

## **MALAYSIAN HERITAGE FOOD FOODWAYS AMONG YOUNG GENERATION**

### **Makanan Warisan Malaysia “Foodways” di Kalangan Generasi Muda**

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#### **Abstract**

This study was conducted to examine the extent of knowledge and awareness of today's young generation about Malaysian Heritage Food and their foodways according to their respective races. The study was conducted using quantitative techniques or methods using a Likert scale. 15 questions were constructed involving 160 respondents in Politeknik Sultan Idris Shah, Selangor. Studies show that the younger generation still identifies about Malaysian Heritage Food of their respective races. However, majority of respondents do not know Malaysian Heritage Food' foodways even though Malaysian Heritage Food has been documented and gazetted since 2005. For that reason, in order to avoid the extinction of traditional food preparation methods, the roles and responsibilities of parents are very significant to ensure sustainability of Malaysian Heritage Food foodways as they are the closest group to the younger generation. In addition, all parties related to Malaysian Heritage Food particularly National Heritage Department, Badan Warisan Malaysia (BWM), a non-governmental organization which focusing on heritage conservation and also academicians shall diversify methods, technique and practice of identification, promotion and conservation so that Malaysian Heritage Food foodways do not decrease by time.

Keywords: Malaysian Heritage Food, Foodways, Young Generation

#### **Abstrak**

Kajian ini dijalankan untuk mengkaji sejauh mana pengetahuan dan kesedaran generasi muda masa kini mengenai Makanan Warisan Malaysia dan cara penyediaan hingga cara makan mengikut kaum masing-masing. Kajian ini dilakukan dengan menggunakan teknik atau kaedah kuantitatif dengan menggunakan skala Likert. 15 soalan dibina melibatkan 160 responden di sekitar Selangor. Kajian menunjukkan bahawa generasi muda masih mengenali Makanan Warisan Malaysia berdasarkan kaum masing-masing. Walaubagaimanapun, majoriti responden tidak mengetahui cara masakan, ramuan dan jenis peralatan Makanan Warisan Malaysia walaupun Makanan Warisan Malaysia telah didokumentasikan dan diwartakan sejak tahun 2005. Atas sebab itu, untuk mengelakkan kepupusan kaedah penyediaan makanan tradisional, peranan dan tanggungjawab ibu bapa sangat penting untuk memastikan kelestarian makanan Makanan Warisan Malaysia kerana mereka adalah kumpulan terdekat dengan generasi muda. Di samping itu, semua pihak yang berkaitan dengan Makanan Warisan Malaysia terutamanya Jabatan Warisan Negara, Badan Warisan Malaysia (BWM), sebuah organisasi bukan kerajaan yang memfokuskan diri pada pemuliharaan warisan dan juga ahli akademik harus mempelbagaikan

kaedah, teknik dan amalan pengenalan, promosi dan pemuliharaan agar Makanan Warisan Malaysia tidak luput ditelan zaman.

Kata kunci: Makanan Warisan Malaysia, Makanan, Generasi Muda

## **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

Malaysia is well known as a wonderful and multiracial country consisting of 80 ethnic groups the majority of the Malays, Chinese, Indians and others which living in harmony and peace. On top of that, all races could apply their respective religion, custom and tradition without hesitation. Each race has its own way of life, belief and traditional food. We all know the importance of food to human beings. Scientifically, food supplies energy, builds and repairs new or damaged body tissues, and protects the body from disease. Nevertheless, food also has a social function that is to bring identity for a race. Therefore, the National Heritage Department has gazetted 213 Malaysia Heritage Foods (MHF) under Act 645 (National Heritage Act) as a measure to preserve the traditional food of each race (Kamal, 2020; Bernama, 2019). Among the foods that have been gazetted as Malaysian Heritage Food are nasi lemak, rendang, laddu, mee mamak, char kiew tiau, yong taufu and others. In spite of that, the process in the making of MHF cannot be forgettable and should not be abandoned which is also known as foodways. Foodways are ways of preparing food, ingredients used, utensils and ways of eating. The word has existed since 1942 when it was founded by John W. Bennet Harvey L. Smith and Herbert Passin (Laudan, 2017). In social science, foodways are the cultural, social and economic practices relating to the production, preparation and consumption of food. Foodways often refers to the intersection of food in culture, traditions and history (Darnton, 2012). Darnton (2012) stated that –

“ Food traditions that have been passed through your family are more than just recipes – they’re windows into the culture and history of those who came before you,”

Foodways are “all of the traditional activities, attitudes, beliefs and behaviors associated with the food in your daily life. Foodways include customs of food production, preservation, preparation, presentation, gathering, marketing (both buying and selling), and uses of food products other than for eating and food folklore.” (Bortolotto and Ubertazi, 2018). In many religions and cultures, certain foods are gathered and prepared in the same way for each celebration or at specific times of year. These traditions may be written down or shared through oral history (Di Giovine and Brulotte, 2014).

