

Utilization of Lake Toba culinary identity for gastronomic tourism development

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Abstract: This research explores the potential of gastronomic tourism in the Lake Toba region of Indonesia, focusing on the unique culinary identity and traditions of the Batak tribe. Batak culinary practices are firmly rooted in local traditions and environmental conditions, with major traditional foods and drinks such as Tuak, Na Niura, and Mie Gomak having strong cultural values. Currently, Lake Toba gastronomic tourism has not become a leading tourism destination. The purpose of this study is to examine how environmental and cultural factors affect local cuisine and beverages in the Lake Toba region and to identify challenges and opportunities in promoting these gastronomic assets effectively. This qualitative research uses interviews, observations, and documentation to collect data. Key stakeholders, including local business owners and Batak cultural experts were interviewed using non-probability snowball sampling to gain comprehensive insights into the region's culinary identity. The results of the study highlight the cultural significance and potential tourist attraction of traditional Batak food and beverages. However, challenges such as tourists' lack of knowledge about local cuisine were identified. The study shows that a more structured and strategic approach, including annual food festivals and culinary tours, is needed to increase the demand for Lake Toba's Gastronomi tourism. This study underscores the need for an annual Lake Toba Gastronomy festival to utilize local culinary heritage, thereby increasing cultural preservation and tourism development in the Lake Toba region.

Keywords: Batak tribe, culinary identity, cultural heritage, development tour, gastronomic tourism, Lake Toba

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Introduction

Gastronomy is a study of the relationship between culture and food that examines various components of culture and food in culinary arts centers (Mayasari, 2018; Sormaz et al., 2016; Fields, 2002). Identity in gastronomy is a concept often referenced in specialized articles and informal settings to illustrate how this discipline affirms who we are. However, this concept is rarely analyzed from a philosophical or anthropological perspective to understand its full implications (Del Pozo & Miranda, 2022). Culinary identity refers to the unique food culture and traditions associated with a specific region, country, or community. It encompasses not only the flavors, ingredients, and cooking techniques but also the historical, social, and cultural context in which food is prepared and consumed (Danhi, 2003).

The concept of cuisine identity tries to make the cultures self-identified with cuisine, determine use of local material and the effect of various cultures upon foods and beverages. Local products are one of the components of gastronomical identity (Güleç & Yılmaz, 2024). The development of local food products is an outcome of the external conditions, including climate, fauna, flora and, naturally, the cultural background (Dias, 2022). In contemporary times, gastronomic experiences have evolved into creative tourism assets, enabling destinations to enhance their promotional efforts and cultivate distinct brand identities (Lin et al., 2011; Zhu & Yasami, 2021). Although there is already an inventory of local food, gastronomic identity does

not support the development of tourism. Food and drinks served in a destination have not been able to become a special attraction for tourists (du Rand et al., 2003; Okumus et al., 2013).

The Lake Toba region in North Sumatra, Indonesia, offers a vivid example of a culinary identity shaped by geographical and cultural elements. The culinary practices of the Batak tribe reflect their unique interpretation and practices of culinary identity, which are deeply rooted in local traditions and environmental conditions. For example, the preparation and consumption of Tuak (palm wine) and Na Niura (fermented goldfish) are integral parts of social and ceremonial events, highlighting the community's reliance on local ingredients and traditional methods.

Tuak, a fermented drink made from the sap of the enau tree, is a staple food at social gatherings and cultural ceremonies, realizing people's connection with their environment. The enau tree thrives in the volcanic soil and cool climate of the area, producing the fermented sap into a drink with a distinctive flavor, unique to Lake Toba. Similarly, Na Niura, a raw goldfish dish soaked in Batak spices, depicts the community's use of local fish and traditional preservation techniques passed down from generation to generation.

The concept of culinary identity for the Batak people is intertwined with their daily lives and cultural expressions. Local products such as andaliman (a type of pepper), candlenuts, and other native spices are not only culinary ingredients but also cultural symbols that represent the heritage and biodiversity of the region. These elements of local cuisine play an important role in defining the Batak identity and preserving their cultural heritage.

Interest in gastronomic tourism has grown significantly in recent years, acknowledging the deep connection between tourism and gastronomy (Wijaya et al., 2023). Culinary experiences are increasingly recognized as an essential component of travel, increasing the attractiveness and success of destinations (Chang & Mak, 2018; du Rand et al., 2003; Leng & Badarulzaman, 2014; Rachão et al., 2019; Seyitoğlu & Ivanov, 2020). In Lake Toba, the potential for gastronomic tourism is huge, given the rich culinary traditions and unique culinary identity of the region.

Culinary identity supports tourism by providing unique and authentic experiences that can attract both domestic and international tourists. For example, the Gastronomic eCircuit on Lake Toba aims to promote traditional food and beverages by creating a platform that connects local stakeholders with tourists. The circuit features local and national chefs, traditional dishes and culinary practices through food festivals and street food tours, thus enhancing the region's tourism appeal (Serdar, 2018; Zhu & Yasami, 2021). Numerous tourist destinations have started to recognize their local food and cuisine as a vital market niche and an attractive element in promoting their location to visitors (du Rand et al., 2003; du Rand & Heath, 2006; Hashimoto & Telfer, 2006; Henderson, 2004; Horng & Tsai, 2012; Kivela & Crofts, 2005; McKercher et al., 2008; Okumus et al., 2007; Tussyadiah, 2008).

