

Local Food and Sociocultural Change: A Comparative Case Study of Songkhla Province and the Sai Ma Community, Nonthaburi Province

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Abstract

Local food represents an important form of cultural heritage that reflects community identity, culinary wisdom, and ways of life. However, contemporary sociocultural changes, including urbanization, economic transformation, and changing consumer preferences, have increasingly influenced traditional food practices. Despite the growing interest in local food studies, comparative research across communities with different sociocultural contexts remains limited. This study therefore aimed to: (1) investigate the cultural identity, culinary wisdom, and sociocultural contexts reflected in the local food traditions of Songkhla Province and the Sai Ma Community, Nonthaburi Province, as well as to examine the sociocultural factors and contemporary lifestyle changes influencing the transformation of local food traditions in both communities. These two areas were selected because they represent distinct cultural and ecological settings: Songkhla is a multicultural coastal province shaped by Thai Buddhist, Thai Muslim, and Thai Chinese influences, whereas the Sai Ma Community is a historic riverside settlement characterized by orchard-based livelihoods and central Thai food traditions. A qualitative research approach was employed. Data were collected through in-depth interviews with 20 key informants and analyzed using content analysis. The findings revealed that local food reflects community identity and ways of life; culinary wisdom is transmitted through families, communities, and experiential learning; and local food traditions have adapted to contemporary social changes through modifications in ingredients, cooking methods, and flavor profiles. The study suggests strengthening intergenerational transmission of local food knowledge while promoting gastronomic tourism that preserves cultural identity and local food heritage in a sustainable manner.

Keywords:

Local food, Culinary wisdom, Cultural identity, Food heritage, Sociocultural change

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Introduction

Local food constitutes an important component of cultural heritage that reflects the identity, local wisdom, and ways of life of people within specific communities. Beyond its function as a source of nourishment, food serves as a cultural space through which beliefs, traditions, family relationships, and community resource management are expressed and maintained (Counihan & Van Esterik, 2013). Food culture therefore plays a significant role in shaping community identity and transmitting local knowledge across generations through food preparation practices, ingredient selection, and shared dining experiences.

However, in contemporary society, local food cultures are increasingly challenged by globalization, urbanization, technological advancement, and changing lifestyles. These transformations have significantly influenced food consumption patterns, particularly among younger generations, who are increasingly inclined toward convenience foods, fast food, and international cuisines. Consequently, traditional food practices and local culinary traditions have gradually diminished in everyday life (Mintz & Du Bois, 2002). Such changes have also contributed to the erosion of food-related knowledge, the declining use of indigenous ingredients, and the transformation of traditional modes of knowledge transmission within families and communities. Over time, these developments may affect both local food security and the preservation of cultural identity at the community level.

Songkhla Province and the Sai Ma Community in Nonthaburi Province represent two communities with distinct sociocultural contexts, yet both clearly demonstrate the close relationship between food and the everyday lives of local people. Songkhla is characterized by its multicultural composition, comprising Thai Buddhist, Thai Muslim, and Thai Chinese communities, which has contributed to the development of a unique and diverse food culture shaped by cultural interaction and exchange. In contrast, the Sai Ma Community, located along the Chao Phraya River in Nonthaburi Province, is a long-established riverside settlement whose way of life has traditionally been associated with agriculture, fruit orchards, and the culinary traditions of central Thailand. The community's local wisdom is reflected in its traditional food recipes and local desserts that have been continuously transmitted across generations.

Despite their different geographical and cultural settings, both communities have experienced significant transformations driven by urban expansion, economic change, and contemporary lifestyles. These changes have influenced local food practices in various ways, including the modification of ingredients, cooking methods, and consumption patterns to accommodate modern living. Examples include the simplification of food preparation processes, the increased use of processed ingredients, and the declining accessibility of indigenous ingredients formerly obtained from traditional agricultural landscapes. Such developments illustrate the dynamic nature of food culture, which is not static but continuously adapts to changing social conditions and ways of life while maintaining elements of its cultural identity.

