



Laha Bete as a Traditional Culinary Typical of Sinjai Regency

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ABSTRACTS

Each community has a unique culinary that reflects their respective regions. In Sinjai Regency, there is Laha Bete which is processed from anchovy which is a marine product of the Sinjai community. This paper intends to describe the traditional food of Laha Bete as a legacy from the ancestors to be known together. The method used in collecting research data is a qualitative research method, which includes in-depth interviews with informants and observations of the object of study and the collection of related documents. The processing of Laha Bete is unique because it is processed through vinegar immersion which has long been known by the public. The materials used in the past and present have been added as a result of the development of the times and the knowledge possessed by the community. The ingredients used in the past were only anchovies, grated coconut and salt for flavoring. But now there are additional ingredients such as vetsin, fried shallots, sliced red chilies, basil leaves or soup leaves. In the past, coastal communities only made Laha Bete as family consumption, but its development is now presented in activities or celebration parties held by the people of Sinjai Regency.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Sinjai is one of the regencies in South Sulawesi Province. Sinjai Regency has 9 sub-districts, including North Sinjai District, East Sinjai District, Central Sinjai District, West Sinjai District, South Sinjai District, Sinjai Borong District, Bulupoddo District, Tellu Limpoe District, and Pulau Sembilan District. Sinjai Regency is surrounded by mountains and oceans or coastal areas. The coastal areas are located in the sub-districts of North Sinjai, East Sinjai and Pulau Sembilan. The mountainous areas are located in the districts of West Sinjai, South Sinjai, Central Sinjai, Sinjai Borong, and Tellu Limpoe. There are Sinjai people who work as fishermen, farmers, traders, and others.

From a biological point of view, humans and all living things must eat as a condition for survival. Unlike other creatures, eating in human history has been an integral part of human evolution. Food for anthropologists is placed as a very important culture because it is inseparable from human life. Food is cultural according to Massimo Montanari in his book *Food is Culture*. Food is a human construct. Humans do not directly eat something obtained from nature, but they process it first before consuming it. Therefore Montanari argues that food is more artificial than natural (Setiawan, 2016). Food is something that has always existed in society which is a common communal object throughout history, which was once just an object of a symbol with the meaning to sustain life and to relieve hunger or to fulfill the desire of an empty stomach (Purna & Dwikayana, 2019). Food is one of the primary needs which is the result of human work and is a form of human culture.

People in Sinjai Regency who work as fishermen usually catch many types of fish. One of them is anchovy. Anchovy is a fish that has a size of about 12 cm. Anchovy is usually consumed by the Sinjai people with various preparations. The famous anchovy preparation is Laha Bete. These foods are mostly consumed by people living on the coast. A Danish ethicist and agricultural & food expert, Christian Coff describes human eating activities as a form of intimate relationship between humans and their environment outside of themselves. According to him, eating is a process that involves several stages, namely the stage of seeing, then with the stage of smelling and finally tasting (Setiawan, 2016). Traditional food owned by a region in Indonesia becomes a cultural heritage and asset for the people who live in the area as well as for the Indonesian state and knowing and getting to know the food can be seen from various aspects, for example the history and culture of eating and its philosophy (Elsty & Nahdlah, 2020).

Laha Bete has been known to the Sinjai community for a long time and is part of the culture of the people living on the coast. Regarding the year of its initial appearance, it is not known with certainty, but it is believed that the food has been around for a long time even before colonial rule. The culinary has two syllables, namely the word *laha* which means food mixed with coconut, and *bete* which means the name of anchovy. Now Laha Bete has become one of the icons of Sinjai Regency.

Laha Bete is a favorite food for the Sinjai people and people from outside the region. With the development of the era that is unavoidable, it also results in changes in the food consumed by the community. Changes occur in the materials used and methods and consumption by the community.

Based on the explanation above, the writer wants to study about Laha Bete, the materials and methods of making it and its consumption by the community. The purpose of this paper

is to obtain an overview of the traditional culinary specialties of the Sinjai people, namely Laha Bete. The author hopes that this paper will be useful for society in general and for academic purposes as a reference source for further related research in the future.

3. METHOD

In this study, the method used is a qualitative method, namely research something in depth. Qualitative research is used to obtain in-depth and meaningful data, where the meaning is actual data and definite data is a value behind visible data (Sugiyono, 2015). The research method used is descriptive qualitative with the object of the study of traditional culinary Laha Bete in Sinjai Regency. Researchers collect data through interviews, observation and document collection.