By integrating culinary identity into tourism strategies, destinations like Lake Toba can offer tourists a richer and more immersive experience. Food tours that include visits to local farms, cooking classes, and tastings of traditional dishes allow tourists to deeply engage with the local culture. This not only enriches their travel experience but also fosters a greater appreciation and preservation of local culinary heritage. The interpretation and practices of the Lake Toba community of culinary identity are deeply rooted in their environment and cultural traditions. By highlighting these unique aspects and integrating them into tourism strategies, Lake Toba can enhance its appeal as a gastronomic destination, offering tourists an authentic and enriching experience that celebrates the region's rich culinary heritage. The culinary diversity of Batak, especially around the Lake Toba area, has not been fully documented due to time and resource limitations. Many traditional dishes remain unrecorded, which is a significant weakness that future research needs to address. Inventory efforts often focus on documentation and data collection without concrete steps to promote and integrate gastronomy into the tourism industry. This results in local food and beverages being consumed mainly by locals and not packaged as attractive tourism products. The cold mountainous environment in the Batak region limits the consumption of vegetables, which affects the diversity of food. In addition, cultural beliefs result in vegetables being rarely used in traditional ceremonial menus, which has an impact on the overall culinary offerings for tourists. This article highlights the need for bet-

ter documentation and integration of local culinary traditions into the tourism industry to fully harness the gastronomic potential of the Lake Toba region.

Culinary identity supports the development of gastronomic tourism by providing unique and authentic experiences that can attract domestic and international tourists. For example, the existence of the Gastronomic Fest in Lake Toba aims to promote traditional food and beverages by creating a platform that connects local stakeholders with tourists. The festival features local and national chefs, traditional dishes and culinary practices through food cooking demonstrations and street food tours, thus enhancing the region's tourism appeal (Serdar, 2018; Zhu & Yasami, 2021).

By integrating culinary identity into gastronomic tourism development strategies, destinations such as Lake Toba can offer tourists a richer and more immersive experience. Gastronomic tours that include visits to local farms, cooking classes, and tastings of traditional dishes allow tourists to engage deeply with the local culture. This not only enriches their travel experience but also fosters a greater appreciation and preservation of local culinary heritage. The interpretation and practices of the Lake Toba community of culinary identity are deeply rooted in their environment and cultural traditions. By highlighting these unique aspects and integrating them into tourism development strategies, Lake Toba can enhance its appeal as a gastronomic tourism destination that offers tourists an authentic experience of experiencing the region's rich culinary heritage.

Methodology

In September 2023, the authors began researching the potential and challenges in the development of gastronomic tourism in the Lake Toba area. The purpose of this research can be achieved by exploring primary and secondary sources of information to be able to provide an explanation of the culinary identity of Lake Toba in the Batak Tribe that can be used for the development of gastronomic tourism.

Primary data is collected through interviews, which play an important role in conducting preliminary studies, identifying research problems, and gaining in-depth insights from informants (Sugiyono, 2015). This method is directly aligned with the goal of understanding cultural and environmental influences on local cuisine by providing detailed qualitative data from key stakeholders. Secondary data were collected through observation and documentation studies. A variety of media, including photographs, interview recordings, research notes, and documents obtained from the internet, are utilized. This approach supports the research objectives by providing contextual and empirical evidence that complements the primary data, ensuring a comprehensive understanding of culinary practices and their significance.

Informants were selected using non-probability sampling techniques, especially the snowball sampling method. This approach was chosen because the initial data collection of one or two subjects proved insufficient, requiring additional subjects to complete the sample. This method is aligned with the research objectives by ensuring a broad and representative sample of informants, including business owners and culinary culture specialists, thus capturing diverse perspectives on the culinary identity of the Batak tribe.

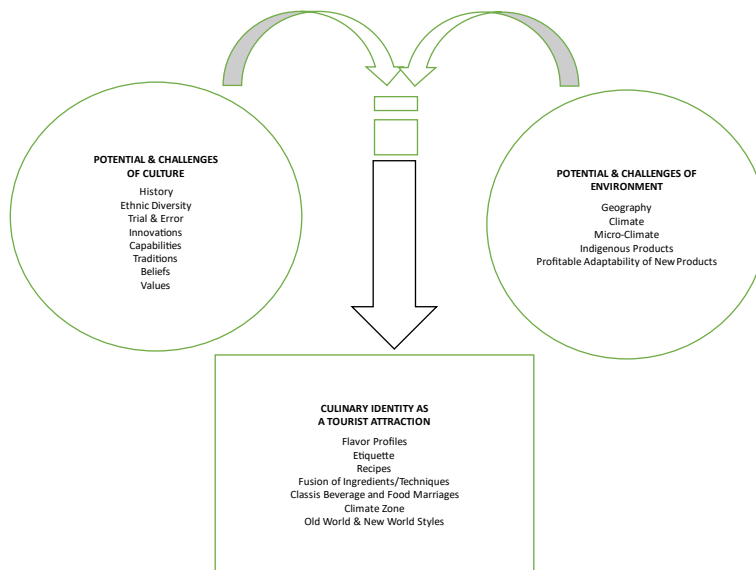
The method and design of this research are very much aligned with the research objectives. Using a combination of interviews, observations, and documentation studies, this study effectively addresses the potential and challenges of gastronomic tourism in the Lake Toba region. The use of snowball sampling ensures a comprehensive and representative sample, providing a solid foundation for understanding the unique culinary identity of the Batak tribe and its implications for tourism development.

The field activity in September 2023 involved comprehensive data collection, starting with meetings with key speakers such as the Toba Regency Culture and Tourism Office and the Samosir Regency Culture and Tourism Office. A total of nine people were interviewed, seven of whom were selected through snowball sampling. This structured approach ensures that research objectives are met by systematically gathering recommendations and insights from relevant stakeholders. Nine informants were interviewed, seven of whom were selected through snowball sampling. The list of nine informants can be seen in Table 1.

Table 1. List of informants (self-research)

Informant	Name	Agency/Business	Information
1	Patar Silalahi	Toba Regency Culture and Tourism Office	Head of Culture
2	Wati	Gomak Ma'Renny Noodle Shop, Toba Regency	Official
3	Suheri Napitupulu	Lapet & Tipa-tipa Shop Toba Regency	Owner
4	Silitonga	RM Fly Over Laguboti Regency Toba	Owner
5	Johnson	RM Manuk Napinadar Toba Regency	Owner
6	Irayana Simbolon	Samosir Regency Culture and Tourism Office	Head of Culture
7	Renta Siahaan	Sampean Uli Restaurant, Samosir Regency	Owner
8	Luker Sidabutar	Sekapur Sirih Restaurant, Samosir Regency	Owner
9	Sepwan Naibaho	Arts and Culture Teachers in Samosir Regency	Batak Cultural Scholars

To address this problem through case studies and achieve a comprehensive and detailed understanding of the nature of gastronomic tourism, qualitative methods combined with descriptive analysis are used. The conceptual framework of this study is illustrated in Figure 1 (Danhi, 2003).



