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# GASTRONOMIC DISHES AS SOCIO-CULTURAL REPRESENTATION: AN ETHNOGASTRONOMIC STUDY IN THE OSING BANYUWANGI COMMUNITY, EAST JAVA

By

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## ABSTRACT

This study examines the gastronomy of the Osing community in Banyuwangi as a socio-cultural representation that includes symbolic, spiritual, social, and ecological dimensions. The Osing people as the indigenous people of Banyuwangi have a culinary tradition that not only serves as a fulfillment of food needs, but also as a medium of cultural expression, ethnic identity, and guardian of local wisdom. Globalization and modernization affect the consumption patterns of the younger generation, so that traditional culinary values have the potential to be degraded. Through a qualitative approach with ethnographic methods, including participatory observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation. This research was conducted in Kemiren Village as the center of Osing culture. The results of the study show that ritual dishes such as pecel pitik, tumpeng sewu, and tumpeng songo contain the philosophy of human harmony with nature, spiritual relationship with ancestors, and social solidarity through the practice of mutual cooperation. Local ingredients and traditional processing techniques reflect the ecological knowledge of the Osing people that is in harmony with the principles of sustainable gastronomy. In the context of tourism, Osing culinary plays a strategic role as the main attraction, but at the same time faces the challenge of cultural commodification due to the development of the tourism industry. The community-based gastronomic tourism model is a solution to maintain cultural authenticity while providing economic benefits for local communities. This research confirms that Osing gastronomy is a holistic knowledge system that integrates cultural, ecological, and economic aspects, and contributes to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). These findings are expected to be the basis for the development of traditional culinary preservation policies and the strengthening of sustainable tourism in Banyuwangi.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Banyuwangi is a city known as "*The East End of the Island of Java*". Banyuwangi is an area with ethnic and cultural diversity that can be an interesting example for the study of ethnogastronomy in Indonesia because it has a distinctive cultural richness and is firmly rooted in the Osing people as the indigenous people of the region. The Osing people are known to have a unique cultural heritage, especially in the culinary aspect of rituals. The Osing community

has culinary traditions that are inherent in social life, both in domestic activities, traditional rituals, and celebrations. A study of the culinary vocabulary of the Osing language shows that each food term contains lexical and cultural meanings that are closely related to the value system of society (Rizki, 2025). Gastronomy in the context of Osing culture is not only a matter of taste and food processing techniques, but also contains a symbolic system that reflects the philosophy of life, respect for ancestors, and harmony with nature. Food in traditional ceremonies such as *Tumpeng Sewu*, *Amin Pikingand Tumpeng Songo* It is prepared through sacred rules starting from the selection of ingredients, cooking time, to who has the right to process it (Indiarti & Nunuk, 2019). This shows that traditional gastronomy functions not only as a fulfillment of biological needs, but also as a vehicle for cultural expression, social identity, and guardians of local wisdom (*local knowledge*) community.

In the study of food and cultural anthropology, traditional food is understood as a symbol that represents social values, belief systems, and human relationships with the environment (Brilliant, 2025). Various international studies, such as those in the Balkan region, show that gastronomic identity and culinary heritage have a significant influence on the development of cultural-based culinary tourism (Lin & Marine-roig, 2021). These findings are relevant to be brought in the context of Banyuwangi, where the interaction between local traditions and global dynamics creates new spaces for the negotiation of culinary meaning (Yoga, 2022). Local and global logics intersect, shaping increasingly complex consumption patterns and culinary tourism experiences (Richards, 2019). Local knowledge about Banyuwangi cuisine shows that the Osing people utilize natural ingredients and traditional processing techniques that are part of sustainable ecological knowledge. Thus, traditional food is not only material, but also spiritual representing a philosophy of life that emphasizes the balance between humans, nature, and supernatural forces.