Although local food represents an important form of cultural heritage that reflects community identity, local wisdom, and ways of life (Montanari, 2006; UNESCO, 2021), it is increasingly influenced by urbanization, economic transformation, technological advancement, and changing consumption patterns among younger generations. These developments have led to continuous adaptations in food production, preparation practices, and the transmission of traditional culinary knowledge (Mintz & Du Bois, 2002). Beyond its nutritional function, food also serves as a cultural space through which relationships among people, resources, and community life are expressed and maintained (Counihan & Van Esterik, 2013).

Therefore, examining local food in Songkhla Province and the Sai Ma Community, Nonthaburi Province, provides an opportunity to understand food as a reflection of cultural identity, local wisdom, and community life. By comparing two communities with distinct geographical and sociocultural contexts, this study seeks to generate insights into the dynamics of Thai food culture and the social factors shaping the continuity and transformation of local food traditions in contemporary society.

Research Objectives

1. To investigate the cultural identity, culinary wisdom, and sociocultural contexts reflected in the local food traditions of Songkhla Province and the Sai Ma Community, Nonthaburi Province.
2. To examine the sociocultural factors and contemporary lifestyle changes influencing the transformation of local food traditions in Songkhla Province and the Sai Ma Community, Nonthaburi Province.

Literature Reviews

Local Food and Food Identity: Local food is shaped by geographical conditions, natural resources, ways of life, and social relationships within a community. It is expressed through local ingredients, flavors, cooking practices, and patterns of consumption. Beyond its nutritional function, food serves as a cultural symbol that reflects community identity and cultural heritage (Counihan & Van Esterik, 2013; Montanari, 2006). This concept provides a framework for understanding the distinctive characteristics of local food in Songkhla Province and the Sai Ma Community, Nonthaburi Province, as well as the relationship between food and the sociocultural contexts of these communities.

Cultural identity is not naturally given or fixed; rather, it is socially constructed and continuously shaped within specific cultural and historical contexts. As a social construct, identity is produced, negotiated, consumed, and regulated through cultural processes and systems of representation. It is expressed through various cultural practices, including language, communication, food consumption, beliefs, and values, which collectively contribute to the formation and expression of individual and collective identities (Rajamangala University of Technology Srivijaya, 2005).

Local Culinary Wisdom and Food Heritage: Local culinary wisdom encompasses the knowledge, skills, and experiences developed through community life and transmitted across generations. It is reflected in practices such as ingredient selection, the use of local herbs, food preservation, and seasonal cooking, highlighting the relationship between people, nature, and culture (UNESCO, 2021). Accordingly, local food can be viewed as a form of intangible cultural heritage that embodies culturally valued knowledge, beliefs, and practices preserved through families, communities, and everyday food traditions (Rajamangala University of Technology Srivijaya, 2005).

Sociocultural Change and Contemporary Lifestyle: Sociocultural change refers to the dynamic process through which food cultures evolve in response to social, economic, technological, and lifestyle transformations. Urbanization, globalization, digital communication, changing consumer preferences, and the growing use of processed ingredients have reshaped food

practices, consumption patterns, and the intergenerational transmission of culinary knowledge (Mintz & Du Bois, 2002). Consequently, local food traditions are continuously negotiated and adapted within contemporary society.