(Source: Modified from Danhi, 2003)
Figure 1. Conceptual framework

Results and Discussions

Potential and Challenges of Geography and Climate to Food and Beverage

The Lake Toba region, located in North Sumatra, Indonesia, is one of the most amazing natural and cultural tourism destinations in the world. The Lake Toba area has a cool climate with an average temperature between 17 to 22 degrees Celsius and fairly high rainfall throughout the year. This largest volcanic lake is not only famous for its stunning scenery, but also for

its rich culture and traditions, including when it comes to traditional food and drinks of the Batak tribe.

The geography and climate in the Lake Toba area affect the traditional food and drinks of the Batak tribe. The culinary culture of the Batak tribe is one of Indonesia's cultural treasures that should be preserved. This culinary tradition has developed for hundreds of years, influenced by various geographical conditions, traditions, and beliefs of the Batak people. One of the advantages of Batak cuisine is the abundant use of spices. Spices commonly used in Batak cuisine include andaliman, hazelnuts, garlic, onion, and chili, which add a distinctive flavor and aroma to the dish. Based on the results of the interview with Wati, Silitinga, Sidabutar, and observations know that one of the most widely used spices is andaliman. The following is the form of the andaliman that can be seen in Figure 2.



(Source: Documentation, 2023)

Figure 2. Andaliman

The culinary culture of the Batak tribe is also shaped by the geographical conditions of the region. The Batak people who live in mountainous areas take advantage of ingredients available in nature, such as meat and fish. The cold mountainous environment, especially in Samosir, limits the consumption of vegetables among the Batak people. Geography and climate present opportunities and challenges for the culinary traditions of the Batak tribe. The fertile volcanic soil and mild climate are conducive to growing a variety of spices that are an integral part of Batak cuisine. However, the same cold climate can be a challenge to grow a wide variety of vegetables, which affects the food diversity of the Batak people.

The culinary culture of the Batak tribe is greatly influenced by the geography and cultural traditions of the region. The extensive use of spices such as andaliman, hazelnut, garlic, and chili peppers is a hallmark of Batak cuisine, which relies on local ingredients and traditional cooking methods. The Batak tribe consumes more meat and fish than vegetables, which are often eaten raw due to cultural beliefs and practices.

In Batak culture, vegetables are usually not included in the traditional ceremonial menu. This is in accordance with the statement of Naibaho, when interviewed explaining that "vegetables are rarely provided by Batak people; At the ceremony there are only cucumbers, the rest are fruits and meat. There are many vegetables themselves but they are never included in the menu of traditional ceremonies. Vegetables are usually eaten raw every day. For example, Scales are eaten raw because they are considered good for eye health, so Halosi is also eaten raw. In Batak ceremonies, the important thing is rice, many side dishes, and empty vegetables because there is indeed a kind of ancient statement that the king should not provide vegetables. For them, eating vegetables was like a goat eating grass, so if the vegetables were served in front of the king, the king would usually be angry. "We are not goats." That's why there are a lot of goats. There is a term, 'Rice must have a lot of side dishes, it must be delicious. There are a lot of groups of meat here, flour probably because here in the mountainous areas if you eat vegetables, you will lack energy.'" This perspective highlights the cultural beliefs and traditions that shape the culinary practices of the Batak people, emphasizing the importance of meat and rice in their ceremonial dishes.

Tradition and plays an important role in the culinary culture of the Batak tribe. For example, Batak people have the habit of serving certain foods on certain occasions. *Arsik*, a yellow-spiced goldfish dish, is traditionally served at weddings and other ceremonial gatherings. These cultural practices ensure that culinary traditions are not only preserved but also celebrated during important social events.

Batak cuisine has a slice with the original cooking tradition of the Austronesian tribe. For example, cooking pork with its blood, a practice seen in Batak cuisine, is also found in a Filipino culinary tradition called *dinuguan*. However, because many tribes in the archipelago have embraced Islam, non-halal cooking practices, such as the use of pork, dog meat, or blood, have largely been. These practices now only survive in non-Muslim cultural areas, such as in Manado and Batak lands. Batak cuisine has several basic ingredient terms that are an integral part of its culinary specialties. These include: *Itak* (rice), *Manuk* (chicken), *dekke* (fish), *B2* (pork), *B1* (dog). In addition, Batak culinary traditions include various seeds, such as *Tipa-tipa*, *Sinao*, and *Sasagun*. The history and ethnic diversity of Batak cuisine reflects its rich cultural heritage that maintains its unique culinary practices despite external influences and religious changes in the region. The name of Batak culinary based on the raw materials can be seen in Table 2.

Table 2. Batak culinary names based on raw materials

No	Itak (Rice)	Chicken	Buffalo	Fish
1	Itak nanihopingan	Manuk binolgang	Naniarsik	Dali ni horbo/ nanielhotan
2	Itak gurgur	Manuk na niatur	Nanisorbuk	Saksang
3	Itak nihintang ni andalu	Manuk sira pege	Nanitombur	Tanggo-tanggo
4	Itak gabur gabu	Manuk nilomang	Naniura	
5	Itak sipitu barimbing	Manuk situjuh dai		
6	Sago sago	Manuk Napinadar		
7	Rabbit			

Table 2 presents the typical culinary names of Batak, featuring a variety of dishes made from the main ingredients such as rice, chicken, fish, and buffalo. This data is justified by the rich culinary traditions of the Batak people, which are greatly influenced by the geographical conditions, cultural practices, and historical context of the region. The Batak tribe living in the Lake Toba area has developed a unique culinary identity that combines local ingredients and traditional cooking methods. The geographical setting of the mountainous terrain and proximity to the lake provide access to certain ingredients such as freshwater fish and buffalo, which are central to their cuisine. The preparation methods and ingredients listed in Table 2 reflect traditional Batak culinary practices. For example, dishes such as *Naniura* (fermented fish) and *Saksang* (buffalo meat cooked with spices) are prepared using original techniques that have been passed down from generation to generation. The preservation of this traditional method ensures the authenticity of the culinary identity. Many of the dishes listed in Table 2 have significant ritual and social significance. For example, *Arsik* (spicy fish) and *Dali ni Horbo* (buffalo milk) are often prepared for special occasions and ceremonies, demonstrating their integral role in Batak culture. This reinforces the idea that culinary practices are not only about sustenance but also about cultural expression and social cohesion.

