

Traditional Palaw'an Food Preparation Practices: Cultural Significance and Community Identity in Brooke's Point, Palawan

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Abstract. Traditional food preparation practices among indigenous communities are essential expressions of cultural identity, ecological knowledge, and social cohesion. This study explores the traditional food preparation techniques of the Palaw'an community in Brooke's Point, Palawan, Philippines, focusing on Barangay Amas, Barangay Saraza, Barangay Malis, and Barangay Samariñana. Despite increasing scholarly attention to indigenous food systems, there remains limited documentation of specific culinary processes and their embedded cultural meanings within localized contexts. Addressing this gap, the study employed a qualitative case study design, utilizing semi-structured interviews and participant observation to gather in-depth insights from community members. Data were analyzed through thematic analysis to identify recurring patterns and cultural themes. The findings reveal that traditional dishes such as lut-lut, mel-mel, minel-mel, and arat-arat are central to Palaw'an cultural life, particularly during rituals, communal gatherings, and harvest celebrations. Food preparation is a highly structured and culturally regulated process involving techniques such as soaking glutinous rice, extracting coconut milk, and preparing purad—a fermented mixture critical for flavor development and preservation. Cooking methods rely on indigenous materials, including bamboo tubes, clay pots, and embers, demonstrating deep ecological knowledge and sustainable resource use. Moreover, these practices reinforce social structures, including gender roles, communal participation, and intergenerational knowledge transmission through observation and oral tradition. Ritual elements, such as food blessings and offerings, further emphasize the spiritual significance of food within the community. Despite challenges posed by modernization and environmental changes, the Palaw'an continue to preserve these traditions, reflecting resilience and cultural continuity. The study concludes that traditional food preparation among the Palaw'an is not merely a subsistence activity but a dynamic cultural system that sustains identity, strengthens community bonds, and preserves ancestral knowledge. It underscores the importance of safeguarding indigenous culinary heritage and recommends its integration into cultural education, heritage conservation, and sustainable tourism initiatives.

Introduction

Traditional food preparation techniques refer to the methods and processes used in preparing food that are passed down through generations and are often rooted in cultural heritage and the use of local ingredients. Among indigenous communities, these practices extend beyond basic sustenance and reflect systems of knowledge, identity, and social organization that are shaped by long-standing relationships with the environment (Mintz & Du Bois, 2002; Kuhnlein & Receveur, 1996). The Palaw'an people, an indigenous group residing in

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the southern part of Palawan, Philippines, possess a rich cultural heritage that is intricately tied to their traditional food preparation techniques. These practices are not merely methods of cooking but are integral to the community's identity, social structure, and spiritual life. Traditional food preparation among the Palaw'an is characterized by the use of locally sourced ingredients, time-honored techniques that emphasize sustainability, and rituals associated with significant life events such as births, weddings, and harvest celebrations.

For the Palaw'an, food preparation is more than a necessity; it is an expression of cultural identity, community cohesion, and spiritual belief. These practices sustain their connection to the natural environment and ancestral traditions, where food serves both as a source of nourishment and a marker of cultural continuity. Previous studies have emphasized that indigenous food systems function as expressions of identity and cultural resilience (Bessière, 1998).

Despite growing attention to indigenous food systems, there remains limited documentation of specific food preparation techniques and their cultural meanings within localized contexts. Existing literature often focuses on broader themes such as food security, sustainability, and identity but lacks detailed accounts of the actual processes, tools, and rituals involved in traditional food preparation (Kuhnlein et al., 2013). Furthermore, modernization, environmental changes, and shifting lifestyles pose significant challenges to the preservation of indigenous knowledge systems (Reyes-García et al., 2019).

The Palaw'an community across **Barangay Amas, Barangay Saraza, Barangay Malis, and Barangay Samariñana in Brooke's Point, Palawan** continues to practice traditional food preparation despite these challenges. However, their lived experiences and specific techniques remain underdocumented. This highlights the need for research that captures the perspectives of indigenous communities and examines their practices in depth.

In response to these gaps, this study aims to examine the traditional food preparation techniques of the Palaw'an community in the identified barangays. Specifically, it seeks to **identify traditional Palaw'an dishes, examine their preparation techniques, and analyze their cultural and ritual significance.**

By documenting these practices, the study contributes to the preservation of indigenous culinary heritage and provides insights into the role of food preparation in sustaining cultural identity, ecological knowledge, and community resilience. The findings may also support initiatives in cultural education, heritage preservation, and sustainable tourism.

Research Objectives

The primary objective of this study is to explore and document the traditional food preparation techniques of the Palaw'an community in Barangay Amas and Barangay Saraza, Brooke's Point, Palawan, Philippines. Specifically, the study aims to:

1. Discover the major dishes commonly prepared by the Palaw'an community.
2. Identify the traditional food preparation techniques used by the Palaw'an people.
3. Examine the cultural and ritual significance of these techniques, and how they reflect the values and beliefs of the Palaw'an community.

Methodology

Research Design

This study employed a qualitative case study design to explore the traditional food preparation techniques of the Palaw'an community in Brooke's Point, Palawan. Qualitative research is appropriate for understanding cultural practices, meanings, and lived experiences from the perspective of participants. The case study approach enabled an in-depth examination of food preparation practices within a specific cultural and geographical context.

Research Locale

The study was conducted in Barangay Amas, Barangay Saraza, Barangay Malis, and Barangay Samariñana, all located in Brooke's Point, Palawan, Philippines. These barangays are home to members of the Palaw'an indigenous community, where traditional food preparation practices are still actively observed, particularly during rituals and communal gatherings.