The current of globalization and modernization also affects people's consumption patterns, especially the younger generation who are now more familiar with modern food than traditional dishes that are full of ritual meaning. These changes raise concerns about the loss of cultural values contained in traditional foods (Sudarwan et al., 2019). In the context of the Osing community, culinary not only functions as a fulfillment of biological needs, but also as a medium for conveying cultural messages that are inherited from generation to generation. Every ingredient, cooking technique, and serving ritual has a philosophical meaning that reflects the relationship between humans and nature, ancestors, and community. The loss of traditional culinary knowledge has the potential to weaken the collective identity of the Osing people, as gastronomy is an important element in social structures, belief systems, and mutual cooperation practices. The study of ethnogastronomy is becoming increasingly relevant to explore how traditional foods play a role as a symbol of identity, a means of cultural communication, and a means of maintaining ecological sustainability through the use of local ingredients and environmentally friendly traditional techniques. Thus, this study not only captures the culinary richness of Banyuwangi, but also emphasizes that the typical culinary of the Osing people is a socio-cultural representation that includes symbolic, ritual, social, economic, and sustainability dimensions that are in line with current global developments (Boo & Jooho, 2022).

In the context of tourism, Banyuwangi has experienced rapid development in the last two decades. Local governments implement the concept *Smart Tourism Destination* that combines digital innovation, the implementation of *Banyuwangi Festival*, as well as the development of community-based tourism villages (Jarvis et al., 2022). Gastronomy is an important element in *Branding Destinations* due to the uniqueness of traditional culinary strengthen the image of regional culture while increasing tourist attraction. Application of the concept *Gastronomic Tourism* in Banyuwangi is able to expand the economic opportunities of the local community and strengthen the position of traditional culinary as a cultural and economic asset of the region (Park & Widyanta, 2022). However, this dynamic also carries the risk of cultural commodification when ritual foods such as *Chicken*, which was originally sacred in the ceremony *Tumpeng Sewu*, is now served in modern restaurants without the context of the original culture. This phenomenon reflects the tension between efforts to preserve cultural values and the need to adapt to the global tourism market.

Within the framework of sustainable development, the development of local gastronomy is closely linked to the achievement of *Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 2025*, especially the goals of poverty alleviation (SDG 1), decent work and economic growth (SDG 8), sustainable cities and communities (SDG 11), responsible consumption and production (SDG 12), and the preservation of terrestrial ecosystems (SDG 15) (Riki et al., 2025). Community-based gastronomy has the potential to be a strategic instrument to strengthen food security, reduce economic inequality, and preserve cultural heritage. However, without sustainability-oriented management, this potential can turn into a threat in the form of cultural degradation and exploitation of local resources. Therefore, it is important to apply an ethnogastronomic approach that combines cultural, economic, and ecological aspects in the management of sustainable culinary tourism.

Ethnogastronomy as an interdisciplinary approach studies the relationship between culture, environment, and eating practices in a specific social context Through this approach, food is seen as a social construct that reflects collective identity and local wisdom. In the Osing community, values such as *Gotong Royong*, the sacredness of



ceremonies, and the philosophy of life balance are reflected through traditional food (Scott, 2025). The ethnogastronomic study of Osing cuisine will provide an in-depth understanding of how eating practices, processing techniques, and food symbolism function as a medium for preserving cultural identity in the midst of global change (Tohopi et al., 2025). By understanding gastronomy as a socio-cultural representation, this research is expected to contribute to the development of a sustainable culinary tourism model, community-based, and in line with the principles of the 2025 SDGs. Through an in-depth study of the culinary of the Osing people, this research is not only an effort to preserve local culture, but also a strategy to strengthen the competitiveness of Indonesian tourism in the global era.

## 2. RESEARCH METHODS

This study uses **Qualitative Approach** by the **Ethnographic**, which aims to understand the social and symbolic meaning behind the gastronomic practices of the Osing Banyuwangi community. This approach was chosen because it is able to describe in depth the relationship between food, culture, and local identity in the context of tourism. **Research location** located in Kemiren Village, Glagah District, Banyuwangi, as a representation of the Osing community who still practice culinary traditions and traditional rituals. **Research informant** Selected purposively, consisting of traditional leaders, traditional culinary actors, tourism village managers, and tourists. **Data collected** through participatory observations, in-depth interviews, and documentation of culinary activities and rituals of the Osing community. **Secondary data** obtained from literature, cultural archives, and local government policies on gastronomic tourism. Data analysis was carried out in a **interactive** which includes data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions. The validity of the data is maintained through **Triangulation of sources and techniques**, *member check*, as well as in-depth contextual descriptions. This approach is expected to be able to reveal how Osing's gastronomy functions as a socio-cultural representation as well as an instrument of development **Community-Based Sustainable Tourism** in Banyuwangi (Yulianto, 2025).

