

Innovation in Corn-Based Culinary Products for Soups and Desserts in Maquili District, Ataúro Municipality

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Abstract - *The study explored the traditional cooking of corn porridge for multi-use in culinary products, transforming it into soup and dessert menu in Maquili Village, Ataúro Municipality, using a descriptive and qualitative methodology, data were gathered through direct observation, interviews, and literature review, with a sample of four (4) respondents taken from the total population of 2,737. The findings highlight the potential of corn porridge to be innovated and adapted into diverse menu options, preserving its cultural significance while enhancing marketability and nutritional value. Grounded in theories of culinary innovation and sustainability, this research underscores the role of traditional foods in promoting sustainable food systems and cultural heritage. The study offers a practical model for developing innovative uses of local products, paving the way for economic and gastronomic advancements while fostering the integration of traditional foods into modern culinary practices.*

Keywords - Corn Porridge, Culinary Product, Soup, Dessert.

I. INTRODUCTION

In today's world, investment and development are crucial, especially in tourism. We need to keep growing and boosting income for sustainability. This protects our economy for the benefit of our people and nation. As an independent and democratic nation, we recognize the importance of investments in economic activities, especially in tourist destinations. Entrepreneurs and traders engage in these activities legally in local, national, and international markets. Moreover, investing in legal economic activities helps increase income for entrepreneurs, ensuring the sustainability of industries while generating revenue for national development. In Timor-Leste, investment in tourism is a key program for the IX Constitutional Government (2023-2028). The government sees tourism as a vital engine for economic growth. It aims to protect the nation's natural, cultural, and spiritual heritage. The program highlights the country's beauty, resources, and unique cultural experiences that stand out globally.

Tourism is also a way to generate income and promote local products from communities, including rural areas. The local population wants to create beautiful, clean, and attractive tourist environments. When local products are developed and marketed effectively, they can attract tourists to Timor-Leste. This allows local communities to benefit economically from tourism through effective visits to their sites and activities. According to Mamonto (2018) defines tourism as the temporary travel of tourists from one place to another. Tourists travel not just to invest or conduct business, but also to enjoy the beauty and cleanliness of their destinations. Their trips are opportunities to relax and learn new things, as well as to meet their needs through planned activities. Tourism involves conscious exchanges of services between tourists and their home countries. Some scholars view tourism as an industry that can invest in local products, benefiting consumers and positively impacting the economy, culture, and community life.

Travelers need accommodation to rest and recharge. Hotels in local communities provide clean, friendly, and comfortable rooms, along with nutritious food and beverages. During their stay, tourists often enjoy traditional and innovative dishes made from local ingredients. In Timor-Leste, some local products have begun to develop, thanks to local entrepreneurs. However, many have yet to meet national and international tourism standards

due to limited resources and facilities. Local products like wheat and barley are produced by agricultural communities. If products like corn porridge are well-developed and innovated, they could generate income from tourist visits. Culinary innovation is vital for providing quality services to tourists. Culinary tourism, or food tourism, involves visiting places known for their food. According to (Di & Dki, 2021) note that the culinary industry has great potential to develop local products that appeal to tourists. These foods should be original, tasty, and reasonably priced to enhance visitors' experiences. According to Rahma et al. (2017), culinary tourism is not just about economics; it's also about preserving cultural heritage and community sustainability. Melelo (2023) explains that traditional food is made from recipes passed down through generations. This food reflects cultural heritage and the identity of a community. Traditional dishes are unique to each place, with their own qualities and meanings.

Regarding corn products, Fiqriansyah et al. (2021) state that corn is a cereal crop originally from Mexico. It's the second main source of carbohydrates after grain products. The production of traditional food, including corn porridge (batar-nurak) in Maquili Village, is significant for local communities in Timor-Leste. However, traditional food production needs innovation to meet modern standards. For instance, batar-nurak can be transformed into soups and desserts for tourists and consumers. As an Ataúro resident, I affirm that batar-nurak and batar-tuan are staple foods for our communities. They rely on agriculture, producing wheat and barley. Preparing these foods involves a labor-intensive cooking process, such as pounding corn and mixing it with rice. With these realities in mind, we are motivated to research: "Innovation in Corn porridge Products for Soup and Dessert in Maquili Sub-District, Ataúro Municipality." This research aims to contribute to the development and innovation of local corn products, enhancing food security and generating income for the sustainable future of Timor-Leste.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. Product Innovation