Participants

Participants were selected through purposive sampling, focusing on individuals with extensive knowledge and experience in traditional Palaw'an food preparation. The selection prioritized community members who are actively involved in preparing traditional dishes and who have acquired their knowledge through generational transmission.

Data Collection Methods

Data were collected using semi-structured interviews and participant observation. Semi-structured interviews allowed participants to share detailed narratives of their experiences, practices, and cultural beliefs related to food preparation. Participant observation enabled the researchers to directly observe preparation techniques, tools, and rituals in their natural setting. To ensure authenticity, participants' responses were recorded and transcribed verbatim, preserving the original language and expressions used during the interviews.

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using thematic analysis following Braun and Clarke's (2006) framework, which involves identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns (themes) within qualitative data. The analysis followed six phases: (1) familiarization with the data, (2) generation of initial codes, (3) searching for themes, (4) reviewing themes, (5) defining and naming themes, and (6) producing the report.

This approach enabled the researchers to identify recurring patterns related to traditional dishes, preparation techniques, cooking methods, cultural meanings, and knowledge transmission. Verbatim excerpts were retained in the presentation of findings to preserve authenticity and cultural context.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical principles were observed throughout the study to ensure the protection and respect of all participants. Prior to data collection, the purpose of the study was clearly explained, and informed consent was obtained. Participation was voluntary, and participants were allowed to withdraw at any time without any consequences (Orb et al., 2001).

Confidentiality and anonymity were maintained by excluding personal identifiers from the data. All responses were treated with privacy, and the information collected was used solely for academic purposes (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Since the study involved an indigenous community, particular attention was given to cultural sensitivity and respect for indigenous knowledge. The researchers ensured that participants' responses were represented accurately through verbatim transcription and careful interpretation, following ethical principles in indigenous research (Smith, 2012).

Results and Discussions

This study presents the analysis and interpretation of data gathered from Palaw'an participants regarding traditional food preparation practices. The data were analyzed thematically according to the themes reflected in the research questionnaire, and similarities and differences were compared across participants. Through this approach, the researchers gathered insights from participants coming from four barangays in Brooke's Point, Palawan: **Barangay Amas, Barangay Saraza, Barangay Malis, and Barangay Samariñana**. All four barangays were included in the data collection process, and participants from each barangay were interviewed to ensure a broader and more representative understanding of traditional Palaw'an food practices. The key informants include Participant 1, a 57-year-old resident from Sitio Mangkongon, Barangay Amas, and Participant 2, a 61-year-old resident from Barangay Saraza. Additional participants from Barangays Malis and Samariñana were also interviewed, and their responses showed strong similarities with those from Amas and Saraza, reinforcing the consistency of the findings. The testimonies of the participants reveal rich, consistent, and culturally grounded narratives on traditional Palaw'an food preparation techniques, cooking methods, ingredients, tools, and the cultural and ritual significance of food.

Traditional Dishes (Mga Tradisyonal na Pagkain)

Lut-lut and mel-mel are the traditional food of the Palaw'an people. Based from the participants, these dishes are prepared during gatherings and rituals, especially in the celebration of their harvest. They used local ingredients such as glutinous rice and coconut and etc. The preparation is a communal activity often involving ritual practices, while mel-mel is traditionally prepared by women, especially elders.

"Yung tradisyonal na pagkain lang talaga namin, yung lut-lut at mel-mel. Pero ang mel-mel ang karaniwang gumagawa lang niyan yung mga babae lang, sila Auntie mo sila lola mo lang."

"Uhhh... yung aming tradisyonal na pagkain talaga ay lutlut at melmel yon ang madalas namin inihahain sa mga tao."



Figure No. 1. Lut-lut



Figure No. 2. Mel-mel

Both participants identified lut-lut and mel-mel as the most important and frequently prepared traditional Palaw'an dishes. These foods are not prepared on ordinary days but are deeply connected to communal gatherings, rituals, and post-harvest celebrations. Participant 1 emphasized that mel-mel is traditionally prepared only by women, particularly elder women such as grandmothers and aunts, while Participant 2 similarly noted that women are more knowledgeable about the delicate process involved in mel-mel preparation.

The preparation of lut-lut, on the other hand, involves the participation of men due to the physically demanding nature of cooking over intense heat. This division of labor reflects traditional gender roles within Palaw'an culture, where food preparation is not only a domestic activity but also a cultural responsibility.

"Yan bago kami naglut-lut yan, una-unang hinahanda namin kahoy, tapos niyog 'yan. Tapos niyog, yung sumunod yung meregket (malagkit), yung bigas meregket na 'yan ibabad mo sa tubig ng isang gabi, 'yan. Pagtapos ng babad, kinabukasan ng umaga may kwan na 'yan, halimbawa mayroon ng matanda, pupuntahan namin 'yan doon yung bigas o malagkit na binabad sa tubig na may hawak na roroko tapos tignan, baka may nakakuha ng kaluluwa. Kung wala naman, edi pagkatapos kwan ng matanda, hugasan ng maayos, malinis talaga. Pagkatapos hugas yan, dalhin mo na sa bahay 'yan nakahanda na 'yan doon, may buho na may kawayan na. Pagkatapos doon, nagakudkod na sila ng niyog, nagakudkod na kami ng niyog nyan, tapos kwan na magpiga na, pigain ang niyog tapos ilagay na sa sumbling o buho yung gata nya. Tapos paglagay ng gata syempre ilagay mo na yung bigas doon sa buho o kaya sa kawayan. Pagkatapos ng kwan mo.... lagay ng bigas mo sa buho nakahanda na yung apoy dapat, isalang mo na yan doon, pagsalang mo doon syempre paluto na sya edi nagakwan na yun, nagahintay nalang ng kwan....."--Participant 1

