

Differences in Processing and Presentation of Indonesian Food in America and Indonesia

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ABSTRACT

A fine food is a food that represent itself where it came from even those food is made far away from original place. Originality of food remain consistent while the taste and presentation may deliberately change to fit the culture and personal habit of the original citizen. The main objectives of this study are to recognize and describe the different process and presentation of Indonesian food that has been made in two specific different countries, Indonesia dan America. This research was conducted through textual analysis and qualitative data collection namely by personal observations, interviews, and documentations. This research observes the cultural and habitual action of the people who lived in Indonesia and America. The findings show variation in the aspect of processing and presenting Indonesia food in Indonesian and American context. The same food and ingredients may be different in the presentation and processing based on the cultural background of the place where the food is produced. Although this research analyzes specific context of places, but essence of culture that affect the food presentation and processing can be applied in any regions and culture.

SARI PATI

Makanan enak adalah makanan yang merepresentasikan dari mana asalnya bahkan ketika makanan tersebut dibuat jauh dari tempat asalnya. Kekhasan makanan tetap konsisten sementara rasa dan penyajiannya mungkin sengaja diubah, agar sesuai dengan budaya dan kebiasaan pribadi penduduk asli. Tujuan utama dari penelitian ini adalah untuk mengetahui dan mendeskripsikan perbedaan proses dan penyajian makanan Indonesia yang dibuat di dua negara yang berbeda yaitu Indonesia dan Amerika. Penelitian ini dilakukan melalui analisis tekstual dan pengumpulan data kualitatif yaitu dengan observasi pribadi, wawancara, dan dokumentasi. Penelitian ini mengamati tindakan budaya dan kebiasaan masyarakat yang tinggal di Indonesia dan Amerika. Temuan menunjukkan variasi aspek pengolahan dan penyajian makanan Indonesia dalam konteks Indonesia dan Amerika. Makanan dan bahan yang sama mungkin berbeda dalam penyajian dan pengolahannya berdasarkan latar belakang budaya tempat makanan tersebut diproduksi. Meskipun penelitian ini menganalisis konteks khusus suatu tempat, tetapi esensi budaya yang mempengaruhi penyajian dan pengolahan makanan dapat diterapkan di daerah dan budaya mana pun.

Introduction

Indonesian food is rich in flavor and has many kind of condiments, inheritance from our ancestors from generations to generations making Indonesian food is authentic from the eldest era, by the time going Indonesian spices is so eminent, so it gained attention of other countries to came to Indonesia and tried to made a big trade for our spices. The intention was to bring local spices to their origin, and obviously expanded it into prime commodities, and of course some of the country that made the trade want to develop independently from the traded spices from Indonesia to where they are came. Back then, other country might not understand as good as nowadays about the concept of weather or land condition about spices, some of the spice could be developed in hot or cold weather, some might not. Luckily, Indonesia has only two seasons, which is hot season and rainy season with high humidity, because of that is make our spices characteristic is distinctive and richer by the flavors.

As a part of globalization, the spread of local food, is also caused by the migration of the citizen around the global. Many people travel and move to another country for many kind different reasons. When, people migrate, they also bring their original culture and social background with them, including food. In this case, it also happens to Indonesian people. For years, many Indonesian people move to other country, including to America. In 2015, the number of Indonesian people living in America was recorded up to 113,000 people (<https://www.pewresearch.org/>). This number is growing every year. While they live in America, Indonesian people are still eating Indonesian food. In some ways, their existence in America also become the media of promotion of Indonesian food and the culture within. Thus, slowly but it is sure, those spices will be touching every persons palette around America soil. Since many of Indonesia living across states in the USA.

Since there are many different conditions in culture and nature between America and Indonesia; to make an Indonesian cuisine in America, Indonesian people must use the ingredients, condiment and cooking utensil that are available in America. However, they try to make a good use of the resources that they can get to make a decent Indonesian food that taste like the food

they can get in Indonesia. With the global economy and technology, to get imported ingredients directly from Indonesia is no longer difficult. However, it still takes time and more money to spend. Therefore, many of Indonesian people in America use all the resources that they can get in the local grocery stores to make an original Indonesian food. This interesting condition create a unique combination of Indonesian food. There are differences in the process and presentation of Indonesian food produced in America. Therefore, this study aims to pinpoint the differences between Indonesian food in America and Indonesia. The focus will be on the process and presentation of the food. It is crucial to understand how far the original Indonesian food itself has changed to suit the Indonesian people that has lived in America.