## 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### 1. Culture and Philosophy of Gastronomy of Osing Banyuwangi Tribe Dishes

The gastronomy of the Osing Banyuwangi community reflects the deep attachment between culture, beliefs, and human relations with nature. In the Osing society, food not only functions as a biological need, but also contains spiritual, symbolic, and social values. Culinary traditions such as *Tumpeng Sewu*, *Pecel Chicken* and *Tumpeng Songo* be part of a ritual system that is passed down from generation to generation and play an important role in traditional ceremonies such as *Village Salvation*, *The Land of the Earth*, as well as religious festivals (Hanif Rochmadika, Princess Adinda Trisia, 2023). Each element in the food has a philosophical meaning. For example, the cone-shaped rice tumpeng symbolizes the vertical relationship between humans and God, while the side dishes around it depict the balance of social life (Rizkiyah & Faridi, 2022). Deep-baked free-range chicken *Chicken* represents purity and sacrifice, while the grated coconut and accompanying urap spice reflect the unity and mutual cooperation of the community. This philosophy is in line with the view of *Tri Hita Karana* which also develops in the eastern part of East Java the harmony between humans, nature, and spirituality (Rizkiyah et al., 2023). Culinary anthropology, food serves as a *Cultural Language* which conveys the identity and collective values of a community. This is evident in the eating practices of the Osing people, where the presentation and consumption of ritual food is always carried out together, led by traditional elders, and accompanied by prayer. The eating together activity is not just a consumption activity, but a manifestation of gratitude and a symbol of social solidarity. Thus, Osing gastronomy serves as a mechanism of cultural reproduction and a guardian of the social cohesion of the community.

### 2. Types of Cuisine, Ingredients, and Processing Techniques

The traditional culinary of the Osing people shows a diversity of types of dishes classified based on their social and ritual functions. Based on field findings and literature review, there are two main categories of Osing culinary, namely: (1) Sacred Ritual Dishes, which are used in religious and traditional ceremonies, such as *Chicken*, *Tumpeng Sewu*, *Tumpeng Songo*, *Squirrelly* and *Traditional Market Cakes*. (2) Traditional Everyday Dishes, such as *Sego Tempong*, *Royal Rondo* (fried tape), *The Fish Pond* and *O'Neill School Basketball* (Syabella & Muljanto, 2025).

In terms of materials, the people of Osing use more natural ingredients obtained from the surrounding environment, such as free-range chicken, coconut, banana leaves, chili, basil, and local garden products. The processing process is carried out using traditional techniques such as *roast*, *Burn using charcoal*, *Roasted* and *steam* without the use of chemical additives. For example, in *Chicken*, chicken is not fried but burned with coconut charcoal to maintain its distinctive aroma (Tri, 2025). The cooking process also has a social dimension. In the ceremony *Tumpeng Sewu*, all residents work together to prepare food since the morning, starting from grating coconuts, preparing

sambal urap, to arranging hundreds of small tumpengs. This collective activity shows the principle of mutual cooperation and a clear division of roles between men and women. This is in accordance with the concept *Social Food Chain* explained by Contreras & Gracia-Arnaiz (2021), that culinary practices are representations of social structure and the distribution of gender roles in society. In addition, the sustainability of food is also a major concern. Local ecology-based culinary practices such as those carried out by the Osing people by utilizing garden ingredients and without excess waste support the achievement of the principle of *Sustainable gastronomy*. The use of local ingredients not only maintains the authenticity of the taste, but also strengthens the community's economy and reduces environmental impact. Therefore, Osing gastronomy can be seen as a real example of how local wisdom is the basis of a sustainable food system.