The use of certain ingredients such as *andaliman* (a type of pepper), *candlenuts*, and various local spices in the dish highlights the Batak tribe's adaptation to its environment. These ingredients are not only locally available but also perfectly suited to the climatic and soil conditions of the region, further justifying their prevalence in cuisine. The data in Table 2 are well supported by the historical, cultural, and geographical context of the Lake Toba region. It provides a comprehensive overview of the distinctive dishes that are the culinary identity of the Batak people, emphasizing the deep connection between their food practices and their environment. This table serves as a valuable reference for understanding the gastronomic heritage of the area and underscores the potential of this culinary tradition as an attraction in gastronomic tourism.

Samosir food is one of the cultural treasures owned by the local community, featuring various types and unique variations, each with its own meaning and symbol. Flour is the basic

ingredient in Samosir's typical cuisine, and can be processed into various foods, such as paitak, itak, dulung-dulung, lapet, puhul-puhul, ombus-ombus, and rabbit. Paitak is a staple food made from rice flour cooked with coconut milk and spices. Sasagun is a food made from rice flour that is fried, shaken, or compacted. Dulung-dulung is itak (rice) wrapped in bamboo leaves. Lapet is itak wrapped in banana leaves. Puhul-puhul is itak that is steamed. Ombus-ombus is an itak made from glutinous rice flour and wrapped in sukik leaves. Rabbit is an itak that is equipped with buffalo milk, jackfruit, and bananas.

In addition to flour, chicken meat is another important ingredient in Samosir cuisine, used in various dishes such as manuk binolgang, manuk pinadar, manuk sirapege, manuk sipitu daik, manuk nangiringingan, manuk naniatur, and manuk naliloming, and so on. Buffalo meat also plays an important role and is used in dishes such as nanilapian, saksang, and tanggo-tanggo. Nanilapian is buffalo meat cooked with rice crumbs and caterpillars found in buffaloes. Saksang is buffalo meat cooked with spices and coconut milk. Tanggo-tanggo is buffalo meat cooked with spices and coconut milk, then cut into small pieces. Fish is another important ingredient in Samosir cuisine, and it is used in various dishes such as arsik, ura, sorbuk, and tombur. Arsik is a fish cooked with spices, including andaliman. Ura is a fried fish. Sorbuk is fish cooked with spices and coconut milk. Tombur is fish cooked with spices and coconut milk, then mashed.

Based on the results of observations while in the Toba Caldera Geopark Information Center Area, it is known that the positive impact of the volcanic eruption in the Lake Toba area produces a source of spring water for agriculture, livestock, and other living needs, including in the manufacture of traditional drinks. The cool climate and fertile soil support the growth of various plants used as raw materials for traditional drinks. The mild climate and unique geographical conditions around Lake Toba create an ideal environment for the growth of plants used in traditional beverages, such as enau trees and various herbaceous plants.

The Lake Toba region, located in North Sumatra, Indonesia, is known for its unique geographical and climatic conditions, which significantly influence the production and taste of different traditional beverages such as Tuak (palm grapes), Nira (unfermented palm sap), as well as local tea and coffee. Tuak is produced from the sap of the enau tree, which thrives in the mountainous area around Lake Toba. The region's cool climate facilitates the fermentation process, resulting in drinks with a unique and refreshing taste. Nira comes from the same sap as Tuak but is consumed before fermentation, offering a natural sweet and fresh taste. Batak Tea and Coffee benefits from the region's mineral-rich volcanic soils and mild climate, which contribute to its distinctive, high-quality taste.

The uniqueness of the geography and climate of the Lake Toba area gives special characteristics to the traditional drinks of the Batak tribe. Clean, mineral-rich mountain water, cold temperatures, and fertile volcanic soils give this drink a distinctive and authentic flavor. The distinctive taste of traditional Batak drinks, such as tuak, comes not only from the raw materials, but also from the fermentation process that occurs at consistently low temperatures in the Lake Toba area.

The geography and climate in the Lake Toba area have a great influence on the traditional drinks of the Batak tribe. Unique natural conditions, with lush volcanic mountains and lakes, as well as a mild climate, support the growth of plants that are the raw materials for traditional drinks. This influence is evident in the type of raw materials used, as well as the taste and quality of the drinks produced. Traditional drinks such as tuak, nira, and the Batak coffee are the result of a harmonious interaction between nature and culture of the Batak people which continues to be maintained and inherited from generation to generation.

Cultural Potential and Challenges

History and Ethnic Diversity

The history and ethnic diversity of the Batak in the Lake Toba area has very deep and complex roots. The Toba Batak ethnic group has inhabited the region for thousands of years, with a rich history of local culture, traditions, and wisdom. The Batak Toba ethnicity is recognized as one of the earliest indigenous tribes to inhabit the area around Lake Toba. According to archaeological research, the region experienced a supervolcanic eruption about 73,000-

75,000 years ago, which formed Lake Toba as we know it today (Napitu et al., 2022; Sitanggang et al., 2022; Sihombing, 2023). In Batak mythology, this lake is considered a supernatural creation that is the source of life for them. For centuries, the Batak Toba tribe remained isolated from outside influences until the mid-19th century. The Italian explorer, Dr. Elio Modigliani, in 1890 was one of the first Westerners to interact with the Toba Batak and document their culture and traditions (Sihombing, 2023)

The Batak Toba culture is very rich and diverse, with a significant contribution to local wisdom and biodiversity conservation around Lake Toba. The ethnobotany of Batak Toba shows the use of more than 146 plant species from 53 families for food, medicine, and traditional rituals (Sitanggang et al., 2022). For example, plants such as ginger, rice, garlic, and turmeric have high cultural value and also significant economic potential.