Product innovation is about creating and using new ideas to improve local products. It responds to changing market needs. This can include changes in design, materials, technology, or function to make products more appealing to consumers. The goal is to develop better, more efficient, and attractive products. This increases a company's competitiveness in the market. Yaniar (2018) says product innovation involves many linked processes. For example, the product batar nurak is transformed into soup and dessert using different ingredients in creative ways.

Alamsyah (2015) also states that product innovation is about generating new ideas and using creativity to attract customers. Innovation isn't just a new idea; it combines various processes for business growth. Product innovation turns knowledge into new local products through updated processes and actions. Sinurat & Sumanti (2017) define innovation as a new approach to making changes within an organization to boost competitive advantage. Organizational innovation encourages creative thinking and the application of personal knowledge to solve challenges.

B. Culinary

Culinary refers to food and drink products that are essential for daily life. It represents a lifestyle and connects people with their needs. According to Maritim & Ali (2024), the term culinary comes from the English word "culinary," relating to cooking skills. In Indonesian, it has a similar meaning. Culinary spaces allow visitors to choose food and dining options. These spaces should be practical and comfortable for preparing food. Cooking is common and often happens at home. It involves preparing food and drinks, ensuring everyone can enjoy meals. Therefore, we highlight corn porridge products to promote them at tourist attractions on the island of Ataúro. Kusmaya et al. (2018) note that food tourism offers unique experiences. It influences travelers' choices about food and activities.

Culinary experiences are vital to daily life and lifestyle. Prabandari et al. (2023) describe traditional cuisine as food made from local products. These are processed using familiar methods, giving them unique flavors that locals love. Culinary involves preparing raw ingredients creatively. This topic explores renewing traditional products while using technology to create modern experiences. This can help attract visitors to the area.

C. Dessert

Dessert, typically served after the main course, can also function as a palate cleanser, especially after meals with strong flavors. Desserts can be produced in two ways (Andrianti et al., 2014). The two categories are as follows:

1. Cold Desserts: Our cold desserts include Bread Pudding; Choux pastry, a delicate pastry made with liquid dough; and Mousse, a smooth, creamy dessert. These desserts are refrigerated before serving.
2. Hot Desserts: Hot desserts are served warmly. Examples include banana flambe, souffle, apple pie, and bread pudding.

Dessert, whether hot or cold, is typically the final course. We offer both hot and cold options to cater to consumer preferences, with some preferred fruit.

D. Corn

Corn, originating in the Americas and spread globally, reached Asia and Africa via European trade, with the Portuguese introducing it to Indonesia and Timor-Leste around the 16th century (Rejo, 2020). Corn kernels contain proteins, vitamins, minerals, and other organic matter, offering nutritional value.

Wulandari et al. (2016) suggest that corn has a high potential to contribute calories, providing 15-56% of the human body's nutritional needs Jiao et.all, (2022) explored the potential of corn processing by-products (corn gluten meal, husk, and steep liquor) as valuable resources.

Their research highlights the application of these by-products in functional foods, nutrition, and industrial sectors, emphasizing their role in waste reduction and economic benefits. The study suggests that efficient processing can transform corn by-products into valuable materials for biofuels, supplements, and industrial uses, contributing to sustainability and profitability in grain processing. The research also analyzes industry trends in China and globally, providing insight into corn processing advancements for addressing environmental and economic challenges.

Rejo (2020) identifies corn as the second most strategic commodity and staple food globally. In Indonesia, it is a vital raw material for the food and livestock feed industries. Wang & Hu (2021) examined corn production efficiency and influencing factors across 12 corn-producing countries from 2012 to 2019. Using Data Envelopment Analysis (DEA) and the Tobit model, they assessed the technical efficiency of 18 farms and the impact of agricultural methods and service support.

