



BEYOND THE FRUIT: UNCOVERING THE CULTURAL SIGNIFICANCE OF HALAYA SAMPALOK IN GENERAL TRIAS, CAVITE

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Abstract

This study explored the cultural significance of Halaya Sampalok as an intangible culinary heritage of General Trias. Specifically, the research examined its historical background, socio-cultural functions, traditional preparation practices, economic contributions, and role in preserving local identity. Employing a qualitative ethnographic research design, the study gathered data through semi-structured interviews and participant observation involving tourism officers, local residents, producers, and vendors knowledgeable about the delicacy. The collected data were analyzed using thematic analysis following Braun and Clarke's framework. Findings revealed that Halaya Sampalok serves as a significant cultural symbol associated with family gatherings, fiestas, reunions, and seasonal celebrations, particularly during tamarind season. Participants emphasized that the delicacy strengthens social relationships, reinforces communal identity, and preserves intergenerational traditions through informal knowledge transfer within families and communities. The study further found that Halaya Sampalok contributes to the informal local economy by providing supplemental livelihood opportunities for small-scale vendors and producers. Despite its cultural and socio-economic importance, the delicacy remains underrecognized outside General Trias due to limited commercialization, insufficient institutional promotion, and minimal integration into mainstream culinary tourism. Participants highlighted the need for cultural mapping, heritage documentation, and local government support to preserve and promote the delicacy as part of the municipality's culinary identity. The findings underscore the importance of safeguarding traditional food practices as cultural resources that sustain community memory, strengthen local identity, and contribute to cultural tourism development. The study contributes to the growing discourse on Philippine food heritage preservation and emphasizes the role of indigenous culinary traditions in sustaining intangible cultural heritage.

Keywords: *Halaya Sampalok, intangible cultural heritage, culinary heritage, General Trias, cultural mapping, traditional food*

Introduction

Food is a fundamental expression of culture, identity, and collective memory. Beyond its biological function, food reflects the historical experiences, social values, and traditions of a community. According to Fischler (1988), food functions as a cultural system that shapes and reflects human identity and social relationships. Similarly, Almerico (2014) emphasized that food practices contribute significantly to the construction and preservation of cultural identity across societies. Traditional foods, therefore, serve not only as sources of nourishment but also as cultural artifacts that embody local knowledge, customs, and heritage passed down through generations.

Food heritage is increasingly recognized as an essential dimension of intangible cultural heritage because it preserves the practices, meanings, and traditions associated with food preparation and consumption. Bessière (1998) argued that the intergenerational transmission of traditional culinary practices strengthens cultural continuity and community pride. On a global scale, initiatives promoting food heritage have gained prominence through cultural preservation programs and sustainable tourism development. The recognition of the Mediterranean diet and Japanese washoku by UNESCO (2010) illustrates the growing acknowledgment of traditional foodways as valuable cultural resources worthy of protection and promotion. Likewise, the Slow Food Movement initiated by Petrini (2003) emphasized resistance to cultural homogenization by advocating for the preservation of local culinary traditions and regional food identities.

In the Philippine context, food heritage reflects centuries of cultural interaction shaped by indigenous, Asian, Spanish, and American influences. Traditional Filipino dishes such as adobo, sinigang, sisig, and various kakanin have become representations of regional identity and national culture. Efforts to preserve these culinary traditions have been supported by institutions such as the National Commission for Culture and the Arts (NCCA) and local government units through culinary festivals, heritage documentation, and

educational initiatives (Fernando-Amilbansa, 2015). These efforts recognize that traditional cuisine contributes not only to cultural preservation but also to tourism development, local entrepreneurship, and community identity.

Despite these preservation initiatives, globalization and modernization continue to influence changing food preferences, particularly among younger generations. The increasing popularity of global cuisines and commercially produced food products has contributed to the gradual decline of many traditional Filipino delicacies. Liba et al. (2017) noted that preservation initiatives for indigenous food heritage in the Philippines remain limited and often lack sufficient public visibility and institutional support. Consequently, numerous regional delicacies with historical and cultural value remain underrecognized and insufficiently documented despite their significance to local communities.