The local wisdom of Batak Toba also plays an important role in conservation efforts in the Lake Toba area. The Batak Toba people have long adopted sustainable agricultural practices and wise methods of using natural resources. They are also actively involved in environmental conservation efforts and the revitalization of their cultural identity through the use of language and traditions that are maintained in their communities (Napitu et al., 2022; Sitanggang et al., 2022). Overall, the history and ethnic diversity of the Batak in the Lake Toba area reflects the harmonious relationship between humans and nature, as well as the importance of preserving local wisdom to maintain the sustainability of their environment and culture in the future.

Traditions, Beliefs, and Values

The cultural heritage of the Batak tribe, including its culinary practices, plays an important role in the identity of the region. However, modernization poses challenges to the preservation of some traditional practices, such as the *Mangebang* tradition, underscoring the need for concerted efforts to preserve these cultural elements. Batak traditional ceremonies are closely related to culinary practices that reflect the values and cultural heritage of the Batak people. This ceremony emphasizes the unique cooking methods and stages of culinary consumption that distinguish Batak cuisine. The menu *Na Niura* (fermented goldfish) and *Ikan Arsik* (spicy goldfish) exemplify traditional dishes that utilize local ingredients and reflect Batak cultural practices. The menus of *Manuk Napinadar* (grilled chicken with blood sauce) and *Dali Ni Horbo* (buffalo milk dish) further illustrate the unique culinary traditions of the Batak tribe.

The Batak people have a distinctive approach to cooking, especially favoring methods such as grilling, steaming, or serving raw food. This preference is rooted in historical practices where cooking oil has traditionally been used for medicinal purposes rather than for food preparation. From an interview with Naibaho, it is known that "There is one uniqueness: Lake Toba food does not know the frying system; All of them are eaten raw, steamed, or baked. That's how it's processed, nothing is fried. Because cooking oil used to be used in Batak land only for medicine, not for food."

From the results of observations in several restaurants/restaurants visited directly by the research team, Naibaho's statement as one of the informants is in accordance with the findings in the field. Restaurant owners in processing their dishes hardly use cooking oil. Thus, it is rare to find Batak culinary dishes that are cooked in oil or fried. This method of preparation underscores the importance of preserving traditional cooking techniques that have been passed down from generation to generation.

In an interview with Naibaho, it is known that under the Batak custom, the first to be eaten is *Pinasa*. He used to eat jackfruit. After eating *Pinasa*, which tastes sweet, then he will eat what is called *Sago-sago*, which tastes a little bland. After that, he would consume the spicy one; After he finished eating, he would drink, then he would chew on the sugarcane. So in food dishes, there is always that. For example, there is sago next to *Openg*, then next to fish, next to *Goljang Chicken*, then there is *Pinadar Chicken*. The last stage is that he will drink, then chew the sugarcane. The sweet ones are saved last.

Unfortunately, modernization has led to the loss of some culinary traditions, such as the '*Mangebang*' tradition. *Mangebang*, which means 'to show', involves transporting one-month-old babies to the market. The decline in practices is partly due to changes in societal norms. Based on an interview with Naibaho, it is known that "When a child comes to our house, the custom of

the ancient Batak people is to immediately take Sitonggo-tonggi. Sitonggi-tonggi is honey, because honey is difficult to replace with sugar. Every child who comes will immediately feel sugar in his mouth. In the case of the royal family, what is tasted is not sugar but salt. Sugar is meant so that he can get a very sweet life in the future. The royal family is given salt so he knows how to survive."

Batak culinary culture is also rich in beliefs and values. One important belief is encapsulated in the "eat first and then converse" adage, which underscores the importance of sharing food before discussing a problem. This practice ensures that guests feel respected and in a good mood to discuss. In an interview, Naibaho explained that, "There will be no Batak custom without food, because the Batak people say 'Eat first, then we talk'. It's best not to have a conversation first and then eat because that's the principle. So, in the Batak custom, eat first and then be asked, 'what is the need'. It's also a strategy because when you're already eating, you won't be denied a conversation. Taboo for the Batak betrays what he has eaten. In Batak, before the traditional ceremony, eat first. After the meal, the ceremony was held. All such ceremonies. We can't do anything before our stomachs are full."

According to Silitonga, in the interview, it is known that there are foreign tourists such as from the United States who eat at the RM Flyover Laguboti, Toba Regency. Of course, these tourists are accompanied by their guides. Meanwhile, from the observation results, it is known that there are still few tourists who come to the Lake Toba area with the main purpose of gastronomic tourism. This is in accordance with the statements of the two heads of the cultural sector, both from the Culture and Tourism Office of Toba Regency and from Samosir Regency (Silalahi & Simbolon) which stated that the majority of tourists who come to the Lake Toba area are not because of the attraction of cultural tourism and especially gastronomic tourism, but because of the attraction of natural tourism. This is due to several things, including the lack of information and promotions carried out. The Culture and Tourism Office of Toba Regency and Samosir Regency can develop and disseminate interesting narratives that emphasize the historical and cultural significance of traditional Batak dishes and drinks. Digital platforms and social media can be used to share these stories and visuals, thus attracting a wider audience (Serdar, 2018; Zhu & Yasami, 2021).

Culinary Identity as a Tourist Attraction

Tipa-tipa

From the results of the interview with Napitupulu, it is known that Tipa-tipa is a traditional snack of the Batak people, often referred to as the Seralnya of the Batak people. The main ingredient used is rice. The process begins with harvesting young rice, which is then soaked for approximately two nights. After soaking, the rice is dried and ground until it reaches a certain level of maturity. The name "Tipa-tipa" comes from the repetitive pounding process involved in the manufacture of this snack. After being pounded, the rice is winched to remove the skin. The shape and appearance of Tipa-tipa can be seen in Figure 3.