Method

This is a qualitative research that uses cases study approach. According to Moleong (2013), qualitative is a form of study that the aim is to reveal real events in the field through information obtained from individuals and groups, in writing or orally by trying to maintain the integrity of the object under study. Therefore, qualitative research itself is focuses of naturalistic interpretation of the subject. As a qualitative research, data from the study cannot be measured with a numerical scale (Kuncoro, 2009). Meanwhile, according to Sugiyono, (2014:224) qualitative data is a data that does not use numbers and the data research itself is more artistic, has less pattern, and it generated from this study are more concerned with the interpretation of the data collected from the field.

As mentioned by Creswell (2013), qualitative case study is a research methodology that explores the phenomenon within some context, using various data sources. It also involved the exploration of perspectives to explain manifold surfaces of the phenomenon. In this case, a qualitative data is very suitable for this study by reason of the data taken is from a comparison of cultural experiences in two countries according to local Indonesian people. The objective of this study is to reveal food presentation and processing differences that affected by the cultural and geographical context where the food is produced. The setting of this study is America, and the

object is Indonesian food produced by Indonesian people who have been living in America for years.

Data Collection

In order to collect data for this research, there are several tools have been used, namely observation, in depth interview and documentation. According to Herdiansyah (2012), observation and in-depth interview are methods used in qualitative research to understand a social phenomenon context naturally by promoting a deeper communication interaction process between researchers and the phenomenon that being studied.

A. Observation

In approaching qualitative research plan, the observation data collection illustrated a systematic data collection methods and examined people in natural settings environment situations, according to Creswell (2013). By observing a significant difference of Indonesian food on both countries, the circumstances itself gave a result of information that support the objective of this research. The observation is being done in group of Indonesian people living in America; by looking at their daily meals and food processing and presentation, when they are having social or family function in America.

B. In depth Interview

As the important part of data collection tools, in depth interview is conducted for this study. As mentioned by Arikunto (2010) interview is a dialogue conducted by the interviewer to obtain an information from the interviewee. The interviewee is called as the informants. In this study, there are 5 informants who are being asked their opinion about thus issue. The informant is chosen by considering the length of stay, the role in Indonesian community in America and their active culinary activities in America. The informants are also taken from the Indonesian who lived on both countries. The informants choses are the informal leader of Indonesian community living in American, specifically in Los Angeles area.

C. Documentation

Other data is collected through documentation. As stated by Tanzeh (2011), that documentation is an activity for collecting data by viewing or recording a report that is already available. Documentation is an activity that recorded from a current situation. By taking a real events moment author can record a data perfectly to complete the primary purpose of this research. The documentation in this study focus on the process of cooking Indonesian food in America. This also involved collecting pictures about the different Indonesian food produced and presented in America and being compared with the ones made in Indonesia.

Data Analysis Technique

The data that has been collected, will be analyzed based on the qualitative methods of analysis. Shortly there are three main ways to generate final data. All the data will be collected, reduced, and presented based on the major objective of the study. Data collection is being done through observation, in depth interview and documentation. After collected all the data, choosing the relevant information and reduce several data to acquire important and relevant argument within the study. In this regard, the initial gathering of data as many as possible, will be open an opportunity to obtain many direct information to established greater result.

After data is being collected properly, the process of selecting data is conducted. Several irrelevant data is being reduced. As stated by Daymon and Holloway (2008), data reduction is the process of sorting irregular data into more regular chunks by creating code, arranging them categories and summarizing them into simple patterns and arrangements. Therefore, in this study, the data is being chosen and categorized based on the objectives if study, which is to compare the process and presentation of Indonesian food made in America and Indonesia.