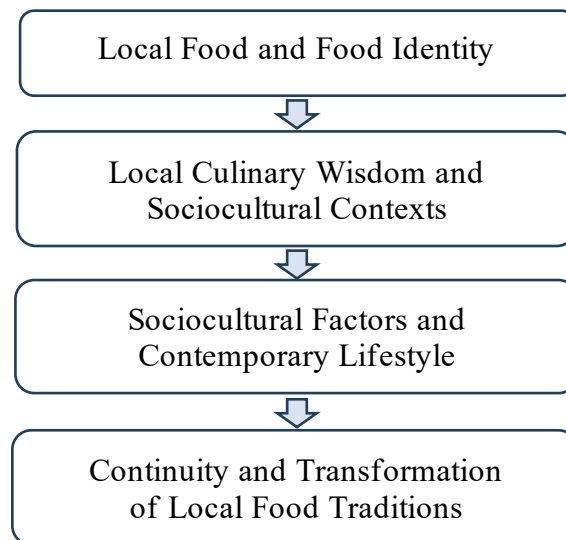


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework of the Study

This study is grounded in three interrelated concepts: (1) Local Food and Food Identity, (2) Local Culinary Wisdom and Food Heritage and (3) Sociocultural Factors and Contemporary Lifestyle. Local food is viewed as a cultural expression that reflects community identity, local wisdom, and sociocultural contexts. At the same time, local culinary knowledge and food heritage are transmitted through generations and embedded in everyday cultural practices. However, these food traditions are continuously influenced by sociocultural transformations, including urbanization, globalization, technological advancement, and changing lifestyles. The interaction among these dimensions shapes both the continuity and transformation of local food traditions in Songkhla Province and the Sai Ma Community, Nonthaburi Province.

Research Methodology

This study employed a qualitative research approach to explore local food culture in two communities representing different sociocultural contexts: Nonthaburi Province in central Thailand and Songkhla Province in southern Thailand. These sites were selected because both communities share connections in terms of ingredients, culinary practices, food beliefs, and consumption traditions that reflect local ways of life and cultural identities. The informants consisted of 20 participants, including local residents and community wisdom holders, with 10 participants selected from each study area. Data were collected through in-depth interviews focusing on local food characteristics, ingredients, cooking methods, and the transmission of culinary knowledge within the communities. The collected data were analyzed using content analysis following the qualitative analytical approach proposed by Pothisita (2011), with the aim of identifying the identities and sociocultural meanings embedded in local food traditions in both regions.

Results

The findings of this study present the identities, local wisdom, and sociocultural contexts reflected in the local food traditions of Songkhla Province and the Sai Ma Community, Nonthaburi Province, as well as the sociocultural factors and contemporary lifestyles influencing the transformation of local food traditions. The findings are organized into three main themes as follows:

1) Local Food Identity and Community Way of Life

Local Food Identity in Songkhla Province: The findings indicate that local food in Songkhla Province reflects the region's multicultural heritage, shaped by the coexistence of Thai Buddhist, Thai Muslim, and Thai Chinese communities. A distinctive characteristic of Songkhla's local cuisine is the extensive use of spices, herbs, and seafood, which reflects the close relationship between food, coastal livelihoods, and long-standing cultural exchanges in southern Thailand. Furthermore, local food traditions are closely associated with community rituals, religious ceremonies, festive events, and hospitality practices. These findings highlight the role of food not only as a means of sustenance but also as a cultural space through which social relationships, cultural values, and community identity are maintained and expressed.

Among the many local dishes of Songkhla, “**Tao Kua**” is one of the most well-known culinary heritage foods. This traditional dish consists of blanched rice noodles, water spinach, bean sprouts, deep-fried shrimp fritters, tofu, boiled duck eggs, pork belly, and pig ears, served with a distinctive sauce made from palm sugar syrup blended with fish sauce and vinegar. The dish reflects the unique culinary wisdom and multicultural food traditions of Songkhla's local communities.

“**Khao Stew**” is a traditional dish that reflects the fusion of Western and Eastern culinary influences. It consists of steamed rice served with a rich, spice-infused stew and tender braised pork or chicken. The dish illustrates the historical cultural exchanges that have shaped the local food traditions of Songkhla.

Another distinctive element of Songkhla's local food heritage is “**Gaeng Som**” (Southern Sour Curry), a traditional dish characterized by its bold sour, salty, and spicy flavors. The curry is prepared using locally sourced seafood, such as spotted scat, grey mullet, sea bass, and marine catfish, together with indigenous ingredients and herbs, including fresh chilies, turmeric, and Ko Yo shrimp paste. These ingredients and culinary practices reflect the local wisdom and culinary identity of Songkhla's southern food culture.