The average technical efficiency was found to be 0.863, with a 13.7% loss. Intensive non-tillage conservation showed higher technical efficiency, and a U-shaped relationship existed between mechanized labor and technical efficiency. The study underscores the need for efficient agricultural practices to boost global grain production.

Based on the author's observations in Atauro, communities utilize corn porridge (batar-nurak) in various ways for sustenance (cooking, drying, frying). This research aims to help the Ataúro community innovate corn processing, transforming traditional methods into modern approaches for creating corn-based soups and desserts, thereby converting grain products into novel food items.

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research employs a qualitative method, as defined by Sugiyono (2019), to investigate a specific problem systematically and obtain convincing data. Primary data was collected through direct observation and in-depth interviews with four key informants: two community members, the village head, and the Director of Agriculture.

Interviews explored the history and existence of rice, rice types produced, and the evolution of cooking methods from traditional to innovative, specifically in corn-based soups and desserts designed to attract tourists. Data was analyzed using the interactive model described by Miles and Huberman (Sugiyono, 2018), involving data collection, reduction, presentation, conclusion drawing, and verification to reach definitive results. Triangulation, using diverse data sources, was employed to elaborate on the collected data.

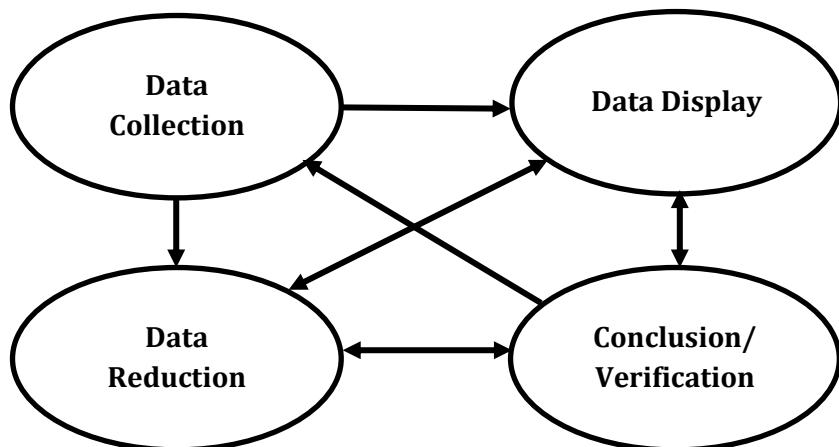


Figure 1. Interactive Model of Qualitative Data Analysis (Miles and Huberman)

IV. RESULT AND FINDINGS

A. History of Atauro Island

Ataúro's origin story tells of three brothers, Komateu, Lekitoko, and Kutukia, who repeatedly found flowers instead of fish in their traps. The island's narrowness is attributed to these failed fishing attempts. To widen the island, the brothers stood at Mount Manukoko and shot arrows in different directions. Komateu, the eldest, shot north to Vatuu. Lekitoko shot south to Berau, and Kutukia, the youngest, shot east, landing within the village. According to Calistro Pereira of the Maquili Community (2024), these arrow shots shaped Ataúro into its current form.

The local community of Ataúro speaks three languages: Rahesuk, Rasua, and Raklunyu. Ataúro's natural beauty and unique linguistic landscape have the potential to attract tourists. Tourist activities should be supported by community-provided facilities and services (Prathama et al., 2020). Ataúro's climate is generally like the rest of Timor Leste, with distinct summer and rainy seasons. The summer, typically from June to October, is longer than the rainy season (November to May), though climate change makes prediction difficult. The hot, dry soil during the summer impacts agriculture. The five sub-districts of Ataúro are Mau-meta villa, Maquili, Makadade, White, and Biqueli. To further develop tourism, the mother tongues should be preserved and promoted, while the new generation should also learn Tetum, Portuguese, and English to communicate with international tourists (Richards & Wilson, 2019). Linguistic diversity can be incorporated into hotels and restaurants, with signage in local languages and translations for foreign tourists. Tourism education in Portuguese and English can be provided to local officials, and even training in Rahesuk and Rasua for long-term visitors can provide a unique cultural value (UNESCO World Heritage Review, 2021). The integrated experience of Rai Mau-Meta Vila, Maquili, Makadade, Beloi, and Biqueli can attract visitors, with language diversity supporting the promotion of each location. Ataúro's natural landscape and linguistic culture are strong points to increase the value of sustainable tourism.