Tipa-Tipa is referred to as Seralnya the Batak people are firmly embedded in the cultural practices and traditions of the Batak tribe. The process of using young rice and the meticulous steps involved in soaking, pounding, and cleaning the rice reflect an ancient tradition that has been preserved for generations. This shows a strong cultural identity that is unique to the Batak people. The detailed preparation process of Tipa-Tipa, including a two-night soaking period and repeated collisions, highlights the unique traditional culinary techniques of Batak culture. This method not only enhances the flavor and texture of the dish but also signals the importance of maintaining traditional practices, which are an integral part of the Batak culinary identity. The main ingredient, young rice, is locally sourced, which links this dish directly to the agricultural practices of the region. This emphasizes the connection between the Batak people and their environment, showing how local resources are utilized in their cuisine, further strengthening their culinary identity.

For tourists, experiencing Tipa-Tipa offers a unique opportunity to get involved with the authentic culinary practices of the Batak people. The traditional preparation methods and stories behind the dishes provide a rich cultural experience that is likely to attract tourists interest-

ed in local gastronomy and traditions. The process of making Tipa-Tipa can be exhibited as an educational attraction. Tourists can learn about the importance of every step in the preparation process, the cultural history behind the dish, and the importance of rice in Batak culture. This aspect of education can enhance the tourist experience, making it more meaningful and memorable. By promoting Tipa-Tipa as a tourist attraction, there is an opportunity to preserve and celebrate Batak culinary traditions. Culinary festivals, culinary tours, and live cooking classes centered around Tipa-Tipa can attract both domestic and international tourists, contributing to cultural preservation while boosting the local economy. The unique appearance and taste of Tipa-Tipa, as described in the preparation process, can be a visual and sensory delight for tourists. Traditional preparation methods and the use of fresh local ingredients can provide an authentic taste of Batak cuisine, appealing to food enthusiasts and culinary tourists alike.

Tipa-Tipa serves as a strong representation of Batak's culinary identity through traditional preparation methods, cultural significance, and the use of local ingredients. As a tourist attraction, it offers an authentic and educational experience that can increase cultural appreciation and promote tourism in the Lake Toba region. The combination of cultural heritage and unique culinary practices makes Tipa-Tipa an excellent candidate for the development of gastronomic tourism.



(Source: Documentation, 2023)

Figure 3. Tipa-tipa

Gomak Noodles

In an interview with Wati, it was known that Mie Gomak is a typical dish of Batak Toba and Batak Mandailing originating from the North Sumatra region. This cuisine is a typical dish of the area around Lake Toba, ranging from Porsea, Balige, Laguboti, Tarutung, to South Tapanuli. Gomak noodles can also be found in various areas in North Sumatra, ranging from Medan, Siantar, Parapat, Labuhan Batu, Sibolga, to Deli Serdang (Damanik et al., 2021). The name "mi gomak" comes from the word "gomak" in the Toba Batak language which means "to take" or "squeeze". This is because gomak noodles were originally served in a "gomak" way, i.e. the noodles were held or squeezed with bare hands before being served on a plate. However, currently some gomak noodle sellers have used spoons or forks to serve it.

The main ingredients of gomak noodles are skewer noodles, coconut milk sauce, andaliman, onion, garlic, chili, and salt. Noodles sticks are usually used because they have a chewy texture and are not easily broken. The coconut milk sauce gives a savory taste, while andaliman gives a spicy and distinctive taste that is the hallmark of gomak noodles. The typical taste of gomak noodles is a combination of spicy taste from andaliman, savory from coconut milk sauce, and sweet from sugar. The spicy taste of andaliman is the most dominant in gomak noodles. Andaliman is a typical North Sumatran spice that has a spicy and slightly sour taste. The appearance of a bowl of Gomak Noodles can be seen in Figure 4.



(Source: Documentation, 2023)

Figure 4. Gomak noodles

Na Niura

From the results of the interview with Silitonga, it is known that Na Niura Goldfish is a typical Batak Toba dish made from goldfish fermented with typical Batak spices. The word "dekke" in Batak means fish, while "mas" means gold (Sahni, n.d.). Na Niura carp is a traditional food that originated from the Batak Country, especially in the Toba area, Samosir Island, Lake Toba, North Tapanuli, and Humbang Hasundutan. In the past, Na Niura Goldfish was only served to kings and other important people. However, due to its delicious taste, this dish later became popular and can be enjoyed by everyone. Na Niura goldfish initially used mujair fish, but later goldfish also began to be used because goldfish are easier to find in Lake Toba. Na Niura goldfish is known as a food that is not cooked, boiled, or fried. The term "na niura" in the Batak language means "fish that is not cooked over fire but is tasty and tasty to eat". Na Niura goldfish is cooked by spreading it with typical Batak spices, such as asam batak (utta sira or asam jungga), kecombrang, andaliman, onion, garlic, and chili. The spices are fermented for several days to produce a distinctive flavor. Na Niura goldfish is usually served with white rice and chili sauce. The appearance of the Na Niura goldfish can be seen in Figure 5.



(Source: Documentation, 2023)

Figure 5. Na niura

Arsik Fish

Arsik is a typical dish of the Batak community made from goldfish cooked with yellow spices (Munthe et al., 2023). The word "arsik" comes from the word "mangarsik", which means "to water" or "pour". This is because this dish is made by dousing goldfish with seasoning sauce during the cooking process. Arsik is thought to have existed since ancient times. In the beginning, this dish was only served to kings and other important people. This is because Arsik is considered a luxurious dish and can only be enjoyed by certain people. As time went by, Arsik became more popular and could be enjoyed by everyone. This is because of its delicious taste and ease of manufacture. Arsik is a symbol of bounty for the Batak people, and is usually presented at traditional events, such as weddings and births (Damanik et al., 2021) This dish is served in the hope that the person who receives it can have a clean heart and behavior. In an interview with Silitonga, it was known that Goldfish is the main ingredient and the scales are

usually not removed. Arsik spices consist of various spices typical of North Sumatra, such as andaliman, sour cikala, galangal, and lemongrass. The display of the Arsik Fish can be seen in Figure 6.



