

From Local Wisdom to Tourist Set Menus:

A Case Study of Ban Thung Luang, Kirimas District, Sukhothai and Ban Wang Won, Srisatchanalai District, Sukhothai

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Abstract

This research aims to study and collect evidences about food and its cultural relation in Ban Thung Luang community, Kirimas district, Sukhothai province and Ban Wang Won community, Srisatchanalai district, Sukhothai province. Folkloristic methodology is applied in this study. These sites have been developed in terms of homestay tourism. People in these communities select their individual 'signature' local dishes and serve them as a set menu for tourists. The tourists are encouraged to participate in learning how to choose food ingredients and how to cook the menu. This activity plays an important role to motivate tourists' interest about local community way of life. It is found that tourist set menus potentially generate income to the local people. It also becomes a tool to express local community ways of life and to conserve wisdom heritage of ancestors in the communities. Individual ideas and thinking processes involving the selection of ingredients, cooking methods, and food decoration grounded behind narrative stories and food cults about tourist set menus in these communities illustrate the dynamic transmission of local wisdom, beliefs, and food cults into the context of contemporary tourism.

Keywords: Community Based Tourism, Local wisdom, Local food, Folklore

Introduction

A Thai proverb, "un thamniam thai thae tae boran, krai maa thueng ruean chan thong torn rab" (due to an ancient Thai custom, anyone who comes to visit your house must be welcomed), shows that Thais have been inculcated to be nice and kind. In case of tourism, Thailand is recognized as the tourism paradise because most Thais are 'civilized' and 'warm-hearted' hosts. Thais typically prefer offering food services to their guests in order to show their companionship. Thus, the hosts who are also chefs are likely to combine local wisdom and knowledge about food into the creation of tourist set menus. Sujachaya (2018) found that the tourist set menu in the reign of king Narai Maharaja (1656-1688) was prepared and cooked in accordance with tourists' races. The tourist set menu then shows Thai's creativity and cultural development. Nowadays, the tourist set menu becomes a source of profits in modern economy and represents social and cultural identity of each community. For instance, the homestay's tourist set menu often selects its local food entitled as 'a signature dish' in order to represent the uniqueness of the community. The chefs would use local ingredients and packaging to serve food for tourists. Consequently, the variety of tourist set menus in individual regions determines the identity of individual hosts and the social bonds. Moreover, the creative ideas on the set menu also show the relationship between caterers and community as well as the adaptability of local wisdom and ancestors' intellects to the contemporary society.

Due to the booming period of homestay tourism in Thailand particularly in historical communities, the number of domestic and international tourists continuously increases (Mundee, 2015). Tourism in historical communities does not only provide shared experiences to the tourists about the significance of the communities but also creates



them a sense of living like "a host" (Rinprom, Khlangwichian, & Pongnurak, 2007). Tourist set menus represent local wisdoms and cults of the community. Particularly, the portrayal of narrative stories and cults in each menu becomes fascinating for tourists. Food tales explained by 'voices' of local people rationalize the ideas about the way they choose ingredients, cooking methods, and food decoration. Such of the explanation significantly arouses tourists' attention and creates co-experiences between "host" and "guest." Simultaneously, it encourages young generation to apply local knowledge into new functions of social and economic systems.

Ban Thung Luang and Ban Wang Won are traditional communities. Their cultural diversity reflects from local community ways of life, local foods, and works in the communities. The name of Ban Thung Luang was evidenced in a message when King Rama VI visited Sukhothai. It is said, "on the way from Muang Sukhothai (Old City) to Muang Thani (New City), there is a district called 'Thung Luang.' It is supposed to be 'Thalay Luang' (the grand sea) of King Ramkhamhang. This area is wide enough to store water in the season." Nowadays, Thung Luang is governed by the administrative region of Kirimas district, Sukhothai province. Due to the fact that the area of Ban Thung Luang is a large pond, its villagers would rather use soil in this area to make earthenware. According to Jodmai Rayathang Pai Phitsanulok (A letter during the way to Phitsanulok) by Somdet Chaofah Krom Phraya Naritsara Nuwattiwong noted in 1901, there is a record noted that "on the 18th at the waking time, Phraya Sukhothai brought me three exquisite pots. Literally, they are supposed to make in Ban Thung Luang where is under the west side of Sukhothai. Thung Luang people used to make a massive pot for Chumphala Sriha Somkram, a soldier, which he offered to me. Wang Mai Korn also made it." This record emphasizes that Ban Thung Luang's villagers have a talent for making earthenware. The local have taught their wisdom to descendants and it recently becomes a significant occupation in the community. For Ban Wang Won, its community is located in Sukhothai heritage site of Muang Kao district. Its villagers are farmers. They are also diverse of culture and local wisdom such as the local wisdom about banana and silk weaving. Ban Wang Won villagers intend to conserve traditional customs. As a result, the regional authority developed a project by collecting local wisdom in the community and established community enterprise in the district. This project does not only generate income to the local but also conserves local community ways of life.