One province that demonstrates a rich yet understudied culinary heritage is Cavite, historically recognized as the “Historical Capital of the Philippines.” The province possesses diverse culinary traditions that reflect its historical experiences, agricultural resources, and community practices. Hernandez et al. (2018) identified several traditional foods associated with Cavite, including Pansit Pusit of Cavite City, Pancit Estacion of Tanza, and Tinapang Salinas of Rosario. These delicacies serve as markers of local identity and cultural continuity. However, many traditional foods within the province remain relatively unknown outside their localities, limiting their recognition as part of the broader Philippine culinary heritage.

Among these lesser-known delicacies is Halaya Sampalok, a traditional dessert associated with General Trias. Made primarily from tamarind pulp, sugar, and other natural ingredients, Halaya Sampalok reflects the agricultural resources and culinary creativity of the local community. The delicacy is commonly prepared during fiestas, reunions, and local gatherings, symbolizing social unity and cultural continuity. Bautista (2019) observed that despite its cultural and agricultural significance, Halaya Sampalok remains absent from mainstream Philippine culinary mapping due to limited promotion and documentation. Furthermore, contemporary food preferences increasingly favor modern and globalized food trends, which may reduce younger generations’ appreciation of traditional delicacies such as Halaya Sampalok (Lastimoso et al., 2023).

Given these concerns, this study seeks to explore the cultural significance of Halaya Sampalok as part of the intangible cultural heritage of General Trias, Cavite. Specifically, the study aims to document its historical origins, culinary practices, socio-economic contributions, and symbolic meanings within the local community. Through cultural mapping and qualitative ethnographic inquiry, the research contributes to the growing discourse on food heritage preservation by highlighting the importance of safeguarding lesser-known traditional foods. Moreover, the study intends to provide insights that may support heritage conservation initiatives, cultural tourism development, and policy-based preservation efforts for local culinary traditions in the Philippines.

Research Objectives

This study examines the cultural significance of Halaya Sampalok as an intangible culinary heritage of General Trias in terms of its historical background, cultural practices, socio-economic contributions, and role in preserving community identity. Specifically, it intends to accomplish the following objectives:

1. To examine the cultural and social significance of Halaya Sampalok in preserving the traditions, identity, and communal practices of General Trias.
2. To analyze the socio-economic contributions of Halaya Sampalok to local vendors, producers, and community-based livelihood activities in General Trias, Cavite.
3. To identify the challenges and preservation strategies related to Halaya Sampalok, particularly in terms of intergenerational knowledge transfer, cultural mapping, and heritage promotion.

Methodology

Research Design

This study employed a qualitative research design utilizing an ethnographic approach to examine the cultural significance of Halaya Sampalok in General Trias. Qualitative research is appropriate for studies that seek to understand human experiences, cultural meanings, and social practices within their natural settings. Specifically, ethnography enables researchers to explore the shared beliefs, traditions, behaviors, and lived experiences of a particular community through prolonged engagement and direct interaction with participants. According to Fetterman (1982), ethnography combines both the art and science of describing a culture or social group by examining patterns of behavior, rituals, and social interactions within a specific context. This approach was deemed suitable for the present study because it allowed the researchers to gain an in-depth understanding of the historical, social, and cultural dimensions associated with Halaya Sampalok as an indigenous culinary tradition. Through participant observation, interviews, and cultural immersion, the study explored how the delicacy functions as a symbol of identity, heritage, and community continuity in General Trias, Cavite.

Participants

The participants of the study were selected through purposive sampling to ensure that the respondents possessed substantial knowledge and direct experience related to Halaya Sampalok. Purposive sampling is commonly utilized in qualitative research to identify information-rich participants who can provide meaningful insights relevant to the research objectives. The study included local producers and vendors who have continuously prepared and sold Halaya Sampalok within the community, allowing the researchers to document traditional culinary practices and livelihood experiences. Community residents and consumers were also included to provide

narratives regarding the role of Halaya Sampalok in family gatherings, fiestas, and local celebrations. In addition, cultural practitioners and local historians contributed historical perspectives concerning the origin and cultural development of the delicacy within the municipality. Representatives from local government offices, particularly those involved in tourism and cultural affairs, were likewise selected to provide information regarding existing cultural preservation initiatives and the promotion of Halaya Sampalok as part of the cultural identity of General Trias. The inclusion of participants from diverse sectors enabled the study to obtain comprehensive and multidimensional perspectives regarding the culinary heritage of the community.