Researchers in this case conduct interviews with resource persons who know and have experience related to the research theme. The first resource person was Drs. Muhannis Ara, a South Sulawesi culturalist. The next resource persons are several residents of Sinjai district who work as teachers, traders, farmers, students and housewives. They each share their knowledge about the research theme. Interviews were conducted by asking questions about Laha Bete to the informants. Answers from interviewees were recorded and recorded for important keywords. After the interview process, the researchers made observations on how to process Laha Bete in several houses of residents in Sinjai Regency. See and observe carefully the process by process until it is ready to be served.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1. Laha Bete's Traditional Culinary History

A humanist said that Laha Bete started from people living on the sea coast, where they were fishermen and mustards (a kind of crew or crew). They make the food because of the simple way of processing. Laha Bete is a traditional food that almost all coastal tribes know about. The definition of traditional food or local cuisine is food that is consumed by a group of people or served in special celebrations at a certain time as a legacy from previous generations made with recipes derived from ancestors to posterity which almost no changes that make it different from regional cuisine (Rosidine et al., 2021). Outside the Sinjai area, culinary similar to what is commonly referred to as (Lahara, Lawak, Peccok), and others. This makes the word (Laha) only known in the Sinjai community.

Laha Bete culinary has gone through a back and forth phase in its development. In ancient times the culinary was popular but a few years later it experienced a decline in consumption. In the 1990s, a humanist wrote a song called Laha Bete. And make the people of Sinjai who hear it remember back to the culinary. The lyrics of the song Laha Bete reflect the process of making it "(Betemi ri pangngajai, ri remme pangesse nipa, riteppang kaluku pura lung, ripeccoreng lemo-lemo, ricobereng pesse fields, retailanni laha bete...)" which means "Mairo fish which is processed, soaked in vinegar, sprinkled with grated coconut, given orange juice, made a spicy sauce, named Laha Bete".

4.2. Bete Laha Processing Material

The ingredients used to make traditional Laha Bete culinary are anchovies, coconut, and vinegar. Oranges, salt, flavoring, and sugar as a flavor enhancer. Commonly added ingredients

are shallots, soup leaves or basil leaves as fragrances and add aesthetic value. However, if you refer back to the past, the ingredients used by coastal communities are only using anchovies as a staple and grated coconut which they roast briefly and salt as a taste enhancer. Unlike now which contains many ingredients, for example, the use of vetsin and so on. This is because the era is increasingly moving forward and the advancement of knowledge of the people, so that new innovations appear, especially in terms of food which is the main factor for human survival.

Anchovy is a staple ingredient of the culinary creation of Laha Bete. Anchovy is easy to find in coastal areas. The coastal areas in Sinjai include the sub-districts of North, East and Pulau Sembilan. In North Sinjai it was found in Lappa Village and in East Sinjai it was found in Tongketongke Village and on Pulau Sembilan. The other 6 sub-districts are mountainous areas. So to get seafood they buy from outside. The price of anchovy is quite affordable for all levels of society. Sometimes there is a phrase "cheapest fish" that is attached to anchovies. Although the price of Mairo fish is cheap and its size is small, the fish is rich in the benefits it contains. Mairo fish is rich in calcium and magnesium, which are important for the body.

The coconut used in the manufacture of Laha Bete is a half old coconut. The coconut is grated and then roasted briefly and then mixed with anchovies and other ingredients. Coconuts are quite common in Sinjai Regency because the majority of the area is mountainous.

The types of vinegar used by the Sinjai people are traditional vinegar and modern processed vinegar. Vinegar is a product that is usually produced through a fermentation process using ingredients from nature, for example sap, apples, grapes, and so on. The traditional vinegar referred to by the Sinjai people is called nipa vinegar and inru vinegar. Nipa vinegar is a fermented vinegar from nipa palm wine, which comes from the nipa tree (*Nypa Fructicans* Wurmb). Nipah trees are plants that are commonly found in tidal areas by the sea or in mangrove areas (Yeni et al., 2013). Therefore, the people who use nipa vinegar are those who live in coastal areas. Meanwhile, inru vinegar is vinegar that is fermented from inru palm wine which comes from palm or palm trees (*Arenga pinnata* Merr). This vinegar is made from a traditional fermentation process that does not use expensive equipment or costs. This vinegar has long been known by the public, which can be consumed and has many health benefits (Leasa & Matdoan, 2015). Inru vinegar is usually used by people who live in highland or mountainous areas. According to people who use traditional vinegar (nipa vinegar and inru vinegar), they take approximately 3 days to ferment. After that time they can use it as vinegar to process anchovies into Laha Bete cuisine. The use of traditional vinegar is generally used by ancient people. Today most people tend to use modern vinegar. One of the Laha Bete traders said that he prefers to use modern vinegar because the aroma and taste produced is better than using traditional vinegar and it is easier to get because it is widely available in shops around where he lives. The method of processing Laha Bete in the Sinjai community has a slight difference in the immersion stage. There are those who soak the fish first in vinegar, then clean it, and there are those who clean the fish first and then soak it in vinegar. Soaking takes less than 1 hour. The purpose of soaking mario fish with vinegar is to remove the fishy smell of fish and make the fish ripen. Because Laha Bete culinary does not go through the process of being cooked, fried, or burned, but only through the process of soaking it in vinegar. According to the informant, elsewhere there are people who use persimmon bark (uli' aju baddok or adien). The use of this persimmon bark because it has a sour taste so it can also function to ripen fish. After the soaking and cleaning process by removing the fish head and taking the bones, the mairo fish are washed with water while sorting back the fish bones