The chosen data the being selected and put together into the categories that have been made. Thus, it being explored and explained with narrative argument to present the data. Few pictures are also being used to strengthen the argument and give more explanation toward the topic. The

data argument than being conclude by looking at the similar or different pattern, formed and its category. The conclusion is drawn from the argument in the presentation. It also adds concluding statement related to the topic based on the recent phenomenon and the possible condition in the future. Several recommendations related with academic value and practical activities are also being stated as part of the concluding remark of the study.

Result and Discussion

Indonesian food are so diverse in every areas in Indonesia itself. In general, Indonesian food are made almost in a same way of method and cooking ingredients in Indonesia. On the other side, it is a challenge to recreate authentic Indonesian food in America, since Indonesian spices are supposedly coming from Indonesia only. Natural condition of Indonesia creates specific treatment for the spices, and it made so special. Although, there are kinds of spices that are similar in America, but the characteristics of Indonesia spices are different. The spices also affect the habit of food consumption in certain region. According to Istiany (2013), habitual eating is an information regarding about type and the amount of food consumed per person or group of people at any given time, so that the assessment of food consumption can be based on the amount and type of food consumed. By that term, it will support the study to breach into what is the specific differences of Indonesian food by the processes and presentations in between Indonesian food in Indonesia and America.

Street food that served as main course in Indonesia could be elevated as a restaurant grade food in Indonesian restaurant in America. Meals such as *Nasi Bungkus* were usually as a main course in Indonesia that sold on street, which locals can easily obtained anywhere around the block. While in America, *Nasi Bungkus* are mainly served in a specific place in Indonesian restaurant. Indonesian food is considered as a heavy meal in America because of the complexity of the ingredients and way of serving it. The reason behind this complexity is America has higher food safety standard than Indonesia; so, it is difficult to serve around America's street.

Processes of making Indonesian food

In term of food production, the process of making the food is important to understand. There are four categories for the processes, which include method of cooking. The substitutions and elimination of the food ingredients will be also explained. There will be a difference in between two continents on how to present Indonesian food as authentic as it is, the following pictures on the next page is an exact example of the cooking process for Indonesian food that happen in two different places.



Sous Vide tools to cook Beef



Cooking Beef Rendang in Pot

The process of food production influences the taste of the food in certain ways. It also give an impacts to the quality of food presentation that may trigger consumer buying decision. According to Margaretha and Edwin (2012), food quality plays an important aspect of consumer buying decision, so it can be seen if the quality of food increases the purchasing decision will followed. This study reveals that Indonesian food which are made in America, is being produced to keep the authentic taste of the Indonesian food. Indonesian people who make the food in America try their best to recreate the food that has similar taste as the origin source. As part of the process of creating Indonesian food, there are four aspects of cooking that different between Indonesia and America, namely the ingredients, methods of cooking, substitution of food and elimination of spices.

A. Main Ingredients

The most importance aspects of food is the main ingredients. According to Wahjudi (2015), the various of food sources in Indonesia causes variation of taste for the traditional Indonesian food. One of the most common ingredient that Indonesian always use as a side dish is *jeroan* which are the best part as Indonesian food, as so far to understand there are many *jeroan* as duck or chicken liver, duck or chicken lungs, chicken intestine, cow tripe, and many more. In Indonesia there is no rules in order to serve this kind of side dish. On the other hand in America especially in California states, there is a rule that California states banned duck or chicken liver to get served in any kind of presentation. This condition has made the main ingredients of Indonesian food may be changed or modified because of difficulty to get the original ones.

B. Method of Cooking

There are multiple methods of cooking for Indonesian food. This study focus only in making one famous dishes in Indonesia, which is *rendang*. As stated by several international cuisines review, *rendang* is considered as one of the most delicious food in the world. In this case, Indonesia's *rendang* is cooked with low heat on top of the closed pot. The method is used to make the spices soaked in the meat and it will be perfectly tendered. This cooking method requires a lot of propane to heat the pot in a long period of time, from six to eight hours to make perfect texture and flavor.

However, to cook *rendang* in America; they cooked it by *Sous Vide*. This concept is almost similar with the local Indonesian ways of cooking. The one that make it difference is Indonesian American cook *rendang* per portion in a plastic bag. The *Sous Vide* is using full electricity that can make the temperature more stable and consistent instead of using gas or propane like the traditional style. As the result of it, Indonesian *rendang* has a full taste and texture, on the other hand the Indonesian American *rendang* is less tasty and the texture was too soft but it fitted for the American's palette.