## **2.0 PROBLEM STATEMENT**

Research on Malaysia Heritage Foods (MHF) have been deliberated and studied by Omar and Omar (2018), Ramli, Zahari, Halim and Aris (2016), Raji, Karim, Ishak and Arshad (2017), Noriza, Zahari, Muhammad and Hannita (2012) and Omar, Karim, Bakar and Omar (2015). However, few studies focusing on Malaysia Heritage Foods (MHF) foodways. According to Omar and Omar (2018), gazetted and documenting Malaysia Heritage Foods (MHF) as valuable intangible heritage is an easy task. However, to ensure the continuity of the practical applications which known as foodways within the society is merely difficult. In addition to that, the word foodways is relatively new to Malaysians and some do not know the existence of this word.

Muhammad, Zahari, Shariff and Abdullah (2016) stated that the lack of studies on the MHF foodways may affected the authenticity of MHF due to acculturation and assimilation within multiracial Malaysian community. Over and above, the urbanization and globalization process may affect the authenticity and genuineness of MHF foodways (Omar and Omar, 2018). Into the bargain, glocalization process also exaggerated the foodways that should be passes from generation to generation in a way to prevent the extinction of MHF foodways which directly acts as a symbol and represent races correspondingly. The glocalization process also exaggerated MHF and its foodways because most of fast food restaurant have been localized their food and menus to suit local food cultures. Bernama (2019) stated that many however, are slowly disappearing from the local menu due to changing times and evolving palates. It is no surprise that many of the younger generation have not even heard of some of these foods and its foodways, once firm favourites of their great grandparents. Therefore, this study aims to investigate the knowledge on 213 Malaysia Heritage Foods (MHF) and most importantly its foodways among young generation in the year 2021.

### 3.0 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study aims to identify the knowledge of Malaysia Heritage Foods (MHF) and its foodways among young generation using the quantitative method to gather all necessary information. The information needed for this study was collected from 160 respondents in Polytechnic Sultan Idris Shah using self-completed questionnaire survey. There are 15 questionnaire developed and using Likert Scale (1- Strongly Disagree to 5-Strongly Agree). The result was analysed by SPSS software and the level of knowledge of Malaysian Heritage Food (MHF) and its foodways was using mean score interpretation method (Moidunny, 2009) as shown at Table 3.1.

**Table 3.1: Mean Score Interpretation**

Mean score	Interpretation
1.00 - 1.80	Very Low
1.81 - 2.60	Low
2.61 - 3.20	Medium
3.21 - 4.20	High
4.21 - 5.00	Very High

Source: Moidunny, 2009

### 4.0 FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

#### 4.1 Respondents' Profile

Demographic (N=160)	Frequency	Percent (%)
Gender		
Male	81	49.4
Female	79	50.6
Age		
18-21	67	42.2
22-25	72	45

26-30	21	12.5
Race		
Malay	131	81.9
Chinese	17	10.6
Indian	12	7.5

4.2 Knowledge on Malaysian Heritage Food (MHF) Item	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree	Mean	Interpretation
	A1. I know about Malaysian heritage food.	0.6	1.9	15.6	38.8	43.1	4.22
A2. I know Malaysian heritage food is always found during festivals according to their respective races /	1.3	1.9	11.3	29.4	56.3	4.38	Very high
A3. I understand the history of Malaysian heritage food in our country	1.9	6.3	35.6	26.9	29.4	3.76	High
A4. I know a variety of Malaysian heritage food is served at every festival	0.6	2.5	21.3	30	45.6	4.18	High
A5. I understand the Malaysian heritage food customs of every race in our country.	1.3	4.4	24.4	33.1	36.9	4.00	High
<b>Overall Total</b>						<b>4.11</b>	<b>High</b>

Accordingly, the results found that the knowledge of respondents consisting of the younger generation is high where (82%, n = 131) and 46.4% of respondents (n = 29) tend to response neutral, disagree and strongly disagree. In this manner, the findings showed that young generation still recognize and conscious on their own traditional food respectively. Subsequently, 86% (n = 137) respondents stated that they always encounter and bump into MHF during the festive season according to their respective races. Due to the fact, this discovery is significant and vital because it shows and ascertained that the MHF has been cooked, prepared and served during festive seasons for instance Hari Raya Aidilfitri for the Malays, Chinese New Year for the Chinese and Deepavali for the Indian. On the ground of this, the transmission and the inheritance of MHF are being passed, showed and practiced from generation to generation. As the matter of fact, this findings are corresponding with previous studies by other scholar for instance Hamzah et al., (2015); Sharif, Zahari, Nor, & Muhammad (2013), Vitterso & Amilien (2011), and Adilah et al (2016).