This origin story can attract tourists to Ataúro, especially the island's location in the middle of the sea. The island and the story itself could be incorporated into "cultural storytelling tours," and conserved sites like Mount Manukoko could be developed into spiritual and educational attractions. Hotels and inns can be built at historically significant locations, offering cultural experiences with local guides. Local products like corn and fruit can be used to create unique traditional dishes for visitors, potentially inspired by research into culinary innovation emphasizing tradition and sustainability (Chan et al., 2022). This would promote sustainability and make tourism a platform for preserving national identity and the local economy. To address this, ecological tourism can be promoted through continued tree planting to protect and enhance the landscape (UNWTO, 2021). Unique tourist routes can be created showcasing the dry land. Local menus can be developed around traditional foods and ecological tourism, featuring tropical and summer ingredients (Chan, Hsu & Baum, 2022). Local hospitality can be adapted to accommodate visitors in all seasons, with dialogue between tourism, communities, and government leading to investment in suitable accommodations (Richards, 2018). Sustainable agricultural

practices integrated with ecological tourism can help ensure a steady supply of local produce for hotels and restaurants.



Figure 2. Geographical Map of Ataúro Island Showing Administrative Areas and Settlements

B. History and Existence of Corn Product in Ataúro Municipality

In Ataúro Municipality, particularly Maquili sub-district, corn is a historically significant staple, valued for its taste, nutrition, and energizing properties. Traditionally, it's prepared mashed, boiled, or mixed with vegetables, mung beans, and peanuts, with production occurring seasonally during the rainy season and summer. Calistro Pereira notes corn's daily importance and identifies three main varieties: fast-growing yellow corn (tahan lima) and taller white, yellow, and brown varieties. A larger, all-white variety is also grown, and fast-growing corn is linked to cultural practices. Paulino Ximenes emphasizes corn as Ataúro's primary food source, sustaining the agricultural community. It's typically boiled, mixed with seeds, or used in cooking and frying. The Head of Maquili District highlights agriculture's centrality but notes the lack of focus on local corn product development. Government investment is limited due to perceived oversupply. Developing corn-based culinary offerings could strengthen the family economy, promote local food production, reduce reliance on imports, and transform the community into producers. The Director of Agriculture Ataúro confirms widespread corn cultivation, though yields depend on weather, and traditional processing methods prevail, hindering innovation.

Research confirms corn's status as a traditional staple. The Maquili community cultivates fast-growing, white, and large yellow corn varieties. Innovation in processing, such as developing soups and desserts from large yellow corn, is crucial for community support. Corn production is fundamental to Ataúro's agricultural life, serving as a daily food, cultural symbol, and economic support. Innovation in processing corn products is vital, especially in tourism and culinary sectors. Utilizing large yellow corn for traditional soups and innovative desserts can attract tourists, offering culinary experiences connected to local culture and sustainable agriculture.

Recommended steps for developing local products include:

1. Modernizing Processing: Transforming traditional methods to create modern corn-based foods like soups and desserts, adding value and market differentiation.
2. Integrating with Sustainable Tourism: Developing an integrated tourism promotion plan involving the local government and agricultural community, including culinary training showcasing local ethnicity.
3. Promoting Local Agriculture in Hospitality: Encouraging hotels and restaurants in Ataúro to feature local corn products, supporting the local economy and increasing agricultural production.
4. Creating Agricultural-Tourism Cooperatives: Establishing direct links between farmers and the tourism sector to support farmers, facilitate corn distribution, and promote traditional foods.

The types of corns that exist in Ataúro Municipality are presented in the following figures:



Figure 3. Varieties of Corn Cultivated in Ataúro Municipality

C. Traditional Cooking for Corn Product

Corn has been a staple food since ancient times, providing sustenance to communities before the introduction of rice. For the Maquili community, corn was their primary food, and they continue to value and consume it today, even with the availability of rice and imported products. The community preserves traditional cooking methods, using corn porridge and traditional equipment to prepare their dishes.