Instruments

The primary instrument utilized in the study was a researcher-developed semi-structured interview guide designed to collect detailed qualitative data regarding the cultural significance of Halaya Sampalok. Semi-structured interviews are widely used in ethnographic and qualitative studies because they allow flexibility in probing participants' responses while maintaining alignment with the objectives of the research. The interview guide consisted of five major components. The first section focused on the participants' demographic and background information, including their familiarity and involvement with Halaya Sampalok. The second section explored the cultural significance of the delicacy within the context of General Trias, Cavite, particularly its role in local traditions and community identity. The third section examined the traditional preparation practices and processes involved in making Halaya Sampalok, including ingredients, cooking methods, and occasions in which the delicacy is commonly served. The fourth section addressed the challenges associated with preserving and promoting the culinary tradition, while the fifth section elicited participants' personal insights, experiences, and reflections regarding the importance of Halaya Sampalok in the community. To supplement the interviews, participant observation and field notes were also employed to document cooking practices, community interactions, and cultural activities associated with the delicacy. These instruments enabled the researchers to gather rich and contextualized data essential for ethnographic analysis.

Procedure

Prior to data collection, the researchers secured permission from relevant local authorities and community representatives in General Trias to conduct the study. Potential participants were identified through purposive sampling based on their involvement in the preparation, preservation, consumption, or promotion of Halaya Sampalok. Upon recruitment, the researchers explained the purpose and procedures of the study and obtained informed consent from all participants before conducting interviews and observations. Data collection primarily involved in-depth semi-structured interviews conducted in locations convenient and comfortable for the participants. During the interviews, respondents were encouraged to share their personal experiences, historical knowledge, and cultural narratives associated with Halaya Sampalok, including its role in family traditions, festivals, and community gatherings. To further enrich the data, participant observation was conducted during cultural events, food preparation activities, and local gatherings where Halaya Sampalok was prepared, displayed, or consumed. The researchers documented observations through field notes, photographs, and reflective journals to capture behavioral practices, social interactions, and culinary techniques associated with the delicacy. Audio recordings of interviews were transcribed verbatim to ensure accuracy and facilitate systematic analysis of the collected data.

Data Analysis

The collected qualitative data were analyzed using thematic analysis following the framework developed by Braun and Clarke (2006, 2012, 2013). Thematic analysis is a widely recognized qualitative analytic method used to identify, analyze, and interpret recurring patterns or themes within textual data. Initially, all interview recordings were transcribed verbatim, and the researchers repeatedly reviewed the transcripts and field notes to achieve data familiarization and immersion. During the second phase, initial codes were generated by identifying meaningful segments of data relevant to the research objectives. Both inductive codes emerging directly from participants' narratives and theory-driven codes related to cultural heritage and food traditions were considered during coding. Subsequently, related codes were grouped into broader categories to identify potential themes reflecting the cultural, historical, and socio-economic significance of Halaya Sampalok. These preliminary themes were then reviewed, refined, and validated through repeated comparison with the original data to ensure coherence, consistency, and credibility. After finalizing the themes, the researchers defined and named each thematic category according to its conceptual meaning and relevance to the study. Finally, the themes were synthesized and interpreted to construct a comprehensive discussion of the findings, supported by direct excerpts from participants' narratives. Thematic analysis enabled the researchers to systematically interpret the participants' experiences and provide an in-depth understanding of Halaya Sampalok as an intangible cultural heritage of General Trias, Cavite.

Ethical Considerations

The study strictly adhered to established ethical standards in qualitative and ethnographic research to ensure the protection, dignity, and welfare of all participants. Prior to data collection, informed consent was obtained from all participants after clearly explaining the purpose, procedures, and significance of the study. Participants were informed that their involvement was voluntary and that they had the right to withdraw from the study at any stage without penalty. Permission was likewise sought before the use of audio recordings, photographs, and other documentation tools during interviews and observations. To maintain confidentiality and anonymity, participants' identities were protected through the use of pseudonyms and the secure handling of all collected data.