#### 4.3 Knowledge Malaysian Heritage Food (MHF) Foodways

Item	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree	Mean	Interpretation
	C1. I know how to cook Malaysian Heritage Food.	6.3	18.1	37.5	21.3	16.9	3.20

C2. I cook Malaysian Heritage Food using traditional methods	8.1	16.9	37.5	21.3	16.3	3.20	Medium
C3. I know the ingredients to cook Malaysian Heritage Food.	3.1	10.6	30.6	28.1	27.5	3.2	Medium
C4. I know the traditional equipment to cook Malaysian Heritage Food.	6.9	16.3	31.9	23.1	21.9	3.37	High
C5. I serve Malaysian Heritage Food using the old-fashioned way	8.8	13.8	40	17.5	20	3.20	Medium
<b>Overall Total</b>						<b>3.2</b>	<b>Medium</b>

As well as that, the results showed that only 38% (n = 61) respondents knew how to cook Malaysian Heritage Food and 62% (n = 99) respondents chose to answer neutral, disagree and strongly disagree. This finding is somewhat worrisome as respondents tend to answer neutrally. This indicates that the respondents are not sure whether they know or do not know how to cook their own traditional food according to their respective races. The results also found that 37% (n = 60) respondents knew how to cook Malaysian Heritage Food using traditional methods and 63% (n = 100) respondents answered otherwise. This finding is also quite worrying because the majority of respondents answered neutral as if they were not sure how to cook Malaysian Heritage Food using traditional methods. However, 45% (n = 72) respondents answered that they know the traditional equipment used to prepare Malaysian Heritage Food such as stone mortar, coconut grater and cake mold. Next, 37% (n = 60) respondents stated that they serve national heritage food according to traditional methods while 63% (n = 100) answered otherwise. These results also show that the majority of respondents are not sure whether they know how to eat and serve the traditional food of their respective races. The study by Muhammad, Zahari, Abdullah and Shariff (2015) stated that young generation less able to prepare their own festival foods. To tell the truth, they are no longer intense on practicing the traditions and always need parents on hand in preparing the festival foods. Some ethnics are reported not only facing the deskilling issues related to domestic cooking skills but starting to lost the heritage food culture (Stringer, 2010; Bowen & Devine, 2010). Chenhall (2011) noted that transition of heritage food practices are less taking among the young generation primarily owing to the increased availability of processed, pre-prepared and convenience foods within the retail and foodservice environments. Consequently, the heritage practices may be forgotten by modern practitioners and young generations (Pieniak, Verbeke, Vanhonacker, Guerrero, & Hersleth, 2009).

## 5.0 CONCLUSION

To put it all together, young generation still have the knowledge on Malaysian Heritage Food (MHF) which has been gazetted and documented by National Heritage Department under Act 645-National Heritage Act since 2005. Therefore, this findings showed that there is transmission of Malaysian Heritage Food (MHF) knowledge from the older generation towards young generation which apparently their parents, the person who are very close to them. This is because according to Omar and Omar (2018), Malaysia currently facing serious issue in preserving this intangible heritage. In addition, further study should be done on the transmission of MHF knowledge. However, the research on MHF foodways are quite worrying due to the lack and limited number of research. This is because; the foodways are vital and crucial in the making of MHF itself. Over and above, the traditional method of cooking, the traditional ingredient, the traditional equipment used and the eating pattern are the most significant and fundamental factor

in the making of MHF as well as to maintain the originality, novelty and uniqueness in term of taste, smell, presentation and style. For that reason, the responsible yet accountable body for instance National Heritage Department, the well-known non-government organization (NGO), Badan Warisan Negara (BWN) from practical perspective and all academician from academic perspective particularly in culinary and foodservice field should put an enormous and massive attention and devotion on MHF foodways' transmission and inheritance in a way to preserve the authenticity of irreplaceable and distinctive Malaysian Heritage Food (MHF). For all intents and purposes, all related and associated body on MHF can stand shoulder to shoulder and work together to realize the mission for instance conducting research, holding forums involving young generation, conducting interesting yet fascinating program involving teenagers, conducting cooking competition among school children and many more activities to create the mission a big success.

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