Table 1. Traditional Cooking Equipment Used in Corn Porridge Preparation in Maquili District, Ataúro Municipality

No	Equipment's	Name	Function
1.		Tray	The tray is used to pick up the corn and beans before pounding with stones.
2.		Stones	The stones used to pound the corn
3.		Furnace	The furnace is used to light a fire.
4.		Pan	Use to fry beans before pounding.
5.		Pan and Wooden Spoon	The pot is used to cook the mashed corn and beans, and the wooden spoon is used to scoop out the cooked beans and corn.

Table 2. Traditionally Ingredients for Cooking Corn

No	Ingredients	Name	Quantity	Units
1.		Ground Corn	1	Tray
2.		Ground Beans	1	Tray

Traditional Preparation Process of Corn Porridge

1. Prepare all the ingredients
2. Shelling corn on a tray before ground
3. Next, ground the corn.
4. Next, fry the peanuts and pound them. Once ground, mix them with the corn and start cooking.
5. Maintain water levels, increasing them as needed until the corn is ripe and ready to eat.



D. Innovation of Corn Porridge for Soup and Dessert

Corn porridge soup, made with locally sourced ingredients, is an innovative culinary creation designed for tourists. The soup has a pleasant aroma and flavor and is ideally served as a light appetizer before a main course, especially for individuals with dietary restrictions. The ingredients for cooking the soup as seen at the table below:

Table 3. Ingredients and Quantities for Preparing Corn Porridge Soup

No.	Ingredients	Name	Quantity
1.		Corn	4/300 gram
2.		Chicken	250 Gram
3.		Onions	½
4.		Shallots	4
5.		Garlic	4

.		Pepper	½ Spoon
7.		Salt	1 Spoon
8.		Leek	3
9.		Salsa leaves	2

The Process for Making Corn Soup

1. Prepare all the ingredients
2. Cut the chicken and wash it.
3. Prepare the shallots, garlic, pepper, and salt. Then, mix all the ingredients and rub them onto the chicken.
4. Cook corn and chicken together. Add prepared spring onions, salsa leaves, and chopped onions, then continue cooking until done.
5. Once the corn and chicken are cooked, let them cool briefly before chopping the corn and blending it into the soup.
6. Blend the corn and strain it on a plate so that the remaining corn doesn't mix with the soup.
7. Plate it with salsa leaves and serve it.



E. Caramel Corn Pudding

1. Caramel corn pudding, crafted with locally sourced corn, offers an innovative dessert for tourists. The recipe is designed to be flexible, encouraging culinary creativity.
2. The pudding's sweetness is dominant, overshadowing the corn flavor.
3. It serves as a light, complementary dessert following a heavy meal.
4. Individual servings can be provided to each guest.

Table 4. Ingredients for Caramel Pudding

No	Ingredients	Name	Quantity
1.		Corn	10
2.		Eggs	5
3.		Milk paus	250Cc

4.		Milk	10 Gram
5.		Sugar	15 Gram
6.		Cornstarch	1

Preparation Process of Caramel Corn Pudding

1. Prepare all the ingredients
2. Cook the corn until it is done
3. After cooking the corn, cool it down before chopping and blending.
4. It needs filtering after blending to remove corn kernels.
5. Melt the granulated sugar in a saucepan, then pour it into a mold.
6. Combine eggs with Whale milk and canned milk. Mix well, then add corn-flour and stir again. Incorporate 10 scoops of corn porridge and mix for 15 minutes. Pour into a mold, cover the pot lid with a cloth, and steam in a saucepan of boiling water for 45 minutes. Once cooked, refrigerate for 30 minutes.
7. Prepare for the plate and plating grapes and orchard after serving.



Corn porridge soup has become an important part of modern cooking. It blends traditional methods with innovative ideas to create a unique dish. Using corn products in soups offers distinct flavors that empower those who enjoy them. This dish can attract tourists, helping communities preserve local traditions and boost their economies.