C. Substitutions

Other important aspect in cooking is choosing the right seasoning. According to Murdiati and Amaliah (2013), seasoning is a natural ingredients and artificial ingredients that has been used to improve food taste and shape the delicacy by adding a certain amount during the cooking process. Some ingredients are made purely from scratch to obtain the authenticity of its own. Coconut milk are general ingredient that Indonesian are mostly use to cook their traditional dishes such as *Gulai*, *Opor*, *Lodeh*, *Kare*, and many more. Coconut milk itself is a milky white color liquid that comes from old coconut that made from grated, strain, squeezed and get it filtered. By its process, those white liquid has opaque appearance that contain rich taste due to the oil content. The bulk of it is a saturated fat. Due to high supply and demand, Indonesian are more likely easier to get old coconut that processed to pure coconut milk instead of factory made or even artificial coconut milk that has been used in America. In the end Indonesian food that made by Indonesian in America more likely using factory made or artificial coconut milk, since it is cheaper and has long expiration date as can be seen from the figure below.



Factory Made Coconut Milk

D. Eliminations

Other important characteristic of a food can be described by the aftertaste, such as spiciness. This is a common flavor of Indonesian food. Many Indonesian food are spicy, in which many Indonesian living in America may not taking it anymore. The main ingredients that original Indonesian use to make spicy are more likely are small red chilies or Indonesian usually called it

Cabai Rawit. Whereas in America, they also have chili, but they may not use it as Indonesian food. In this case, they eliminate the Chili to avoid the spiciness. Most of the Indonesian American could not digest *Cabai Rawit*, instead they use spicy powder or sides of chili if they want to make it spicier as shown in pictures below.



McCormick Chili Powder

Presentation of Indonesian food

Food presentation is important part of the meals. It also affects the willingness people to consume. It is a complex art to decorate food to enhance its aesthetic appeal. Food presentation is affected by how Indonesian habit and cultural to consume the meal. Most Indonesian are using bare hand to consume *Nasi Bungkus* or by using single spoon while the other hand holding the packaging of *Nasi Bungkus*. On the other side *Nasi Bungkus* in America especially in Los Angeles are well prepared and presented to be served on the table and food connoisseur consumed using utensils as requested.

Size and quality of the food are crucial in the way of presenting food. This study divides the discussion into several categories between Indonesian food that made in Indonesia and Indonesian food that are made by Indonesian in America as we can seen in the following pictures.



Nasi Bungkus in Indonesia



Nasi Bungkus in Los Angeles

A. Plating

Food plating is an activity to decorate food on a specific plate to improve its appearance. It makes the food itself possible to go to higher rank. The main differences between Indonesian food in Indonesia and America was the way of presentation. The easiest example is *Nasi Bungkus*, in different state of Indonesia or even in America *Nasi Bungkus* contains from four to many condiments beside the rice itself, the way real Indonesian present it they put the rice in the middle or side and followed by condiments in the same plate finished with the sambal or even sauce as well. On the other hand, in America many Indonesian restaurants put every condiment in all separate small plates or even in a plate with a divider, so while it presented, it is totally clear that we can eat each condiment separately.

B. Sauce

The important condiment of food is the sauce that served along with the main food. Sauce is a liquid that served with the food to add moistness and enhanced flavor. Indonesian itself has many methods of cooking and adding flavor to an ingredient, the way in general Indonesian present it they always cook the main ingredients with the sauce as well to give a strong character, as an example there are *Kare Ayam*, *Gulai Ayam*, and *Ayam Rica-rica*, those three side dishes use same main ingredients which is chicken and they mix with the sauce while they cooked. On the other side Indonesian in America Cook chicken and those sauce separately, mainly Indonesian in America use *Sous Vide* chicken with salt, pepper and ground spices to extract the original taste of

the chicken itself, beside that they make the sauce in different pan, so when it need to be served the food connoisseur are able to choose their own sauce that fit to their palette.