"Una ay yung ano.. paglut-lut syempre kapag maglut-lut ay kailangan marami kang kahoy na panggatong . Pero kapag nagpalingas kana hindi mo pa pwedi ilagay ang lutlut habang malakas pa yung apoy bago mo ilagay ang lut-lut kapag may baga na pero yun ay kailangan naibabad muna ng isang gabi ang malagkit bago ilagay o lutuin para maayos ang pagkaluto nya ... lagyan ng asin yung gata para malinamnam , at saka depende rin sayo ba kung lagyan mo ng konet ' orange luya kung gusto mo ng may kulay lutlut mo ... sa lutlut dapat lalaki ang magluto doon kasi sobrang mainit 'yon. Sa melmel naman nag aano ba sa magsaing depende kung ilan mo gusto karami palamigin mo ang kanin sa bilao para lumamig , kapag malamig na... lagyan purad tapos balutan na ng dahon ng binwa o girangan depende sayo kung alin doon gusto mo .. pero ang paggawa ng melmel ay kailangan hindi maingay ang grupo para hindi masira ang lasa nya .. madalas gumagawa nun ay yung mga babaekasi mas alam nila yung proseso." -Participant 2

The detailed step-by-step descriptions provided by both participants highlight that food preparation is a communal and ritualized process, beginning from ingredient preparation to cooking and culminating in ritual offerings before consumption. These processes are not merely technical but are embedded with spiritual meaning and ancestral reverence.

Traditional Food Preparation Techniques (Mga Tradisyonal na Teknik sa Paghahanda ng Pagkain)

"Kung teknik namin sa paghahanda ng pagkain 'yan, syempre paglulut-lut at pagmemel-mel. Ibig sabihin, yung pagmemel-mel pagsasalang lang yan sa baga ng buho, tapos sa mel-mel naman sinasaing lang 'yan yung bigas." -Participant 1
"Sa pagluto ng lut-lut, yung meregket o malagkit dapat 'yan nakababad sa tubig ng isang gabi tapos kinabukasan pwede na magluto ng lutlut. Sa mel-mel naman, kwan dapat may nakahandang purad, yung purad na 'yan gawa sa binayo na bigas para maging pino tapos hinaluan ng kaunting sili 'yan. Iyan yung pinaka-ingredient ng mel-mel, tumutulung 'yan sya magpaalsa. Sila lola mo sila auntie nyo lang gumagawa niyan." -Participant 1

"Sa teknik ng paggawa namin ng mel-mel, gumagamit kami ng purad. Ang purad ay denikdik na bigas na hinaluan ng sili at lagyan ng kaunting tubig para makagawa ng purad. Pagkatapos ipaghalo ang sili sa denikdik na bigas at bayuhin gamit ng lusong. Kapag na sya bilugin mo sya at ilagay sa bilao para mabilad sa init. Uhm hindi po pwedi gumawa ng melmel kung kulay pula ang bigas kailangan kulay puti na bigas.... kasi kung pula ay mag iiba ang lasa nya.... tapos ay kumuha ka ng dahon ng girangan o di kaya'y binwa, ang dahon ng binwa ay bilog, at yung girangan naman ay malapad....at kapag ma.lamig na yung kanin pwedi na lagyan purad at balutin na ng girangan o binwa.. ang lagayan nya ay 'tabeg 'o basket, gawa mo ngayon kinabukasan ay ganyang oras mo rin pwedi kainin ... kapag malinis ang paggawa mo magiging masarap rin ang melmel. Sa teknik naman namin sa paggawa ng lut-lut, uhm.. ang lutlut naman ay ibabad muna ang malagkit o' meregket 'sa netibo magkudkod ka ng niyog tapos pwedi mo rin lagyan ng 'konet 'orange luya kung gusto mo ng may kulay. Pero po ang konet ay walang lasa kumbaga magkaroon lang ng kulay yung malagkit...." -Participant 2

"Uhm para sa melmel.....saingin yung bigas at kapag luto na ilagay sa bilao para lumamig, at kapag malamig na... lagyan ng purad ang kanin tapos ilagay sa dahon ng binwa o girangan... ilagay sa 'tabeg 'o basket at paikutan rin ng dahon, kung anong oras mo sya ginawa ngayon ... yon din ang oras mo sya ahuin . Kinabukasan pa at sa lutlut naman ibabad ng isang gabi ang malagkit, bago mo ito ilagay sa buho na may kasamang gata ng niyog pero ang gata ay lagyan mo ng asin para malinamnam lasa nya depende sa iyo kung lagyan mo ng konet 'orange' na luya ... 'yon lang rin." -Participant 2

The data reveal that Palaw'an food preparation techniques are highly traditional and strictly followed. Both participants emphasized soaking glutinous rice overnight, careful extraction of coconut milk, and the preparation of purad as essential steps. The purad, made from pounded rice mixed with chili, plays a crucial role in the fermentation and flavor development of mel-mel.