The researchers also observed professional integrity, honesty, and cultural sensitivity throughout the conduct of the study. Local customs, traditions, and community values were respected during interactions and field observations. The researchers recognized that community members possess valuable indigenous knowledge regarding their culinary heritage and ensured that their perspectives were represented accurately and respectfully. In addition, care was taken to avoid any actions or interpretations that could potentially

misrepresent, exploit, or harm the participants and the community. Validation of findings was conducted through participant confirmation and consultation with knowledgeable individuals to enhance the credibility, trustworthiness, and authenticity of the study. By adhering to these ethical principles, the research upheld the responsible documentation and preservation of the cultural heritage associated with Halaya Sampalok in General Trias, Cavite.

Results and Discussion

This section presents the thematic analysis of the qualitative data gathered from interviews with tourism officers, long-time residents, local producers, and vendors regarding Halaya Sampalok in General Trias. The analysis explored the historical, cultural, and socio-economic significance of the delicacy and examined its contribution to local identity, community traditions, and informal economic activities. The findings revealed six major themes that collectively demonstrate the role of Halaya Sampalok as an important element of the municipality's intangible culinary heritage.

Theme 1: *Social Significance of Halaya Sampalok*

This theme highlights the social functions of Halaya Sampalok within community life and emphasizes its role during both formal and informal gatherings. Participants consistently described the delicacy as an essential food item commonly prepared during family reunions, fiestas, birthdays, and other communal celebrations. For many residents, Halaya Sampalok is not merely consumed as a dessert or snack but serves as a shared cultural experience that strengthens interpersonal relationships and reinforces collective traditions.

One participant explained, "It is always prepared during family reunions or celebrations, almost like an ordinary merienda," while another participant shared that Halaya Sampalok is commonly served during birthdays and fiestas because "it is almost always present during gatherings." Participants also emphasized its importance during community celebrations, particularly during the tamarind season from April to May when the ingredients are most available. One respondent noted that "Halaya Sampalok is most commonly prepared during summer or tamarind season."

The findings suggest that Halaya Sampalok functions as a cultural connector that links everyday life with ceremonial occasions. Its continued preparation during social gatherings demonstrates how traditional foods reinforce social cohesion and communal memory within local communities. These findings support the observations of Panaligan (2018), who argued that local delicacies play a significant role in strengthening community identity by fostering social interaction during collective celebrations. Similarly, Rivera and Santos (2020) noted that traditional Filipino food practices act as cultural anchors that sustain intergenerational relationships and reinforce communal belonging, particularly in provincial communities. The seasonal preparation of Halaya Sampalok further illustrates how culinary traditions are closely tied to local environmental resources and agricultural practices, reinforcing the intimate relationship between food, culture, and place.

Theme 2: *Community Identity and Social Impact*

The second theme emphasizes the role of Halaya Sampalok in shaping the culinary identity of General Trias and its contribution to community pride and local livelihood. Participants described the delicacy as a symbolic representation of their locality, particularly among balikbayan and overseas Filipinos who bring the product abroad to share with relatives and friends. This practice reflects how traditional foods become carriers of memory, identity, and cultural belonging beyond geographical boundaries.

One participant stated, "Balikbayan are already used to bringing this abroad to share the taste of our town," highlighting how Halaya Sampalok functions as a culinary symbol of General Trias. Another respondent explained that the delicacy is often prepared upon request for overseas Filipinos, further demonstrating its emotional and cultural value among migrants. Participants also emphasized the local pride associated with the delicacy. One vendor expressed, "Halaya Sampalok is one of my sources of income. It is important to us," while another participant remarked that "it is our pride in General Trias even if it is not famous in other places."

The findings indicate that Halaya Sampalok functions not only as a cultural artifact but also as a socio-economic resource that supports informal economic activities within the community. The delicacy contributes to local identity formation by fostering pride among residents while simultaneously generating income opportunities for small-scale vendors and producers. These findings align with studies emphasizing the relationship between traditional food practices and local economic sustainability. Traditional foods often serve as cultural commodities that promote both heritage preservation and community-based entrepreneurship, particularly in rural and semi-urban areas where localized culinary products remain integral to household economies.