“**Khao Yam**” represents one of the most distinctive local food identities of Songkhla Province, reflecting the region's multicultural culinary heritage. In particular, the Sathing Phra Peninsula is known for its unique version of *Khao Yam Nam Khoe*, in which *nam khoe* is used in place of the more commonly known *budu* sauce. The dish is prepared with herb-infused rice, locally sourced vegetables, toasted coconut, and dried seafood condiments, reflecting the rich ecological resources and way of life associated with the Songkhla Lake Basin.

Overall, Songkhla's local food identity is deeply rooted in the interaction of Thai Buddhist, Thai Muslim, and Thai Chinese cultural traditions, as well as the abundance of natural resources from both terrestrial and marine environments. These influences have contributed to a diverse culinary culture characterized using local herbs, distinctive flavors, indigenous ingredients, and the integration of culinary knowledge from multiple cultural traditions.

Community Way of Life and Sociocultural Contexts related to Local Food in the Sai Ma Community, Nonthaburi Province. The findings indicate that local food traditions in the Sai Ma

Community, Nonthaburi Province, are closely connected to the historical way of life of a riverside community and its water-based transportation system. In the past, waterways served as the primary routes for travel, trade, and social interaction, facilitating the exchange of ingredients, food products, and culinary knowledge among communities within the river basin. As a result, local food became an integral part of both everyday life and economic activities within the community.

The informants emphasized that community life was strongly associated with the river and waterborne commerce, which significantly influenced food preparation practices and food-related occupations. As one informant recalled, "...In the past, there were no roads in our community..." (Informant A, July 17, 2024).

"...In the past, waterways were the primary means of transportation. Boats operated throughout the day, and roads had not yet been developed or commonly used. People traveled by boat to Nonthaburi Pier and then continued on to larger urban areas..."
(Informant B, July 23, 2024)

This finding highlights the close relationship between local food traditions, the riverside environment, and the sociocultural context that shaped the community's way of life. Furthermore, the informants indicated that the preparation of traditional foods and desserts was not merely a household activity but also an important component of the local economy. Local food products were regularly sold at provincial and district fairs, reflecting the use of culinary wisdom as a means of generating income and supporting family livelihoods. These findings suggest that local food traditions in the Sai Ma Community are closely intertwined with riverside ways of life, traditional economic practices, and the intergenerational transmission of culinary knowledge through families and community networks.

The findings reveal that local food traditions in the Sai Ma Community, Nonthaburi Province, are closely connected to riverside ways of life, community-based economic activities, and the traditional raised-bed orchard system. Local cuisine reflects the community's reliance on natural resources, including vegetables, herbs, and fruits cultivated within household gardens. Locally available and seasonal ingredients play a central role in shaping the distinctive identity of Nonthaburi's traditional food culture. Many dishes are prepared according to seasonal availability and local resources, such as santol combined with naturally occurring earthstar mushrooms, taro stem curry, thorny vegetable curry, green curry with homegrown gourds, and durian puffed rice in coconut milk. These food practices reflect local culinary wisdom and the community's ability to adapt seasonal resources into distinctive food traditions that embody the cultural identity of Nonthaburi.

"...Bolete mushrooms grow naturally in our orchard during certain seasons. When neighbors brought us santol fruit, we adapted the recipe by combining it with the mushrooms..."
(Informant A, July 17, 2024)

"...All the ingredients used in the green curry paste were sourced locally, particularly from our own orchard..."
(Informant B, July 23, 2024)

These findings highlight the role of local food as a cultural expression embedded in riverside life, community livelihoods, and local identity. Rooted in a historical context where waterways served as the main channels of transportation and trade, local food traditions emerged

through the interaction between people, natural resources, and community life. As such, local food represents not only culinary practices but also the social, economic, and cultural foundations of the community.