Participant 1 highlighted that these techniques are inherited practices that cannot be altered without compromising the authenticity of the dish. Similarly, Participant 2 explained that cleanliness, silence, and attentiveness during preparation are vital, particularly for mel-mel, as improper handling can affect taste and quality.

These findings suggest that Palaw'an food preparation techniques are governed by customary laws and cultural discipline, reinforcing respect for tradition and ancestral wisdom.

Cooking Methods (Mga Paraan ng Pagluluto)

"Sa lutlut, ginagamitan yan ng baga, kwan parang iihaw sa baga yung buho na yun na ginamit sa paggawa ng lut-lut. Kapag sa mel-mel naman, kwan lang pagsasaing lang yung ginagawa dyan." -Participant 1

"Sa mel-mel naman ginagamit namin ay yung syempre saingin sya kailangan talaga yun ng kaldero tapos yung bilao rin para mapaglamigan ng kanin . Isa rin doon..... yung tabeg o basket para paglagyanan ng mga nagawang melmel at paikutan ng mga dahon rin para yung init yon ang makapag luto sa kanya ... sa lutlut naman kailangan ng buho para paglayan ng malagkit na may kasamang gata, saka rin baga para dahan dahan yung pagluto ng malagkit." -Participant 2

Traditional cooking methods among the Palaw'an primarily involve the use of natural heat sources such as embers (baga) and steaming within bamboo containers (buho). Lut-lut is slowly cooked over embers to ensure even cooking, while mel-mel involves steaming and natural fermentation through residual heat when wrapped in leaves and placed in baskets.

"Ayan na nga, sa lut-lut at mel-mel, 'yan lang talaga ang tanging paraan ng pagluto, nasa tradisyon na namin 'yan hindi na pwedeng mabago, kung babaguin ang paraan na 'yan, hindi na yan paglulut-lut o pagmemel-mel ang tawag dyan." -Participant 1

"Uhm katulad rin ng sabi ko kanina, yan lang talaga ang paraan ng pagluto. Yan ang pinaka pagkain talaga namin sa handaan ay lut-lut at mel-mel at sa lutlut ang isa sa mga pagkain na binabalik balikan ng marami..." -Participant 2

Both participants stressed that these methods are fixed and should not be modified. According to Participant 1, altering the cooking method would result in the dish no longer being considered authentic lut-lut or mel-mel. This underscores the idea that cooking methods are integral to cultural identity, not merely practical choices.

Ingredients (Mga Sangkap)

"Sa paggawa ng lut-lut, iyon lang... yung niyog o gata, tapos bigas na malagkit na galing sa kaingin. Tapos sa mel-mel naman, pinakamahalagang ingredient nya 'yan yung purad, tapos yung bigas lang." -Participant 1

"Yung mga sangkap na 'yan, kadalasan sa paligid lang namin, madali lang 'yan hanapin, pero yung bigas namin na malagkit sa kaingin namin 'yan kinukuha. Pero yung purad na 'yan na sangkap ng mel-mel, gingawa pa 'yan, gawa yan sa bigas na binayo tapos hinaluan ng sili. Sila lola mo alam nya yan, gumagawa 'yan sya." -Participant 1

"Ayan ang pangunahing sangkap namin sa lut-lut ay gata ng niyog, konet o range luya. o di kaya ay bawing. Sa mel-mel naman dahon ng binwa o girangan, iyon lang naman ang mga gagamitin sa kanila..." -Participant 2

"Uhm yung sa lut-lut nakukuha namin yung buho dyan lang rin sa paligid kasi may mga tanim rin na buho ... pati run yung konet o orange luya may tanim rin kami nyan syempre pati yung bawing kasi mayron kaming mga tinatanim para hindi na kami maghingi pa sa iba,... ayaw namin ng maghingi tapos maraming masabi kaya yon ang iniwasan namin... sa mel-mel naman may mga puno kasi na tumubo lang sa paligid katulad ng binwa at girangan kaya alam namin na pwedi iyon sa mga pagkain kasi sinubukan pa namin syempre hindi rin kami basta maglagay lang kundi gusto namin rin ng maayos na pagkain." -Participant 2

The key ingredients used in Palaw'an cooking are locally sourced and minimally processed. These include glutinous rice (maregket), coconut and coconut milk, purad, and natural leaves such as binwa and girangan. Both participants emphasized that ingredients are usually obtained from their own farms (kaingin) or nearby surroundings.

The preference for self-produced ingredients reflects the Palaw'an value of self-sufficiency and quality control. Participant 1 noted that rice from their own land lasts longer and does not spoil easily, while Participant 2 expressed reluctance to source ingredients from others to avoid dependency and potential social issues.

Cooking Tools and Utensil (Kasangkapan at Kagamitan sa Pagluluto)

"Sa paggawa namin ng lut-lut, buho lang yan sumbiling kung tawag sa amin o kawayan. Sa mel-mel naman, lusong o bayuhan para sa paggawa ng purad, tapos dahon ng binwa, nigo o bilao, tapos tabig o basket." -Participant 1

"Ay sa lut-lut buho lang yan pero pwedi ka rin gumamit ng kawayan kung gusto mo ng malaki talag...ang pagbabad ng malagkit sa palanggana na malaki ... ay ano kagamitan sa mel-mel naman ay kwan sempre kailangan ng kaldero para may mapag saingan, bilao para mapaglamigan ng kanin na sinaing. tsaka dahon ng binwa o girangan ayan lang naman ...ang basket o tabeg naman ay nilalagyan ng mel-mel na natapos na gawin." -Participant 2

Traditional tools such as bamboo tubes (buho), mortars and pestles (lusong), baskets (tabeg), winnowing trays (bilao), and natural leaves are essential in preparing Palaw'an dishes. These tools are handmade, durable, and environmentally sustainable.