Sub-Theme 2.1: *Intergenerational Knowledge Transfer*

Participants revealed that knowledge regarding the preparation of Halaya Sampalok is primarily transmitted informally through observation, participation, and family interaction. Most respondents learned the cooking process from parents, elderly relatives, or community elders rather than through formal culinary instruction. One participant shared, "I was taught by the elders in the community, which is why I learned how to cook it," while another explained, "I learned it from my mother because she used to sell Halaya Sampalok before." Another respondent stated that they simply observed their mother preparing the delicacy until they eventually learned the process themselves.

These findings demonstrate that the preservation of Halaya Sampalok relies heavily on embodied cultural practices and oral transmission within families and communities. The continuation of the delicacy therefore depends largely on personal interest and sustained family

participation. Although no institutionalized preservation programs currently exist, the communal nature of food preparation contributes to the continuity of the tradition. This supports Albala's (2012) assertion that culinary traditions are often preserved through imitation, observation, and repetitive practice rather than formal education. The process of learning how to prepare Halaya Sampalok thus becomes an important mechanism for preserving cultural memory and reinforcing kinship ties within the community.

Sub-Theme 2.2: Challenges in Preserving Tradition

Although participants generally reported that the ingredients and preparation methods of Halaya Sampalok remain accessible, they identified limited public recognition and commercialization as significant barriers to the delicacy's broader preservation. Respondents explained that the dish is rarely featured in restaurants or commercial food establishments, resulting in low visibility outside General Trias.

One participant explained that "there are still not many people who know about Halaya Sampalok because it cannot yet be found in restaurants," while another respondent stated that "even here in General Trias, it is still not very popular in food establishments or businesses." Participants suggested that the absence of institutional promotion and commercial integration limits public awareness and reduces opportunities for cultural preservation.

These findings suggest that the primary challenge confronting Halaya Sampalok is not the loss of traditional knowledge or ingredient scarcity but rather its limited exposure in mainstream culinary markets and tourism platforms. Without strategic promotion and documentation, traditional foods such as Halaya Sampalok risk becoming marginalized in contemporary food culture, particularly amid the increasing influence of globalized cuisine and modern consumer preferences.

Theme 3: Halaya Sampalok as a Cultural Symbol in Local Beliefs

This theme highlights the symbolic and cultural meanings associated with Halaya Sampalok within local belief systems and family traditions. Participants associated the delicacy with prosperity, unity, and familial harmony, particularly during New Year celebrations. One participant explained, "People say it brings good luck during New Year because it is sticky and symbolizes family unity."

The findings indicate that Halaya Sampalok carries meanings that extend beyond nourishment and consumption. Similar to other traditional Filipino foods served during festivals and rituals, the delicacy functions as a symbolic object embedded with cultural values and shared beliefs. Romulo (2012) explained that Filipino food traditions often carry symbolic meanings associated with unity, prosperity, and communal harmony. Likewise, Fernandes (1994) emphasized that traditional foodways preserve cultural narratives and social values passed down across generations. The symbolic significance attached to Halaya Sampalok therefore demonstrates how local culinary practices function as repositories of collective memory and cultural identity.

Sub-Theme 3.1: Personal and Familial Significance of Food Traditions

Participants also described Halaya Sampalok as emotionally significant within family life and personal memory. The delicacy was associated with childhood experiences, family bonding, and intergenerational connection, making it an important component of personal and familial identity. Through repeated preparation and consumption during family gatherings and celebrations, Halaya Sampalok becomes a "memory object" that preserves stories, emotions, and relationships across generations.

These findings suggest that traditional foods possess affective and emotional value that contributes to cultural continuity. Although Halaya Sampalok may not possess extensive national recognition, its importance within family histories and local experiences strengthens the broader cultural narrative of General Trias. The delicacy, therefore, serves not only as a culinary tradition but also as a medium through which families preserve emotional ties and collective identity.