1. Fragrant and Unique Taste: Corn soup has a natural flavor and aroma. It serves as an alternative to traditional soups and is gentle enough for those who are sick (Silva et al., 2022).
2. Served Ahead: Corn porridge soup is often served before the main course. This approach can benefit farms and sellers, creating authentic experiences for tourists.
3. Diet and Health: Corn porridge soup can help tackle food contamination issues. It provides essential nutrition while maintaining a traditional taste (Costa & Oliveira, 2020). Corn porridge can also be turned into desserts for tourists, adding value to gastronomic services in Atauro Municipality.

Corn soup has evolved into a tourist attraction, offering a taste of local cuisine. Pine & Gilmore (1999) noted that services embracing local traditions offer unique experiences for visitors. These innovations can reshape culinary concepts, improve local products, and enhance tourism, supporting the local economy. Ramos & Ferreira (2019) reported that local cuisine is vital for preserving traditions and attracting tourists, ultimately boosting economic recognition through innovation.

V. CONCLUSION AND RECOMENDATION

A. Conclusion

This chapter summarizes the research results and conclusions. It also offers recommendations for local authorities and researchers. These suggestions aim to promote the development of local corn products, which serve as a key source of carbohydrates. The goal is to create innovative, modern food options that support economic growth and preserve the cultural heritage of East Timor, especially through tourism. The author conducted this research to gather the community's views on corn products in Maquili Sub-District, Ataúro Municipality. The study also aimed to identify traditional cooking methods for corn porridge products.

Furthermore, it explored modern cooking techniques to create innovative culinary offerings, such as soups and desserts, to attract tourists. The research findings include:

1. The Maquili Village community values corn as a local staple, passed down since ancient times. The younger generation continues to cultivate and honor this cultural heritage, vital for their agricultural lifestyle.
2. The community primarily uses traditional cooking methods. This includes grinding corn to make flour, boiling corn kernels, and more. However, access to innovative local products, like modern soups or desserts, is limited. Although Atauro Island has tourism potential, it lacks the necessary development and investment. Therefore, there is a need to innovate grain products for culinary and hospitality sectors to meet tourist demands.
3. The author's culinary experiments showed that corn can be transformed into modern foods, such as soups and desserts. These adaptations cater to the preferences of tourists while preserving the original flavors. This research inspired the author to create innovative corn-based dishes, including soups and sweet corn pudding.
4. The research also highlights that corn porridge can be developed into corn caramel pudding, made as described in Chapter 4. This pudding is notably sweet due to the natural sweetness of the corn. It serves consumer needs as a delightful dessert option. The findings are significant. They reveal that culinary product innovation can unlock great potential for modern foods like soups and desserts in Maquili District. This innovation is crucial for boosting economic activities in tourism. By attracting tourists through innovative culinary offerings, local products can enhance the community's income and appeal to both local and international consumers. Overall, the research demonstrates that innovating local products represents a valuable economic opportunity for agriculture and the community, focusing on quality, taste, and presentation.

B. Recommendations

Based on the findings, the author offers key recommendations for local and national authorities:

1. To the Government of Timor-Leste: The Ministry of Tourism and Agriculture should create relevant policies. These should guide the community towards sustainable development, especially in tourism. The government should also provide innovative tools to help locals develop products from their agricultural work. This will help protect cultural heritage and ensure economic sustainability.
2. To the Minister of Tourism: Focus on culinary tourism to draw visitors to Timor-Leste. Organize festivals highlighting local products. Collaborate with restaurants and hotels to feature sinking light dishes on their menus.
3. To local authorities and municipalities in Timor-Leste, especially in Maquili, Ataúro Municipality: Encourage and support the community with agricultural materials. This will help locals grow food, including rice. This support will sustain daily lives and promote innovation in rice-based dishes, soups, desserts, and modern foods.
4. For the local community: Utilize wasteland and productive land for planting crops. Grow grains and other foods to generate income. Facilitate learning in tourism, culinary, and hospitality areas to develop traditional grain products into modern innovations. Promote practices for creating sinking light products.
5. For Future Researchers: Students in tourism, hospitality, and culinary fields at Instituto Profissional de Canossa should be encouraged to research similar topics. Focus on the impact of product innovation on vendors and customers. Conduct surveys on consumer interest and economic effects. Assess the cultural significance of culinary innovation.

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