"Unang-una syempre, ibigay mo...ipaliwanag mo sa kanila kahit ikwento mo lang o habang nagaluto ka, sa mga anak mo o sa pamilya mo na ganito yung gagawin ninyo, ganito yung paggamit ng mga kasangkapan na 'yan, kung paano yung ano...yung proseso, para maturuan sila at hindi mawala yung sinabi ng ating mga ninuno." -Participant 1

"Ayan pagdating doon sabihin namin sa kanila na yan anak lutuin mo yan para matutunan mo para kahit wala na kami alam ninyo kung paano lutuin ang lut-lut at mel-mel na yan ... ano para hindi kayo mahirapan at makwento nyu pa sa iba na magulang ninyo ang naturo sa inyo at magsagot naman sila na " kaya ko na yan 'tay " sila naman sumusunod rin sa sinasabi namin." - Participant 2

Both participants described knowledge transmission as the primary means of tool preservation. Tools are passed down through demonstration and storytelling during actual cooking activities. This hands-on approach ensures continuity of knowledge and reinforces familial and communal bonds.

Food Preservation (Pag-iingat ng Pagkain)

"Naniniwala kami na kapag ang bigas na malagkit galing sa bayan, isang gabi lang 'yan. Kapag galing sa amin o sa bundok/kaingin ang bigas, tatlong gabi yan o tatlong araw hindi sya masisira agad. Kaya mas pinili namin na manggaling ang bigas namin sa amin mismo o sa kaingin namin para sigurado kami na may kwan... may quality tapos malinis. Tapos tatlong araw ang itinatagal ng kwan ng lut-lut, yung mel-mel, isang araw lang talaga." – Participant 1

"Para sa amin mas maganda yung bigas namin kasi mas alam namin kung paano sya lutuin at hindi sya basta basta napapanis kaya kapag maglut-lut kami galing sa amin ang bigas o malagkit para kapag nilutlut na sya umaabot sya ng dalawa o tatlong araw bago masira ang lut-lut kahit hindi mo sya initin...pero kung gusto mo ng mainit kainin initin mo na lang sya. Sa mel-mel naman isang araw lang kaya nya kasi maselan yung mel-mel ih kaya kapag ginawa mo ngayon araw... ipahinga mo ng isang gabi rin para kinabukasan kung anong oras mo sya ginawa yon rin pwedi mong buksan.. Kapag pinaabot mo pa ng dalawang araw hindi na pwediii kasi sira na ... at saka pala kapag hindi rin maganda pagkagawa ng purad hindi rin maganda ang maging kalabasan ng mel-mel na ginawa mo." – Participant 2

Food preservation practices are closely linked to ingredient quality and traditional knowledge. Both participants agreed that lut-lut made from locally grown glutinous rice can last up to three days, while mel-mel typically lasts only one day due to its sensitivity.

"Oo naman, hanggang ngayon ginagawa pa rin yan, tinuturo namin 'yan. Hindi kase pwedeng mawala 'yan, bahagi na yan kulturang Palaw'an." – Participant 1

"Uhm sinasabi rin namin sa kanila kasi hindi nila pweding kalimutan ang kultura nating Palaw'an ... kaya oo ginagamit pa rin, grabi naman sila kung kalimutan nila yung kultura nila diba yan ang sabi rin ng mga magulang o matatanda na." – Participant 2

This preservation methods remain widely practiced today, as participants continue to rely on ancestral knowledge rather than modern preservation techniques. This demonstrates the sustainability and reliability of indigenous food practices.

Knowledge Transfer (Paglilipat ng Kaalaman)

"Mula doon sa lolo namin, doon kami natuto... na ganito ang ginagawa ng mga lolo namin. Kasi kung hindi tinuro ng lolo namin hindi namin magawa iyon." – Participant 1

"Ako natutunan ko yan kasi nakikita ko sa mga magulang ko rin .Tapos sabi nila ganito ang pagluto... sabihin nila sa amin na "oh ayon anak huwag mo masyadong damihang sili paglagay dyan para maganda ang kalabasan nya 'yan" ganyan sinasabi nila samin ... lalo na sa lutlut kapag marami ang sabaw hindi rin maganda magiging lugaw na iyan...kaya sakín natutunan ko ayun nalaman ko rin paano sya gawin at ngayon ginagawa ko rin nagluluto ako." – Participant 2

Knowledge transfer occurs primarily through observation, participation, and oral instruction. Both participants learned food preparation techniques from their elders, particularly grandparents and parents. Instruction begins at a young age and increases in complexity as children mature.

"Oo, syempre halimbawa, kwan sampung taon na siya, pwede mo na syang turuan na ganito ang ginagawa ng mga tatay nyo. Dapat isalin sa kanila ang kwento na yan para maalala nila na ganito yung pagkagawa para hindi sila malito." – Participant 1

"Ay oo naman talagang pinapasa ko rin yan lalo na sa mga anak ko , katulad ngayon yung mga anak ko marunong na silang magluto ng lut-lut at mel-mel dahil nga tinuruan ko rin sila ... at natandaan naman nila. Ngayon kapag may handaan sila na mismo magluto kahit hindi na sila turuan alam na alam na nila." – Participant 2

Participants also actively teach younger generations by involving them in food preparation during communal events. This ensures that traditional knowledge remains alive and functional rather than merely symbolic.