Figure 2: Stir-fried Bolete Mushrooms

2) Local Culinary Wisdom and Food Heritage

The findings reveal that both Songkhla Province and the Sai Ma Community, Nonthaburi Province, maintain the transmission of culinary wisdom through families and community networks. Culinary knowledge is primarily acquired through experiential learning and intergenerational knowledge transfer, including the selection of seasonal ingredients, the use of local herbs, food preservation techniques, and place-specific cooking practices. Despite their distinct geographical and cultural contexts, the two communities share common culinary characteristics, particularly in their use of herbs, spices, and coconut milk, as well as the cultural significance of communal dining and food-related social activities. The findings also indicate that local food traditions in both areas have adapted to contemporary social conditions through simplified preparation methods, the incorporation of processed ingredients, and modifications in flavor preferences to meet changing consumer demands. These adaptations reflect the dynamic nature of food culture and its continuous negotiation with evolving lifestyles and social contexts.

Furthermore, many local dishes were found to be closely associated with family and community memories, particularly those prepared for religious ceremonies, festivals, and communal events. These food traditions reflect the role of local cuisine as a form of cultural heritage that strengthens social bonds and reinforces a shared sense of community. The findings also indicate that local culinary knowledge in the Sai Ma Community has been transmitted through family-based learning and hands-on practice. Much of this knowledge has been acquired through observation and guidance from older generations. Examples of local culinary wisdom include the preparation of fresh curry pastes, coconut milk extraction, seasonal ingredient selection, the use of banana leaves for food preservation, and the preparation of traditional dishes based on inherited recipes.

“... Ready-made curry paste is different. It is not as aromatic because the ingredients are not as fresh...”

(Informant B, July 23, 2024)

Furthermore, the study found the continued transmission of distinctive local dishes that embody the unique culinary identity of the community. One example is Khao Tok Nam Ka Ti Durian (puffed rice with coconut milk and durian), which uses puffed rice instead of sticky rice, reflecting the community's local wisdom and culinary heritage. The findings also indicate that culinary knowledge in the Sai Ma Community is primarily transmitted through family-based learning and hands-on practice. Older generations play a significant role in passing down food-related knowledge and skills, while learning often occurs through observation and participation in everyday cooking activities. For example, one informant learned how to prepare Mee Krob (crispy rice noodles) from her grandmother, who had served as a cook at community events. These practices demonstrate the importance of intergenerational knowledge transfer in sustaining local food traditions and culinary heritage.

“...I learned by watching my grandmother, who used to work as a community cook...”
(Informant C, July 17, 2024)

“... Traditionally, it was made with puffed rice rather than sticky rice, which is why it has become a signature dish of the community...”
(Informant B, July 23, 2024)



Figure 3: Khao Tok Nam Kathi with Durian
(popped rice dessert with coconut milk and durian)

These findings suggest that the transmission of local food traditions functions not only as a process of cultural learning but also as a means of preserving community memory through food. The culinary wisdom identified in this study extends beyond food preparation to include ingredient selection, food preservation techniques, and the sustainable use of local resources. Examples include the use of banana leaves for wrapping traditional stir-fried noodles and preserving fresh

vegetables to extend their shelf life. Furthermore, food practices are closely connected to local cultural traditions and religious activities, with certain dishes specifically prepared for merit-making ceremonies, *Kathin Ceremony*, Robe offering ceremony (*Pha Pa*), and other community-based religious events.

“... Traditional coconut milk noodles are simple to prepare, so they are often made for Kathin Ceremony, Robe offering ceremonies and other community events requested by the temple abbot...”

(Informant D, July 17, 2024)



Figure 4: Traditional coconut milk noodle: “Mee Kathi”

The findings further indicate that local culinary knowledge has evolved into an important community learning resource. Knowledge is transmitted to students and interested individuals through cooking demonstrations and hands-on learning activities. These findings suggest that local culinary wisdom represents a form of cultural heritage that is sustained through continuous learning, practice, and intergenerational knowledge transmission within the community.