(Source: Documentation, 2023)

Figure 6. Arsik fish

Dali Horbo

Dali ni Horbo is a food that has existed since ancient times and is a tradition of the Batak people from generation to generation. This food is usually served as the main menu in every Batak traditional event. Dali ni Horbo has a high nutritional content, such as fat, carbohydrates, and protein (Girsang et al., 2023). In addition, Dali ni Horbo can also be processed using various kinds of typical Batak spices, such as turmeric, ginger, andaliman, chili, onion, and garlic. In an interview with Silitonga, it was known that the process of making Dali ni Horbo was fairly simple and used traditional equipment. From the observation of Silitonga's statement, this statement is in accordance with the fact that they used simple tools in making Dali ni Horbo. Buffalo milk is boiled for 10 minutes in a sterile container by adding pineapple water or papaya leaf juice to help thicken the milk and reduce the fishy aroma. Foam that appears on the surface of the milk should be removed periodically until the milk thickens. The Dali Ni Horbo can be seen in Figure 7.



(Source: Documentation, 2023)

Figure 7. Dali ni horbo

Manuk Napinadar

Manuk Napinadar is a typical Batak Toba dish made from grilled chicken. The word "manuk" in Indonesian means chicken, while "napinadar" comes from the root word "padar" which means to burn (Sihombing & Pandiangan, 2018). In an interview with Johnson, he stated that Manuk Napinadar is a typical food of the Batak Toba people spread on the outskirts of Lake Toba, Tapanuli, especially in North Tapanuli, Toba, Humbang Hasundutan, and Samosir Regencies. How to process it When chickens are slaughtered, chicken blood or commonly called "gota" is stored in a container that has been given lime juice so that it does not clump. The process of grilling Manuk Napinadar is done by burning the chicken and feathers on coals. Once the chicken feathers are burned, the fire is turned off and the chicken meat is grilled again on the

coals. In addition to unique baking, Manuk Napinadar's signature is also found in the spices and sauces. Manuk Napinadar seasoning consists of makeup (young shoots of the combrang tree), gambiri (candlenut), onion, garlic, andaliman, and cayenne pepper. The spices are first roasted until they emit aroma, then finely ground and mixed with gota lime juice that has been mixed with spices and then cooked on a tin plate over low heat until cooked. The grilled chicken is then cut into pieces according to taste and mixed with cooked spices. After the spices are well mixed, the gotha that is still hot is then sprinkled on top of the chicken and mixed until smooth. The appearance of Manuk Napinadar can be seen in Figure 8.



(Source: Documentation, 2023)

Figure 8. Manuk Napinadar

Itak Gurgur

Itak Gurgur is a typical Toba Batak food made from rice cooked until boiling (Ven, 2020). In Toba, "itak" means rice and "gurgur" means boiling (Rajagukguk & Sinulingga, 2021). Itak Gurgur has a philosophical meaning, namely so that the person who eats it has a boiling and burning spirit. In the past, Itak Gurgur was only cooked, not steamed. However, as time goes by, there are also people who steam Itak Gurgur with hygienic and taste considerations. Itak Gurgur is usually served at prayer events on special occasions, such as during the long dry season or during the harvest season. During the long dry season, Itak Gurgur is offered to God in the traditional Batak understanding, as a request for rain to fall and plants to grow well. During the harvest, Itak Gurgur is offered as a form of gratitude to God for a bountiful harvest (Ven, 2020).

It needs to be re-instilled in its meaning, Itak Gurgur is a typical Batak food that is usually served at weddings, condolences, and about to go abroad. Prayer and Itak Gurgur even started construction (church construction, and other important events), they hoped that the overseas would remain enthusiastic and strong and avoid all bad things. The meaning that strengthens the body and spirit, for the Batak people, the rice that is the basic ingredient of Itak Gurgur is a symbol of basic needs that strengthen a person's body and spirit. Likewise, the sweet sugar content is a symbol of life. Re-instilling a sense of togetherness from local wisdom values. Something from simple things to achieve goals and ideals, the simplicity of "Itak Gurgur", an awareness that may have begun to be forgotten. The appearance of Itak Gurgur can be seen in Figure 9.



Source: Ven (2020)

Figure 9. Itak Gurgur

Lapet

Based on an interview with Napitupulu, it is known that Lapet Cake is a typical snack of the Batak community, especially in the Siborong wholesale area, North Tapanuli. This cake is made from rice flour, grated coconut, and brown or white sugar. The grated coconut is mixed with brown sugar or white sugar, then becomes a filling for the cake wrapped in banana leaves and steamed. Lapet cake is believed to have originated from the Tapanuli area, North Sumatra. Tapanuli is an area dominated by the Batak tribe. This cake has become an important part of various traditional events and ceremonies in the life of the Batak people. Kue Lapet has a symbolic meaning in various events in the life of the Batak people. In the Batak tradition, the lapet cake has a deep meaning. The rectangular shape of the cake symbolizes stability and sturdiness, depicting the unity and integrity of family and society. Ketan contains the meaning of unity and brotherhood, describing harmony and togetherness between members of the Batak community. Kue Lapet is also considered a symbol of prosperity and good luck in Batak traditional celebrations. Therefore, these cakes are often served in large quantities and given to guests as a form of generosity and respect. Lapet cakes are often served on certain occasions in Batak culture, including weddings, traditional parties, and holidays. The shape and appearance of the Lapet can be seen in Figure 10.



(Source: Documentation, 2023)

Figure 10. Lapet

Regarding the culinary diversity in the Lake Toba area, due to limited time in the field and resources, in addition to the food that has been mentioned in figures 3 to 9, there are still variations of Batak culinary, especially around the Lake Toba area, which have not been recorded. This is one of the weaknesses of studies that need to be completed in other studies. The existence of this research adds to the wealth of research on gastronomy, especially culinary identity in the Lake Toba area.