Challenges and Adaptation (Mga Hamon at Pag-aangkop)

"Sa paghahanda, huwag lang sana mahawakan ng ibang tao na hindi natin kilala, basta nandyan lang sya at nakita nya pero hindi nya kinuha, ayus lang. Kung gusto nyang kumain pwede naman sya magpaalam at kumuha, pero kapag kumuha

sya pero hindi nya kinain, maaring may iba syang motibo. Hinanda yan para sa lahat, hindi pwedeng kumuha sya pero hindi nya naman kinain. Yun lang naman, at basta kwan 'wag lang na madalas ang pagluluto ng lut-lut, kailangan isang beses lang sa isang taon. Kapag tuwing December, pagkatapos gapas ng palay.' – Participant 1

"Oo meron, dapat maging maingat ka palagi sa mga pagkain halimbawa dyan ba sa mga tao alam nyu hindi tayo dapat nagtitiwala sa mga tao kasi pwedi yan maging mabait lang pero hindi natin alam ang pwedi nyang gawin sa pagkain mo . Kaya dapat ikaw lang ang pweding maghanda ng pagkain mo huwag mo na ipagkatiwala sa iba kasi baka mamaya may ilagay syang hindi maganda ba yan ganyan.. ayun lang din ang gusto ko imparating." – Participant 2

One major challenge identified by both participants is the fear of food contamination or malicious intent when others handle the food. As a result, food preparation is often limited to trusted individuals. Another challenge is the strict timing and frequency of preparing lut-lut, which is traditionally cooked only once a year after harvest.

"Wala namang pagbabago, basta sundan lang lahat ng ginawa ng ninuno namin, hindi pwedeng mabago 'yan pinamana yan nila sa amin." – Participant 1

"Oo, yung sa lut-lut nilagyan ko ng bawing para mabango ang malagkit kahit na oo mabango na rin yung malagkit namin pero sa akin gusto ko lagyan pa sa mel-mel wala naman rin pagbabago sa pagluluto naman ng mga lutlut at mel-mel syempre kapag hindi maganda o masarap pagkagawa mo huwag mo na ituloy kundi magtanong kana sa ibang may alam pa, para di na maulit." – Participant 2

In terms of adaptation, Participant 1 reported no changes to traditional practices, emphasizing strict adherence to ancestral methods. Participant 2 acknowledged minor adaptations, such as adding bawing for aroma, but clarified that these changes do not alter the core identity of the dish.

Cultural and Ritual Significance (Kahalagahan sa Kultura at Ritwal)

"Sa kwan namin, sa kultura namin, hindi namin mawala iyan lahat yung ginagawa namin kase kapag hindi napahalagahan iyan maaring may mangyari yan kagaya sa, halimbawa malakas ang init, malakas ang ulan hindi humihinto, iyan kapag hindi mo iyan napahalagahan iyan ang maaaring mangyari, kailangan taon-taon yan ginagawa yan hindi pwedeng mawala yan ang tradisyon na iniwan ng aming ninuno." – Participant 1

"Sa ritwal ganun din yan, hindi iyan makain kung walang ritwal, ang importante ay naritwalan ito, pagkatapos nito bago pa pwede makain. Huwag ka magkain ng wala pang ritwal kasi maaring magsakit tiyan mo, magsakit ulo mo kasi maaari kang masablaw o mabati kung sa tagalog. Kase alam nya yung batas, sya ay marunong gumawa ng ritwal, magbasbas, para yung kakainin mo hindi na rin siguro magsakit ang tiyan mo hindi ka na rin batiin." – Participant 1

"Sa tawag samin ay 'umanat ' o handaan ba sa tagalog kultura na namin talaga yan na kapag may handaan kami hindi mawawala yung lut-lut at mel-mel.. at sabihin na ito hindi pweding isa lang ang pweding kumain kundi lahat ng kapitbahay namin bigyan namin ng pagkain para wala silang masabi ba at yon din talaga ang dapat para maibahagi mo rin sa iba yung pagpapala bahmm yun lang rin." – Participant 2

"Hmm yung dasal na yan meron yan binalutan at ilagay sa plato at bilao, tapos sa baso lagyan ng tubig para isama sa pagdadasal kasi ihandog yon para hindi mabati yan ang sabi ng mga matatanda ba, tapos yan kapag may natira pa lahat ng kilala mo tawagin mo para maubos na at ipamigay mo na lang.. kailangan sa umangat marami kayo para masaya, at syempre kasama rin ang diyos na handugan mo hindi naman makuha yan kung wala sya ang lumikha diba." – Participant 2

Both participants strongly emphasized that lut-lut and mel-mel are inseparable from Palaw'an culture and rituals. These foods must undergo ritual blessing before consumption to avoid illness or misfortune. Rituals involve prayers, offerings, and the invocation of ancestors and natural elements.