Theme 4: Halaya Sampalok in Social Gatherings and Local Identity

This theme emphasizes the role of Halaya Sampalok in strengthening social interaction and reinforcing local identity during communal activities. Participants explained that the delicacy is frequently prepared during birthdays, reunions, and fiestas, making it a recognizable feature of local gatherings and celebrations. Its regular presence in these events reinforces its status as a communal food associated with hospitality, celebration, and shared identity.

Participants likewise highlighted the dual cultural and economic value of Halaya Sampalok within the community. One respondent explained that "Halaya Sampalok helps in our everyday life, especially for those who have small businesses," while another participant stated that "it is one of our sources of livelihood." These findings demonstrate that traditional foods can simultaneously function as cultural expressions and economic resources within local communities.

Sub-Theme 4.1: Food as Livelihood: Economic Value of Halaya Sampalok

Participants emphasized that the production and sale of Halaya Sampalok contribute to household income, particularly during tamarind season. Vendors explained that selling the delicacy provides supplemental financial support for their families and enables them to participate in small-scale entrepreneurial activities.

These findings support the argument of McDonagh and Commins (1999), who asserted that localized food enterprises play an important role in sustaining household economies and preserving regional identity. Halaya Sampalok, therefore, represents both a cultural product and an informal economic resource that contributes to the socio-economic resilience of the community.

Sub-Theme 4.2: Culinary Nationalism and Cultural Pride

The findings further reveal that Halaya Sampalok serves as a symbol of cultural pride among residents and overseas Filipinos originating from General Trias. One participant shared that “balikbayan ask us to cook it and bring it abroad so they can let others taste the food from our town.” This practice reflects the concept of culinary nationalism, wherein food becomes a representation of heritage, belonging, and cultural identity (King, 2015).

The symbolic value attached to Halaya Sampalok strengthens its significance as more than a regional dessert. Instead, it becomes a cultural emblem that allows community members to maintain emotional and cultural connections with their place of origin despite geographic displacement.

Theme 5: Traditional Techniques and Craftsmanship in Preparation

This theme focuses on the traditional culinary techniques involved in preparing Halaya Sampalok and highlights the craftsmanship required to preserve its authentic quality. Participants explained that the delicacy requires careful sequencing of ingredients and precise cooking methods to achieve the desired texture and consistency.

One participant emphasized that “there is a proper way of mixing the ingredients because there should be a sequence so it will not harden immediately.” Such findings indicate that the preparation of Halaya Sampalok involves specialized culinary knowledge developed and refined through repeated practice and experience.

The findings suggest that culinary craftsmanship forms an important component of intangible cultural heritage. The preparation process itself carries cultural value because it reflects accumulated local knowledge and traditional expertise. Preserving these techniques is therefore essential to maintaining the authenticity and continuity of the delicacy.

Sub-Theme 5.1: Intergenerational Knowledge Transfer

Participants reiterated that traditional preparation methods are learned primarily through observation and participation within the household or community. Elderly family members play a central role in transmitting culinary skills to younger generations, reinforcing kinship relationships and cultural continuity.

These findings align with Alcala’s (2012) perspective that traditional recipes and food practices are often preserved through embodied learning and imitation rather than written instruction. In the context of Halaya Sampalok, cooking becomes both a practical activity and a cultural practice through which historical knowledge and identity are sustained across generations.

Theme 6: Under Recognition and the Need for Promotion

The final theme highlights the limited recognition of Halaya Sampalok outside General Trias and emphasizes the necessity of institutional support for its preservation and promotion. Participants acknowledged that despite its cultural importance, the delicacy remains largely absent from mainstream culinary tourism, commercial establishments, and heritage documentation initiatives.

One participant remarked that “not many people still recognize Halaya Sampalok because it is not yet available in restaurants,” illustrating the lack of public exposure surrounding the delicacy. The findings indicate that there is a strong need for organized cultural preservation efforts to ensure the continuity and wider recognition of Halaya Sampalok. Participants suggested that cultural mapping, heritage programs, and tourism initiatives could contribute to increasing awareness and appreciation of the delicacy.

