, and bekelan offerings, consisting of raw ingredients such as bananas, sweet potatoes, taro, or cassava.

Rice is used as a basic ingredient in these offerings, not only because it is readily available but also as a form of gratitude to ancestors. Pork is used in offerings because most people in Abiansema District keep pigs, whether small (one or two) as pets, or in large numbers (over 50) as livestock. In Hindu teachings, it is also stated that pigs which are usually slaughtered on the day of Galungan Penampahan are animals which are symbolized as having the nature of *tamas* (laziness), so killing or slaughtering pigs for ceremonial purposes or for consumption can also be interpreted as eliminating lazy traits.

Various Types of Food in the Mejotan Tradition that Can Be Developed as Tourist Attractions

"My mother usually makes offerings of lawar, jukut, pengaturan, tum, and so on, but I don't know if these foods are available for sale here." This statement was made by Ni Kadek Arini, a chef at the "Warung Made" restaurant, which is located as a stopover for guests who want to enjoy the panoramic view of the rice terraces. A similar sentiment was also expressed by Ni Wayan Sumiasih, a chef at Café Belimbing, in an interview conducted on June 22, 2025, which implies that there is not yet a variety or type of food in the Mejotan tradition offered in restaurants in Abiansema District. So it can be said that this is an indicator that the variety or types of food in the Mejotan tradition have not been developed optimally.

As explained by Putra & Sutaguna, (2019), Several criteria that need to be considered so that cultural tourism can provide economic contributions to the places and communities involved in this type of tourism are: (1) The products offered must have authenticity in the sense that the theme chosen in packaging cultural tourism will only be more attractive if the activities are related to a region or place. (2) Presentation has a large influence on the awareness and classification of the products offered where aesthetics are also included in educational and marketing values. Several things that are still related to tourist attractions as described by (Pugra, 2011), that good tourist

attractions are closely related to four things, namely having uniqueness, originality, authenticity and diversity which are further added by Nasution, (2016), that tourist attractions are centered on three forms, namely:

(1) Form of culture which is inanimate or which does not directly involve human activity, (2) Form of culture reflected in the normal daily life of the destination, (3) Form of culture which is specially animated and many involve special events of depicting historic, festivals, reflecting old traditions and behavior, re-enactment, of battles and displays of old machinery.

On the other hand Adinugraha & Michael, (2014), To understand the variety or types of food that can be offered to tourists and can become a tourist attraction, the variety or types of food are analyzed in depth based on: Guests or things related to guest demographics, product quality, operating limitations, financial objectives. Meanwhile Sutaguna, (2017), Balinese food is classified into two categories: *ajengan* and *amikan*.

Based on several criteria for food that can be developed as tourist attractions, particularly those used as offerings in the *Mejotan* tradition in Abiansemal District, through the theory developed as described above, the various types of food in the *Mejotan* tradition that can be developed as tourist attractions include:

- a. *Ajengan*, which includes *lawar* and *jukut* (vegetable-based dishes) as sources of fiber, and *genyol* (pork-based dishes) as sources of protein, such as *tum/brengkes* (fried chicken), *betutu* (fried chicken), *orutan* (fried chicken), and *gorengan* (fried food). In terms of uniqueness, originality, authenticity, and diversity, as well as analysis based on guest demographics, product quality, operating limitations, and financial objectives, *lawar*, *jukut*, and *genyol* (pork-based dishes) are highly suitable for development as tourist attractions if packaged as a series of engaging products and activities.
- b. *Amikan*, a variety of fruits, is renowned for its uniqueness, originality, authenticity, and diversity. With the help of skilled craftsmen in food processing, it can be developed into new dishes for tourists.
- c. Provisions made from various local agricultural products, such as sweet potatoes, taro, and

bananas, are similar to amikan, and based on the criteria for these offerings, they can be developed into tourist attractions.

Therefore, it can be concluded that all the various types of food offered in the Mejotan tradition in Abiansema District can be developed into tourist attractions.

Efforts to Develop Gastronomy in the Mejotan Tradition in Abiansema District as a Tourist Attraction

The culinary industry, with its diverse menu offerings, is in line with industry developments to meet the needs and desires of consumers/tourists. One such menu is the "special menu," which translates to the establishment of specialty restaurants where the emphasis is on the basic ingredients of the products served. Based on this information, it can be seen that serving food in a buffet style, known as a "buffet menu," is one example of efforts that can be made to serve food based on the ingredients offered in the mejotan tradition in Abiansema District, along with other dishes.

To realize these development efforts, collaboration is needed between tour guides and travel agents who will take tourists to Abiansema District, the Village Head, and the Abiansema District Management, to create tour packages that include activities to enjoy the views of the rice terraces in Abiansema District. Lunch is then served buffet-style, featuring dishes made from offerings used in daily community activities, such as the traditional mejotan (rice cake). Local arts performances also serve as entertainment for guests to enjoy while enjoying lunch. These efforts also contribute to the festive atmosphere of the event.

Meals served in individual portions should adhere to the food presentation guidelines outlined by Arcana, SE., M.Par, (2018). The first human sense to experience food is sight (eyes). Therefore, the appearance of a food served is first perceived by the eyes and subsequently influences the appetite of the person enjoying it.