"Nasa kaugalian na namin ang pagpapahalaga sa aming pagkain, sa amin number one sa aming kultura ang pagkain ng lut-lut at mel-mel." – Participant 1

"Yung paniniwala namin sa pagkain na iyan tulad nalang ng lut-lut at mel-mel, mahalaga din sa aming sarili na ito talaga ang pagkain na pinakamasarap para sa amin na hinahanda namin." – Participant 1

"Hanggang ngayon maganda pa rin kailangan kapag may handaan kami hindi mawala ang lut-lut at mel-mel syempre oo mainit yan magluto ng lut-lut haharap ka nagbabagang apoy tapos magbaliktad ng lut-lut para pantay luto nya talagang

kailangan pagtiisan mo kasi ayan yung pinaka handa namin ih kada may may handaan kami kahit na mainit basta maluto mo kailangan mong pagtyagaan, hmm talagang mahirap magluto ng lut-lut kasi sobrang init pa.. magkudkod kapa ng pagkadaming niyog lalo na kapag marami kang lutuin na lut-lut." – Participant 2

"Mga paniniwala namin sa mga pagkain na yan sa lut-lut at mel-mel ay ito ang unang natutunan na lutuin kasi simula pa noon at hanggang ngayon ito yung pinaka masarap na pagkain namin kasi sariling gawa namin ito ih, syempre diba yan kainan na edi masaya na kayo lahat nagkakaroon kami ng kasiyahan katulad ng pagsabog ng tubog sa isa't isa kasi para maitabog yung mga malas hindi makalapit ba." –Participant 2

Barangay	FOOD	Description	Occasion/Timing
A	Arat-Arat	1. Gather rice/coconut milk/chili from fields/forests. 2. Fry rice in clay pot 5-10 min for purad (stir w/ wood spoon). 3. Mix purad+chili+sticky rice+milk. 4. Stuff bamboo tubes. 5. Cook over fire 1-2 hrs (rotate).	Harvest season
B	Lut-lut	1. Soak sticky rice 3-5 hrs. 2. Mix coconut milk. 3. Stuff/seal bamboo tubes w/ leaves. 4. Fire-cook in bamboo cooker 1-2 hrs till sticky.	Harvest festivals
A	Purad	1. Heat clay pot. 2. Fry raw rice lightly 5-10 min (no burn). 3. Grind to powder. 4. Use for other foods.	Before cooking main dish
B	Purad Variant	1. Make purad. 2. Mix chili+ginger (mountain-sourced). 3. Wrap in leaves. 4. Steam clay pot 10-15 min.	Before cooking main dish
A	Minel-mel	1. Half-cook rice+purad in clay pot. 2. Wrap tight in banana/girangan leaves (2-3 layers). 3. Tie. 4. Slow-cook 24 hrs embers. 5. Unwrap.	Harvest season

Table 1. Traditional Food Preparation Techniques by Barangay

Table 1 shows that food preparation is closely linked to seasonal cycles, particularly the harvest period. In Barangay A, the practice of Arat Arat happens around October to November, though the exact timing depends largely on nature's behavior such as rainfall patterns and harvest readiness. This flexible timing shows a cultural adaptation that respects natural cycles rather than rigid schedules, reflecting how the Palaw'an view their relationship with nature with reverence and dependence. Barangay B respondents similarly prepare traditional dishes like Lut-lut during harvest festivals, emphasizing the communal and ritual importance of food. The detailed preparation techniques such as Purad a pre-cooking step involving heating or grinding rice, often mixed with spices or ginger and Minel-mel a process involving prolonged cooking and leaf wrapping all demonstrate a unique culinary heritage passed on through generations with care and precision. These methods serve not only to enhance the taste and texture of food but also signify patience, respect, and an intimate knowledge of ingredients and cooking materials.

Barangay	Food	Ingredients and Key Preparation Steps
A	Lut-lut	Sticky rice cooked inside bamboo with coconut milk. Soak 3-5 hrs, stuff bamboo w/ milk, fire-cook 1-2 hrs (rotate).
A	Minel-mel	Rice cooked with purad, wrapped in girangan leaves and cooked for 24 hours. Half-cook rice+purad, leaf-wrap tight, 24-hr slow-cook embers.
B	Katumpat	Sticky rice soaked for 3-5 hours, cooked with coconut milk, rice wine called tabad.
B	Mel-mel	Rice dish mixed with purad, wrapped in binwa leaves. Mix rice+purad, leaf-wrap, steam till flavors blend.

Table 2. Common Traditional Dishes

Table 2 shows the traditional dishes are deeply symbolic and highly representative of the Palaw'an cultural identity. Meals like Lut-lut, Minel-mel, Katumpat, and use ingredients such as sticky rice and coconut milk, ingredients abundant in their environment, showcasing sustainable use of local resources. Preparation steps, such as soaking rice for hours or wrapping food tightly in leaves, are not simply culinary choices but culturally significant acts, often connected to social occasions and communal gatherings.

Barangay	Food	How It's Used and Method
A	Lut-lut	Stuff mixtures, steam over fire (natural vessel). Bamboo (tubes)
B	Lut-lut, Mel-mel	Fire-direct in mountains (no stove needed). Bamboo cooker
A and B	All	Fry/stir/steam safely. Clay pot + wooden utensils

Table 3. Cooking Methods and Tools

Table 3 reveals their resourcefulness in cooking methods. Bamboo tubes act as natural cooking vessels, especially in remote areas lacking modern appliances. This illustrates how their culinary practices are intertwined with ecological knowledge and sustainable living. Meanwhile, the consistent use of clay pots and wooden utensils across both barangays underscores a tradition of craftsmanship and the passing down of culinary tools, which are as much part of their heritage as the recipes themselves.