The Lake Toba area has culinary richness, but has not been able to raise it as the main attraction that can attract tourists. The area has rich and unique culinary traditions, such as traditional tuak drinks and Batak specialties, but not many tourists are interested in coming just to explore the gastronomy. This shows that despite the potential, without the right strategy, local food and beverages cannot be a major attraction for tourists.

Results of interviews with representatives of the Culture and Tourism Office of Toba Regency and Samosir Regency, Silalahi & Simbolon stated that so far these two districts have had training programs to improve local culinary skills. This is in accordance with the results of interviews with two restaurant owners (Silitonga & Sidabutar) which stated that from the local government there is a local culinary training program. This is in accordance with the results of previous research which stated that one way to develop gastronomic tourism is to implement a training program for local chefs and food sellers to improve culinary skills and service standards. Conduct workshops on effective marketing and customer engagement for local businesses (Harrington, 2006).

According to Silalahi and Simbolon from the results of interviews, the two districts rarely make annual food festival activities in their respective districts. This is very unfortunate because with food festival activities every year can attract domestic and foreign tourists. The annual food festival featuring traditional Batak cuisine provides tourists with an immersive cultural experience. Collaborate with local chefs and food bloggers to create excitement and draw attention to these events (Hornng & Tsai, 2012).

Although in Lake Toba there has been an inventory of local foods, such as saksang and naniura, efforts to elevate it as part of tourism identity are still minimal. Culinary identities that are supposed to be unique and competitive advantage, are often not well exposed. Local food and beverages in the Lake Toba area are often only part of the daily consumption of local people and are not seen as potential tourism assets. Traditional food and beverages are more often consumed by the local community without any effort to package them into attractive tourist products. For example, the tradition of drinking tuak that is usually carried out in traditional ceremonies and social gatherings can be packaged into educational and interesting tourist attractions. Tourists can be invited to learn the process of making tuak, taste various variants of tuak, and understand the role of this drink in Batak culture.

The abundant gastronomic potential needs to be integrated with a comprehensive tourism strategy in order to provide added value to destinations (Okumus et al., 2007). This includes the development of culinary-based tourism products, improving the quality of service in restaurants and restaurants, as well as effective promotions to attract tourists.

Many tourist destinations have gastronomic potential but have not been able to utilize them optimally due to the lack of effective strategies and promotions (Zhu and Yasami, 2021). From the results of interviews with Silalahi and Simbolon as representatives from the Culture and Tourism Office of Toba Regency and Samosir Regency, it is known that the rich gastronomic potential in the Lake Toba area has not been fully utilized as a tourist attraction. Many tourists come to Lake Toba just to enjoy the natural and cultural scenery, without realizing the culinary richness that exists. In addition, there is no information center that provides comprehensive details about local cuisine. This is not in accordance with previous research that states that to develop gastronomic tourism then we must increase access to culinary destinations by ensuring that roads, signs, and tourist-friendly facilities and built visitor centres and information booths that provide comprehensive details on local cuisine and cultural practices (du Rand et al., 2003).

In an interview with Sidabutar as the owner of the Sekapur Sirih Restaurant, he stated that so far the support from the local government has not been significant in raising the image and development of gastronomic tourism in Samosir Regency. This is of course very contrary to the results of previous research which stated that by encouraging collaboration between local governments, tourism boards, culinary associations, and community groups to create a cohesive strategy to promote gastronomic tourism. Building networks and partnerships with other regions and countries to share best practices and attract international tourists (Rachão et al., 2019).

From the results of interviews with Silalahi and Simbolon as representatives of the Culture and Tourism Office of Toba Regency and Samosir Regency, so far there has been no comprehensive gastronomic tourism special package in Toba Regency and Samosir Regency. This is not in accordance with the results of previous research which stated that there must be cooperation between the gastronomic community, hotels, restaurants, and tour operators to create a comprehensive gastronomic tour package. These packages can include cooking classes, food tastings, and visits to local markets, thus enhancing the tourist experience and promoting local cuisine (Chang & Mak, 2018). And before making a special package of gastronomic tours, it is best to hold culinary workshops and interactive experiences where tourists can learn to prepare traditional Batak dishes. In addition, offer guided tours of local farms and food production sites to educate tourists about the ingredients and processes involved in Batak cuisine (Leng & Badarulzaman, 2014).

The gastronomic potential in the Lake Toba area has a very high value to be developed as a tourist attraction. However, more serious and directed efforts are needed to elevate this local culinary wealth to a higher level. With the right strategy, the gastronomic experience in

Lake Toba can be one of the main attractions that attract tourists from all over the world. The development of gastronomy-based tourism should include effective promotion, improvement of service quality, and attractive presentation to attract tourists (du Rand & Heath, 2006).

Conclusions

This research provides a detailed exploration of the culinary identity of the Batak tribe and the potential for gastronomic tourism in the Lake Toba area. The importance of preserving and promoting traditional culinary practices as a means of cultural preservation and tourism development. Research reveals that Lake Toba's rich culinary heritage, which is characterized by unique beverage and food dishes such as Tuak, Na Niura, and Mie Gomak, offers significant potential for gastronomic tourism. There are several challenges, including inadequate promotion, lack of travelers' knowledge of local cuisine, and inadequate facilities and services to support a satisfying gastronomic experience.

To address these challenges, the study suggests several strategic initiatives, namely (1) Organizing an Annual Food Festival. The festival can showcase traditional Batak dishes, attracting both domestic and international tourists; (2) Making Culinary Tour Packages. Tour packages that explore various restaurants and culinary traditions around Lake Toba can provide tourists with an immersive cultural experience; (3) Increase Collaboration. Cooperation between local governments, tourism actors, and local communities is essential to create comprehensive gastronomic tour packages and improve the tourist experience. The integration of culinary identity into tourism strategies will not only enrich the tourist experience, but also foster greater appreciation and preservation of local culinary heritage.

Future research should focus on evaluating the long-term impact of these initiatives on local economic development and community well-being. Combining quantitative data and a broader context will further advance the understanding and development of gastronomic tourism in the Lake Toba region.

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