### 3. Gastronomy as a Socio-Cultural Representation: An Ethnogastronomic Study in the Osing Banyuwangi Community

The ethnogastronomic approach reveals that food in the Osing culture is a form of expression of social identity and collective knowledge that connects the material, symbolic, and spiritual dimensions. Based on the results of interviews with traditional leaders in Kemiren Village, ritual foods such as *Chicken* It should not be cooked by just anyone because it has a sacred value and a symbolic function in the self-purification of the community. The presentation process is also regulated by custom, and errors in the ritual stages are believed to disturb the balance of nature. These findings show that Osing's culinary system functions as a *Cultural Code* which regulates the values of people's lives (Nanda et al., 2022).

From a sociocultural perspective, Osing gastronomy acts as a means of forming identity and a medium of cultural communication with the outside world. When Osing culinary is introduced in tourist festivals such as *the Banyuwangi Ethno Carnival* and *the Banyuwangi Festival*, traditional food becomes a tool of cultural diplomacy that strengthens the image of the region, the integration of local culture into tourism needs to be balanced with conservation ethics so that commodification does not occur that erases its original meaning. The phenomenon of *servicing pecel chicken* in modern restaurants, for example, reflects the dilemma between adaptation efforts and the risk of losing the ritual context.

Within the framework of sustainable tourism, Osing's gastronomy has great potential as a cultural-based tourist attraction. Local government through the *Smart Tourism Destination* Strive to elevate the potential of local cuisine by directly involving the community in festivals, digital promotions, and tourism villages (Otekinrin, 2023). Concept *Community-based gastronomic tourism* implemented in Kemiren Tourism Village has created a participatory model where the community becomes the main actor as well as the guardian of cultural values. Community-based gastronomy can strengthen local economies while preserving cultural heritage as a sustainable asset (Risqiyah et al., 2025). Thus, ethnogastronomic studies in the Osing people show that food plays a role as a complex socio-cultural representation: reflecting spiritual values, regulating social structures, and being an instrument of cultural economy. Osing's gastronomy is not just a culinary heritage, but a knowledge system that teaches a balance between tradition and change, between value preservation and global adaptation. In the context of sustainable tourism development, strengthening Osing's gastronomy is a strategic step to maintain Indonesia's cultural diversity while encouraging the welfare of the local community (Hanggraito et al., 2025).

The gastronomy of the Osing people in Banyuwangi represents a close relationship between food, social identity, and belief systems. The results of the study show that traditional culinary such as *pecel pitik*, *tumpeng sewu*, and *tumpeng songo* is not only a form of food consumption, but a symbol of cultural communication that depicts harmony between humans, nature, and spiritual power. In the *Tumpeng Sewu ceremony*, for example, each element of food has a certain symbolic meaning, *tumpeng rice* symbolizes respect for God, free-range chicken symbolizes purity, and coconut sauce reflects the simplicity of life of the Osing agrarian community. Each process of serving ritual food in Kemiren has its own customary rules, including who has the right to cook and when the food can be served. Thus, Osing's gastronomic practices serve as a medium of reproduction of cultural values, strengthen social solidarity, and affirm their ethnic identity in the midst of the changes of modernity.

From the perspective of culinary anthropology, food is not only a material entity, but also a cultural artifact that is full of social meaning. Food serves as a "cultural text" that can be read to understand the social structure and value system of a society. In the context of Banyuwangi, traditional culinary is a symbol of collective memory that binds the Osing people to their ancestors. Through ritual dishes such as *pecel pitik*, the community affirms the spiritual connection between humans and nature which is manifested through local ingredients such as free-range chicken, coconut, chili, and banana leaves. The practice of ethnogastronomy shows how food is a means of negotiating cultural identity and reproduction in the era of globalization. So, Osing gastronomy is not just a food system, but a knowledge system that integrates social, economic, and religious aspects in a single meaning.