3. Sociocultural Factors and Contemporary Lifestyle Affecting the Transformation of Local Food Tradition.

The findings indicate that sociocultural changes and contemporary lifestyles have significantly influenced local food traditions in the Sai Ma Community, Nonthaburi Province. These changes are reflected in the modification of ingredients, cooking practices, taste preferences, and consumption patterns. Key factors include urbanization, changes in community landscapes, the decline of agricultural areas and indigenous ingredients, rising production costs, the increasing use of technology and processed ingredients, and shifting consumer behavior.

The informants noted that, in the past, local ingredients were readily available from orchards and surrounding natural environments, as the area was predominantly agricultural. However, increasing urbanization has altered the community context, making certain indigenous ingredients more difficult to obtain and increasing production costs. This is particularly evident in the cultivation of Nonthaburi durian, a signature local product. According to the informants, the

cost of producing Nonthaburi durian has risen substantially due to high land prices and the reliance on tap water for cultivation, resulting in significantly higher market prices than in the past.

“...Last year, Nonthaburi durians were very expensive because production costs were high, particularly due to rising land prices and the need to rely entirely on tap water for cultivation...”

(Informant E, July 17, 2024)

Furthermore, the findings indicate that the quality of local ingredients varies according to seasonal conditions, which directly affects the flavor and quality of traditional dishes. This is particularly evident in foods that rely on seasonal agricultural products, such as Khao Tok Nam Ka Ti Durian (puffed rice with coconut milk and durian).

“...The best-quality durians are usually available between April and early May. Toward the end of the year or during the rainy season, the quality of the fruit tends to decline...”

(Informant B, July 23, 2024)

At the same time, fast-paced lifestyles and changing consumer preferences have encouraged local food producers to modify traditional recipes and flavors to meet contemporary market demands. Adaptations include reducing sweetness levels and incorporating new ingredients into traditional food products.

“...When making fruit preserves, additional ingredients such as fresh milk and condensed milk are sometimes added to create flavors that appeal to younger consumers...”

(Informant F, July 17, 2024)

Despite the increasing use of modern technology and processed ingredients in food production, the informants emphasized the continued importance of fresh local ingredients and traditional cooking practices. They believed that foods prepared from fresh local resources possess distinctive flavors, aromas, and qualities that cannot be replicated by processed products. Furthermore, the findings indicate a strong commitment among local food producers to maintaining ingredient quality, authenticity, and consumer trust while preserving the traditional character of local cuisine.

“...I serve others the same food that I would eat myself...” (Informant B, July 17, 2024)

These findings suggest that local food traditions are not static but continuously adapt to changing social, economic, and lifestyle conditions. At the same time, community members actively strive to preserve the identity, authenticity, and culinary wisdom embedded in their local food heritage.

The transformation of local food traditions in Songkhla has been influenced by several sociocultural factors. One of the most significant factors is the increasing urbanization of everyday life. As more people work outside the home and adopt urban lifestyles, food consumption patterns have shifted toward ready-to-eat and convenience foods that require less time and effort to prepare. Consequently, traditional dishes that involve complex preparation processes are becoming less common in everyday household practices. Urban living has also reduced opportunities for households to cultivate vegetables and produce their own food ingredients. Even in communities where home gardening remains practiced, local food production is increasingly affected by climate

change and urban expansion. As a result, certain indigenous ingredients have become scarce or are no longer readily available, making it difficult to prepare some traditional dishes in their original form. In response, local communities have adapted recipes and food practices to fit contemporary social and environmental conditions while maintaining elements of their culinary heritage.

Discussion and Conclusion

The findings demonstrate that local food is more than a means of sustenance; it represents a form of cultural heritage that embodies local identity, culinary wisdom, and community ways of life. The food identity of Songkhla reflects the integration of Thai Buddhist, Thai Muslim, and Thai Chinese cultural influences, together with the abundance of coastal and wetland resources, resulting in distinctive culinary traditions characterized by unique ingredients, flavors, and cooking practices. In contrast, the local food traditions of the Sai Ma Community are closely associated with riverside life, raised-bed orchard systems, and the utilization of local resources, giving rise to culinary wisdom based on seasonal ingredients and locally adapted food practices. The findings further indicate that culinary knowledge in both communities is transmitted through families, community networks, and experiential learning. Older generations play a crucial role in passing down knowledge related to ingredient selection, the use of local herbs, food preservation, and traditional cooking techniques. These practices demonstrate that local food constitutes an important form of intangible cultural heritage sustained through intergenerational knowledge transmission.