Barangay	Food	Ingredients and Source
A	Minel-mel, Purad	Rice, purad, chili, ginger Locally gathered from fields and forests
B	Lut-lut, rice	Sticky rice, coconut milk, water Collected from mountains and forests

Table 4. Key Ingredients and Sources

Table 4 shows that locally sourced ingredients dominate their cuisine, reinforcing the community's reliance on their immediate environment. The forests, mountains, and fields not only provide nourishment but also define the flavors and characteristics of their dishes. This direct connection to land and nature plays a vital role in maintaining cultural identity, especially in the face of modernization.

Barangay	Method	Foods Teaching
A	Salting and proper storage	Demo full steps (e.g., Minel-mel wrap).
B	Storing rice in woven bags (bayong)	Festivals teach (e.g., Lotlot process).

Table 5. Food Preservation Practices

Table 5 shows that while some traditional preservation methods like salting and storing food in clean containers remain common, others such as storing rice in woven bags (bayong) are falling out of regular use. This indicates a transition influenced by changing lifestyles or access to modern technology but also highlights the community's efforts to maintain practicality and tradition.

Barangay	Methods	Details
A	Passing down through meetings and actual teaching	Intentional efforts to teach youth
B	Teaching through dance, music, and traditional clothing	Cultural activities used to transfer knowledge

Table 6. Knowledge Transfer and Cultural Continuity

The data in Table 6 stress the importance of knowledge transmission. The community places great emphasis on teaching younger generations not only through formal meetings and demonstrations but also through cultural performances like traditional dances and music. These activities foster a strong sense of identity and pride that go beyond the technical aspects of cooking, embedding food traditions within a larger cultural context.

Barangay	Challenge/Adaptation	Explanation (food impact)
A	Unsupervised cooking leads to burnt food	Weather/no watch ruins long cooks (e.g., Minel-mel).
B	Difficulty accessing mountain ingredients	Terrain/weather limits ingredients (e.g., Lotlot ginger).
A and B	Ritual adaptations include use of traditional music (tugtug and agong)	Play during prep/prayers for harvest/food success.

Table 7. Challenges and Adaptations

Table 7 highlights the challenges faced by the Palaw'an, such as environmental difficulties and the risk of food being ruined if left unattended, showing the delicate balance required in traditional cooking practices. Yet, the community's adaptation through ritual music and communal cooperation reflects resilience and a commitment to preserving their culinary heritage.

Discussion

The data reveal that the Palaw'an people in Barangays Amas, Saraza, Malis, and Samariñana maintain rich traditional food practices centered on natural ingredients, indigenous cooking methods, and strong ritual significance. The use of bamboo, clay pots, and locally sourced materials reflects their deep connection to the environment. Despite modern challenges such

as changing weather patterns and limited access to traditional tools, these practices are preserved through family teaching and community rituals, highlighting their cultural and social importance.

The findings show that traditional food preparation in these barangays is deeply rooted in cultural identity and serves as a connection to ancestral traditions and nature. Practices such as Arat-Arat and the preparation of lut-lut and katumpat demonstrate values of sustainability, patience, and care. Although the community faces environmental and resource challenges, they continue to adapt while preserving essential methods and rituals.

Moreover, food preparation is not merely for sustenance but is a way of life that promotes unity, respect, and gratitude. It strengthens community bonds and reflects the Palaw'an belief in the interconnectedness of food, nature, and spirituality. Overall, traditional practices across the four barangays remain resilient due to strong knowledge transfer and adherence to ancestral traditions, emphasizing their lasting cultural significance.

Conclusion and Implications

This study examined the traditional food preparation techniques of the Palaw'an community across selected barangays in Brooke's Point, Palawan, specifically Barangay Amas, Barangay Saraza, Barangay Malis, and Barangay Samariñana. The findings revealed that traditional dishes such as *lut-lut*, *mel-mel*, *minel-mel*, and *arat-arat* remain essential components of Palaw'an cultural practices across these communities. These dishes are prepared using locally sourced ingredients and time-honored techniques that emphasize sustainability, communal participation, and adherence to tradition.

The study further revealed that food preparation among the Palaw'an is a structured and culturally embedded process involving specific techniques such as soaking glutinous rice, extracting coconut milk, and preparing *purad*. Cooking methods rely on indigenous tools and natural materials such as bamboo, clay pots, and embers, reflecting strong ecological knowledge and resourcefulness. These practices are closely associated with rituals and are guided by cultural beliefs, reinforcing their spiritual and social significance.

Across the four barangays, the findings consistently show that traditional food preparation is sustained through intergenerational knowledge transfer and active participation in communal activities. Despite challenges such as modernization and environmental changes, these practices remain resilient and continue to serve as expressions of cultural identity and continuity.

The study implies that there is a need to preserve and promote traditional Palaw'an food practices as part of the community's cultural heritage. Local government units and cultural institutions may support these efforts by integrating indigenous food traditions into tourism and cultural programs. Educational institutions may also incorporate indigenous knowledge into learning initiatives to strengthen cultural awareness among younger generations. Furthermore, collaboration with the food and beverage industry may provide opportunities to introduce Palaw'an-inspired food products while ensuring cultural sensitivity and authenticity.

Finally, further research is recommended to explore broader aspects of indigenous food systems, including the impact of modernization and strategies for sustainable preservation of traditional practices across different barangays.

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Competing Interests

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest, financial or otherwise, that could have influenced the outcomes of this study.

Data Availability Statement

The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request. Access to the data is subject to ethical considerations and the protection of the respondents' confidentiality.

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Appendices

No appendices are included in this article