In addition to the symbolic dimension, Osing's gastronomic practices also show a close relationship with the local ecological system. The Osing people still depend on natural materials taken from the surrounding environment such as garden products, rice fields, and fields. Most of Osing's culinary ingredients are derived from traditional agricultural practices based on local ecology, where communities maintain a balance between exploitation and preservation of resources. This is in line with the concept *local ecological knowledge* which places local food knowledge as a sustainable system that maintains biodiversity. When traditional food is produced with ecological principles, Osing gastronomy plays a role not only as a cultural heritage but also as a model of environmental sustainability practices. The use of local ingredients and the lack of food waste show that the culinary practices of the Osing people have applied the principles of *Sustainable gastronomy* Long before the term was popular in global tourism studies (Ulfiana, 2025).

In the context of tourism, Banyuwangi is a real example of how local gastronomic heritage can be integrated with destination development strategies. The local government since 2016 initiated the concept *Smart Tourism Destination* through various programs such as *Banyuwangi Festival* and development *Kemiren Tourism Village*, which makes traditional culinary as a major part of the tourist attraction. Culinary specialties such as *Chicken* It is now not only found in traditional rituals, but also served as a culinary icon in various festivals and restaurants. Local gastronomy plays a strategic role in strengthening the image of destinations, increasing competitiveness, and encouraging community-based economic growth. This phenomenon presents great economic opportunities, but it also presents challenges in the form of cultural commodification when sacred foods are mass-produced for tourism purposes. The globalization of tourism can lead to a shift in the meaning of local gastronomy from a spiritual symbol to a mere consumer product of tourists (Oktaviani et al., 2024).

Field findings also show that the process of commercialization of Osing culinary poses a dilemma between the preservation of cultural values and economic needs. Some culinary business actors in Kemiren Village, for example, have begun to adjust the taste and presentation *Chicken* to be more accepted by domestic and foreign tourists. This change does increase demand, but it also reduces the symbolic value and sacredness of the food. Cultural commodification can weaken culinary authenticity if it is not regulated with participatory policies. Therefore, in the context of Banyuwangi, it is important to apply the *Community-based gastronomic tourism* involving local communities in decision-making, training, and sharing of economic benefits. In this way, gastronomy is not only a tool for tourism promotion, but also a vehicle for community empowerment (Made, 2025).

The sustainable approach to Osing's gastronomy is also relevant to the *Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)* agenda, specifically goals 8 (decent work and economic growth), 11 (sustainable cities and communities), and 12 (responsible consumption and production). Strengthening local supply chains through organic farming, preserving traditional foods, and building community capacity in tourism management can support local food security while improving community welfare. Management models such as *farm-to-table tourism* can be applied in Kemiren Village as a form of integration between agriculture and tourism. Strengthening community-based gastronomy contributes to increasing local income while strengthening the cultural identity of destinations. The application of a similar model in Banyuwangi can be a real strategy to develop inclusive and sustainable tourism.

Overall, the results of the study confirm that the gastronomy of the Osing people is a reflection of the social, economic, and spiritual systems that are interconnected. Eating practices, cooking techniques, and symbolism in traditional food serve as a means of preserving cultural identity and forming social solidarity. However, globalization and modernization demand a balance between the preservation of traditional values and innovations that are adaptive to the tourism market. In the context of sustainable tourism, a policy strategy is needed that ensures that the development of traditional culinary is not only economically oriented but also pays attention to cultural and ecological dimensions. Through a holistic ethnogastronomy approach, Osing gastronomy in Banyuwangi can become a model of tourism practices that respect cultural heritage while supporting sustainable development.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

The gastronomy of the Osing Banyuwangi community represents a socio-cultural system that includes spiritual, social, and ecological dimensions. Traditional dishes such as *pecel pitik*, *tumpeng sewu*, and *sego cawuk* function as symbols of cultural communication, respect for ancestors, and a form of human harmony with nature according to the values of *Tri Hita Karana*. The use of local ingredients and traditional processing techniques reflects the principles of *sustainable gastronomy* that preserve resources and cultural identity. In the context of tourism, Osing's gastronomy is the main attraction that supports the development of community-based sustainable tourism, while strengthening the local economy and cultural preservation. Therefore, documentation, gastronomic education, and integration in tourism policies are important steps to ensure the sustainability of culinary and ecological values across generations.

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