Sub-Theme 6.1: Cultural Mapping as a Heritage Tool

Participants recognized cultural mapping as an important strategy for documenting and preserving Halaya Sampalok as part of the municipality’s intangible cultural heritage. According to the NCCA (2019), cultural mapping involves the systematic identification and documentation of tangible and intangible cultural resources to support cultural identity and community development.

The findings suggest that integrating Halaya Sampalok into local cultural mapping initiatives may strengthen institutional recognition and support for the delicacy. Collaboration between local government units, cultural organizations, and tourism offices may further enhance efforts to preserve and promote the culinary tradition through festivals, heritage education, and community programs.

Sub-Theme 6.2: Culinary Heritage and Cultural Tourism

The findings further demonstrate the potential of Halaya Sampalok as a cultural tourism resource. Participants believed that promoting the delicacy through local festivals, tourism campaigns, and restaurant integration could increase public awareness while strengthening local identity and economic activity.

Consistent with the NCCA (2019), traditional food practices become more sustainable when incorporated into cultural policies and community-based tourism initiatives. The promotion of Halaya Sampalok through heritage tourism and educational programs may therefore contribute not only to cultural preservation but also to local economic development. Ultimately, the findings affirm that safeguarding traditional foods such as Halaya Sampalok is essential in preserving the cultural identity, historical memory, and culinary heritage of General Trias, Cavite.

Conclusion

The findings of the study revealed that Halaya Sampalok is more than a traditional delicacy in General Trias; it is an important expression of cultural identity, social cohesion, and collective memory within the community. The delicacy continues to play a significant role during family reunions, fiestas, birthdays, and seasonal celebrations, reflecting its enduring relevance in local cultural practices. Participants emphasized that Halaya Sampalok symbolizes togetherness, hospitality, and familial unity, demonstrating how traditional food practices preserve social relationships and reinforce communal belonging. The study further established that the delicacy functions as an important intangible cultural heritage that embodies the traditions, beliefs, and historical experiences of the people of General Trias.

The study also revealed that Halaya Sampalok contributes to the socio-economic life of the community by serving as a source of livelihood for local vendors and small-scale producers. The preparation and sale of the delicacy provide supplemental income opportunities, particularly during tamarind season, while also promoting local entrepreneurship. Furthermore, the findings highlighted the role of balikbayan and overseas Filipinos in sustaining cultural attachment to the delicacy, as Halaya Sampalok is often brought abroad as a representation of local identity and heritage. This demonstrates that traditional foods may function not only as economic resources but also as cultural symbols that connect individuals to their place of origin despite geographical distance.

Another important finding of the study is that the preservation of Halaya Sampalok relies primarily on informal intergenerational transmission of knowledge. The preparation techniques, recipes, and cultural meanings associated with the delicacy are commonly passed down through observation, participation, and family interaction. However, despite the continuity of these traditional practices, the study identified limited public recognition and insufficient institutional support as major challenges affecting the broader preservation and promotion of Halaya Sampalok. The delicacy remains relatively unknown outside General Trias and is rarely integrated into commercial food establishments, tourism initiatives, or formal heritage programs.

Based on these findings, the study recommends that local government units, cultural organizations, and tourism offices strengthen initiatives aimed at preserving and promoting Halaya Sampalok as part of the culinary heritage of General Trias. Cultural mapping projects, heritage festivals, culinary exhibitions, and educational campaigns may be conducted to increase public awareness and recognition of the delicacy. The inclusion of Halaya Sampalok in local tourism programs, restaurant menus, and cultural events may also contribute to the preservation of traditional culinary practices while generating additional economic opportunities for local producers and vendors. Furthermore, documentation of traditional preparation methods and oral histories should be encouraged to ensure that indigenous culinary knowledge is preserved for future generations.

Finally, future researchers may further expand the study by exploring comparative analyses of traditional delicacies from other municipalities in Cavite and neighboring provinces. Additional studies may also examine the role of culinary heritage in tourism development, youth engagement, and cultural sustainability using broader participant groups and interdisciplinary approaches. By preserving and promoting traditional foods such as Halaya Sampalok, communities may strengthen their cultural identity, protect their intangible heritage, and sustain valuable local traditions amid the continuing influence of globalization and modernization.

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