However, local food traditions in both areas are increasingly influenced by contemporary sociocultural changes, including urbanization, the decline of agricultural land, climate change, rising production costs, and changing consumer preferences. These factors have led to adaptations in ingredients, cooking methods, and flavor profiles. Despite such transformations, local communities continue to preserve the identity and cultural wisdom embedded in their food traditions. The findings suggest that local food heritage is dynamic rather than static, continuously adapting to changing social conditions while maintaining its cultural significance and role in connecting people, communities, and local identities.

The findings indicate that local food in Songkhla Province and the Sai Ma Community, Nonthaburi Province, serves not only as a source of nourishment but also as a representation of cultural identity, local wisdom, and community ways of life. This finding is consistent with the concept of Heritage Food, which views local food as a form of cultural heritage reflecting history, collective memory, and the relationship between people and place through ingredients, recipes, production methods, and food practices transmitted across generations (Britwum & Demont, 2022; Zocchi et al., 2021). While local food in Songkhla reflects the multicultural influences of Thai Buddhist, Thai Muslim, and Thai Chinese communities, local food in Sai Ma embodies the close relationship between riverside settlements, raised-bed orchard systems, and local natural resources. These findings highlight the role of food as a cultural space that connects communities with their historical and environmental contexts.

The study also reveals that culinary knowledge in both areas is primarily transmitted through families, communities, and experiential learning. Elderly community members play a significant role in passing on knowledge related to ingredient selection, the use of local herbs, food preservation, and traditional cooking techniques. This finding supports Almansouri et al. (2021), who argue that heritage food knowledge is maintained through intergenerational transmission and is closely linked to geographical, environmental, and sociocultural contexts. Furthermore, it aligns

with UNESCO's perspective that food heritage extends beyond food products themselves to include cultivation practices, food preparation, cooking methods, and consumption traditions passed down through generations (Iglesias Kuntz, 2024). Practices observed in the Sai Ma Community, such as the use of seasonal ingredients, family-based learning, and food preparation for religious and community events, exemplify the characteristics of Intangible Cultural Heritage that continue to be sustained in contemporary Thai society.

However, the findings also demonstrate that local food is not static but continuously adapts to contemporary social conditions and lifestyles. Changes in ingredients, cooking methods, and consumer preferences reflect the influence of urbanization, economic pressures, and evolving consumption patterns. Consistent with Timothy and Ron (2013), heritage cuisines evolve in response to changing social, economic, and cultural circumstances. For example, the adaptation of traditional durian preserves through the addition of fresh milk or condensed milk, together with the use of modern technologies in food production, illustrates how communities preserve the core values of culinary heritage while adjusting to present-day demands. This perspective corresponds with UNESCO's notion of food as a form of "living heritage" that can evolve while maintaining its cultural significance (Iglesias Kuntz, 2024).

A critical issue emerging from the findings concerns the growing commercialization of local food. Although local food can generate economic value and support gastronomic tourism, its transformation into a tourism product may lead to the commodification of culture, potentially diminishing its original meanings and encouraging modifications that cater more to market demands than to cultural authenticity (Timothy & Ron, 2013; Long, 2018). This challenge highlights the need to balance economic development, tourism promotion, and the preservation of cultural values.

Overall, the findings support the view that local food constitutes a form of dynamic heritage that continuously adapts to contemporary social contexts while maintaining its role as a mechanism for connecting people, communities, collective memory, and cultural identity. Such heritage remains a vital foundation for safeguarding local food traditions and promoting sustainable community development.

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