C. Flavor

Definition of flavor is a sensory impression from a food or any substance, that determined by its chemical senses of taste and smell. As stated by Drummond and Brefere (2010) flavor is a way of selecting food that must be distinguished from the taste of food. Flavor is a food attribute that includes appearance, smell, taste, texture, and temperature. This study reveals that Indonesian food produced in Indonesia has different flavor with the ones made in America. Although the person is making the same food, but if they make it in Indonesia, they will get stronger taste than the ones they make when they are in America. This information is revealed from the interview with informants who have been traveling back to Indonesia, after living long time in America. They said that the ingredients and the way of cooking may affect their food. The flavor itself can also be affected by the portion of the food. In this case, bigger portion of food can be lighter in taste compare to the smaller portion, since all the ingredients and condiments can be deeply blended with the main meals.

D. Portion or Size

Related with the flavor that bigger portion of food may less tasty. Thus, the fact that the common food portion of Indonesia and America is slightly different is affected by the need of calory that they need every day. Different nature or setting of place may affect the need of their body to consume food. Based on Rotua and Siregar (2015) standard portion is a breakdown of types and amounts of food ingredients in a net weight for each type of dish. There are multiples measurement for the portioning which may be more or less than a serving suggestion or body's needs.

In general Indonesian who live in Indonesia need around 2000-2200 Kkal each day in order to do daily activity, while Indonesian in America or even American themself needs 2500-2700 Kkal

each day to do their activities, therefore it affected the portion of food itself on how we present or serve to connoisseur. As an examples *Nasi Bungkus* are served with one piece of chicken, while *Nasi Bungkus* that serve in Los Angeles are served with two or even three pieces of chicken as a replacement of a rice, in fact Indonesian or even American did not really eat rice as many as Indonesian who live in Indonesia.

E. Garnish

Finally, as part of the food presentation, garnish is also made the difference between Indonesian food served in Indonesia and America. The word garnish comes from the French word *garnir*, meaning to decorate or furnish. In the culinary world, it means to use food as an attractive decoration according to Guggenmos and McVety (2010). In term of food decoration, garnish is a decoration or embellishment to improve an appearance of a food. there are two types of garnishes in general that cook used to improve food quality and appearance, it was the edible garnish and inedible garnish, both garnishes improve the appearance of good presentation but the edible one can improve the quality of the food itself as well.

In Indonesia, many local foods usually do not use many garnishes, unless it served in high profile restaurant or being ask by food connoisseur. Ingredients such as *Bawang Goreng*, *Kemangi*, *Daun Bawang* are considered as part of the main meals. However, most of Indonesian food that made in America use that garnish on top or on side of the dishes either we ask for it or no, they count that as a completeness of the dishes and increase the flavor itself. It is part of the food decoration that optional, but still can add the flavor of the food.

Conclusion

Authenticity is the base of all modifications and changes in all terms, rooted from the ancestors, Indonesian food itself are expanding year by year around the world circulating and spread in every palettes of human being. Since many of Indonesian people travel, migrate and live in America, they also bring their food culture in America. The different setting of place and culture

have made different presentation and process food produced in two countries. The Indonesian food can exist in any circumstances and anywhere else. However, many aspect has influenced the Indonesian food that has made in America. To get the original or authenticity of taste is not easy, even though the same person who cook the meals. It reveals that people can adapt the culture dan nature. Being original is great however being adjusted in on any condition are amazing thing to be greater, especially when it is coming from process and presentation itself.

This study has revealed the different of process and presentation of Indonesian food that is being produced in America. This may also suggest that Indonesian food that produced and served outside Indonesia tend to have different flavor. It is mostly based on the setting of place and the culture of the people. By understanding the phenomenon, this study suggests that Indonesian people may give more appreciation toward the richness of their local food. It also opens the opportunity of innovation in presenting the Indonesian food outside Indonesia by enhancing the process that can produce the authentic taste of Indonesian food but in different kind presentation that can be consumed by many people in the world. Indonesian food can become one of the cultural identities of Indonesian people wherever they are. Local Indonesian has proved them self to easily adapted and accepted in many parts of the world. Indonesian people who live overseas, will always tend to cook and consume Indonesian food anywhere in the world. It makes them always thinking about Indonesia as their home country.

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