A dish/food presentation is likened to a painting, and the plate or other serving utensil serves as its frame. Therefore, when serving/presenting individual portions of food, attention should be paid to color (preferably more than one color between the main dish, side dishes, sauces, and garnishes) to avoid monotony. Shape (a variety of dishes is more appealing, as is the color), balance (the balance

between the size of the plate, main dish, sauce, side dishes, and garnishes), texture (although food texture is not readily apparent and can only be determined by touch, it is also crucial to avoid serving food with only a soft texture), and aroma (a variety of aromas on a single plate will make the food more appealing and delicious).

Therefore, when presenting food, the presentation, including appearance, simplicity, efficiency, and appropriateness, also requires serious attention to ensure the food appears more visually appealing and appealing.

The Gastronomic Meaning of the Mejotan Tradition in Abiansema District as a Tourist Attraction

Economic Importance

Tourism can thrive in an area if tourism activities have a positive impact on the local economy Sutaguna et al., (2018). In discussing the economic significance of gastronomy in the mejotan tradition, the process of commodification cannot be separated. The term commodification describes the economic value of something that previously had no economic value. It is sometimes used to describe the transformation of the market for unique, branded products based on undifferentiated products. Further added by Dalem, (2010), The commodification of products is the fact that they are primarily produced for exchange for profit. Commodification has a broad meaning and extends beyond the production of commodities, including goods and services for sale. It also encompasses how these goods and services are distributed and consumed.

Economic significance is achieved by packaging the activities of preparing ingredients, processing food into ready-to-eat meals, and serving them, or by packaging them into engaging stories and activities that enable tourists to participate in these preparation activities, thus creating something to see, do, and buy, which are essential for a tourist attraction.

b. Social Meaning

Tourism is an activity that directly impacts and involves the community Sutaguna et al., (2020). Community involvement in tourism activities can take the form of providing tourism facilities or working as a workforce in tourism-related fields, such as tour guides, hotel, villa, or restaurant

employees, and other services. The economic benefits derived from this community involvement, in the form of economic growth, automatically increase their social standing. This change in social standing impacts the social order, where all members of society are treated equally regardless of lineage, caste, or other factors.

From the perspective of tourists, the social benefits include a means to improve their social status and social interaction, enabling them to interact with peers and the local community they visit. As stated by Sulartiningrum & Sugiarto, (2001) Tourists choose specific destinations to fulfill their needs and wants. The biological need for food and drink, especially food and drink never experienced in the tourist's home country, can be a source of pride that can be shared with colleagues, neighbors, and relatives, as a means of enhancing social status in the tourist's home community.

Therefore, the social significance derived from the transformation of traditional Balinese food in Abiansema District, from an inter-community perspective, can be seen in the interconnectedness between community members, social institutions, and the rhythm of community life.

Aesthetic Meaning

As expressed by Sutaguna, (2017a) A dish/food is likened to a painting, and the plate it's served on is its frame. However, this doesn't mean that much time is spent arranging the food on the plate, as a painter would when creating his masterpiece. This can be detrimental if the food is not served fresh. When presenting food, the following factors must also be considered: Balance (balance between the size of the plate, the main dish, the sauce, and the accompaniments/garnishes), Colors (the main dish, sauce, and accompaniments/garnishes should have more than one color to avoid monotony), Shapes (a variety of food shapes is more appealing, as are the colors), Texture (although the texture of food isn't clearly visible and can only be seen by touch, it's also important to avoid serving food with a soft texture), and Flavor (a variety of aromas on a single plate will make the food more appealing).

The development of rural tourism certainly impacts the physical, social, and cultural environment of the local community. The meaning of aesthetics in the context of environmental preservation is in the form of increasing public awareness to maintain the assets they own, meaning

not being tempted to sell land to investors who want to build tourism facilities in Abiansema District.

Conclusion

Based on the formulated problems, several conclusions can be drawn regarding culinary tourism in the mejotan tradition in Abiansema District, as follows:

1. The gastronomic forms of the mejotan tradition in Abiansema District consist of lawar, tum/brengkes, beratan, jukut, betutu, and jaje. After being analyzed based on the criteria of uniqueness, originality, authenticity, diversity, guest demographics, product quality, operational limitations, and financial/commercial objectives, all of these dishes meet the requirements for development as tourist attractions.
2. Efforts that can be made to develop the gastronomy of the mejotan tradition in Abiansema District as a tourist attraction include preparing raw materials, preparing raw materials into ready-to-cook dishes, processing ready-to-cook dishes into ready-to-eat or enjoy dishes, and efforts to improve the presentation of the dishes.
3. The gastronomic meaning of the Mejotan tradition in Abiansema District as a tourist attraction is the economic meaning in the form of added value from commercializing gastronomy in the Mejotan tradition, the meaning of cultural preservation in the form of the sustainability of the traditions and culture of the local community, the social meaning in the form of social interaction and job opportunities for the community and the aesthetic meaning in the form of beauty, naturalness and balance of the environment of Abiansema District.

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