that may still be left on the fish. After clean, half-old grated coconut, salt, sugar, and flavorings are added and then stirred until smooth. And don't forget to squeeze with kaffir lime to add fragrance. Finally, it is given a slice of curly red chili and fried red onion so that there is a spicy taste and also a fragrant taste and adds a beautiful appearance. This finished Laha Bete culinary can last for approximately 12 hours from the time it was processed. and seasoning is added and then stirred until smooth. And don't forget to squeeze with kaffir lime to add fragrance. Finally, it is given a slice of curly red chili and fried red onion so that there is a spicy taste and also a fragrant taste and adds a beautiful appearance. This finished Laha Bete culinary can last for approximately 12 hours from the time it was processed. and seasoning is added and then stirred until smooth. And don't forget to squeeze with kaffir lime to add fragrance. Finally, it is given a slice of curly red chili and fried red onion so that there is a spicy taste and also a fragrant taste and adds a beautiful appearance. This finished Laha Bete culinary can last for approximately 12 hours from the time it was processed.

4.3. Consumption of Laha Bete

Based on information from sources, many people like Laha Bete culinary, but not all of them can make it. The processing of Laha Bete by people who are not local residents of Sinjai will feel different from those made by the local Sinjai community.

The traditional culinary taste of Laha Bete is unique, because it has a sweet and sour taste and a slightly spicy and savory taste from a mixture of grated coconut. In the past, Laha Bete was only consumed by people in coastal areas as side dishes. They eat with family and serve for their guests who come to visit their residence. In recent years it has been included in important events organized by the Sinjai community. For example, when there are Sinjai people who hold a wedding party, they provide Laha bete culinary for their invited guests. Likewise when there are people who hold salvation events, aqiqah, and other important events.

An informant from the South Sinjai sub-district said that the people there consume Laha Bete when they have the ingredients. Because there are mountains, the anchovy is obtained from outside brought by traders who come from North Sinjai or East Sinjai. When holding an event or thanksgiving they also serve it. People there like and prefer to eat than other food served. Informants from the East Sinjai sub-district said that people in the area also often consume Laha Bete. This is because East Sinjai is a coastal area that makes it easy for them to get the basic ingredients, namely Anchovy and the same thing also happens in the communities in Pulau Sembilan and North Sinjai Districts.

There are several people who become culinary producers of Laha Bete. But most of them sell it in the month of Ramadan. They usually peddle their goods in front of their homes or take them to the nearest market, and some leave it to a stall or a trader in the market by dividing the profits by a certain percentage. There are also those who sell according to orders from customers. One of the producers in North Sinjai District who sells during the fasting month said that he had been selling since last year and was assisted by his son in the manufacturing process. The factor that drives him to trade is the taste of the people around where he lives who like Laha Bete culinary. He used to make about 30 boxes per day. Each box he sells at a price of Rp. 5,000. From these sales, he can make a profit of approximately 50% every day. In addition, there are also stalls that provide Laha Bete on the menu.

Consumers who usually eat it are local residents of Sinjai and immigrants from outside the area.

In general, the consumption of Laha Bete is now more favored by the elderly. This is caused by many factors. Like the emergence and development of food from outside. Also based on the taste and mood of the individual who wants to consume it. The efforts of the Sinjai Regency government in empowering and introducing Sinjai Laha Bete culinary specialties are reflected in the proposal of Laha Bete as an intangible cultural heritage and has been approved by the Ministry of Education and Culture of the Republic of Indonesia; and every activity at the Home Office (Rujab) Sinjai is always served to important guests from outside the Sinjai area who come to visit.

5. CONCLUSION

Sinjai Regency has a traditional culinary specialty called Laha Bete. Laha Bete began to be consumed by people living in coastal areas and then spread and was widely known by the general public. At first Laha Bete was only for family consumption, but in recent years it has been presented when holding important events. For example, when the Sinjai people hold a wedding, they prepare the culinary. And at the haqiqah event, congratulations and served to welcome important guests who come to visit. There are also some residents who produce and then trade, but there is no specific MSME that produces them. Laha Bete's traditional cuisine does not last long, only 12 hours after its processing. So it would be better if there is a special formula created in the future that will make the culinary can be consumed by the public anywhere and anytime or a kind of frozen food. Laha Bete's traditional cuisine has recently become rare. Due to several factors that cause it. Laha Bete is a special culinary that is an intangible cultural heritage that must be maintained so that it does not become extinct, so that future generations, our children and grandchildren can know and feel it.

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