Thus, this research reveals that the two communities; Ban Thung Luang, Kirimas district and Ban Wang Won, Srisatchanalai district in Sukhothai, are suitable for investigating and studying about local wisdom. It is because the areas of Ban Thung Luang and Ban Wang Won have long-lasting history that connects with the management of tourism in these areas. The hosts in homestays at Ban Thung Luang and Ban Wang Won combine their local knowledge and beliefs about food to create the uniqueness of tourist set menu. Additionally, these areas connect to the tourism-based model as the route of historical and world heritage sites in Sukhothai organised by the Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT). Consequently, the case study about tourist set menu in Ban Thung Luang, Kirimas district and Ban Wang Won, Srisatchanalai district in Sukhothai will provide insights of identities and wisdom heritage of these historical communities. Findings of the research can apply with other disciplines to develop the sustainable community in order to create the highest benefits according to the strategy of food tourism in Thailand.

Objectives of the Research

1. To collect the database about local wisdom illustrating from the creation of tourist set menus in Ban Thung Luang, Kirimas district, and Ban Wang Won, Srisatchanalai district in Sukhothai



- 2. To analyze thoughts and local wisdom from the portrayal of narrative stories, folktales and cults about food that are grounded in the selection of ingredients, cooking methods, and decoration of tourist set menus in Ban Thung Luang, Kirimas district, and Ban Wang Won, Srisatchanalai district in Sukhothai
- 3. To study the dynamic transmission of local wisdom, ideas and cults about food into the context of contemporary tourism

Research Methods

The study was conducted in two communities: the community of Ban Thung Luang, Kirimas district in Sukhothai and the community of Ban Wang Won, Srisatchanalai district in Sukhothai because both of the communities provide the overnight accommodation services in local people's houses which are known as "homestay." The fieldwork was conducted from October 2018 to September 2019. Participating observation and interviewing hosts and caterers were mainly applied in this research. The researchers apply the criteria by focusing on twenty informants who are hosts and caterers. They must have experiences in preparing food for tourists and live in these two communities at least ten years. The interviews involved only questions about food and its relevant issues such as the selection of ingredients, the process of cooking, the decoration of dishes, and the food services for tourists.

Results

1. The Paradigm of the Transmission of Local Wisdom via the Creation of Tourist Set Menu

Setting menus for tourists in the communities of Ban Thung Luang and Ban Wang Won shows that local wisdom and ancestors' intellects about food are effectively applicable to illustrate backgrounds of individual menus. The portrayal of 'narrative stories' pursues tourists' interests and becomes a new source of "economic value" to the community. Local people who also called themselves as "hosts" are responsible to prepare a food list. The food menus have two distinctive features which are daily menus and "special" or "occasional" menus. While the former normally cooks in family and uses local ingredients such as seasonal vegetables or fruits and free-ranched poultry, the latter cooks only in some special occasions or festivals. It tends to use rare ingredients and cook with complicating processes. However, the hosts are still considerably concerned about hygiene and nutrition. Accordingly, all tourist menus meet the standard criteria of homestay by the TAT. (Department of Tourism, Ministry of Tourism and Sports, n.d.)

It is remarkable that "the hosts" are likely to add "food tales" or "narrative stories" involving food processes to rationalize the ideas about ingredient selection, food names, and food containers. Originally, these stories were told by community's ancestors. They have been retold in families and treated as a custom. These stories reflect the intention and companionship of the hosts in order to welcome tourists like their family members. Consequently, the variety of menus, tastes and "stories" in tourist set menu of Ban Thung Luang and Ban Wang Won in Sukhothai makes tourists impressed. These also encourages food identities to be well-established in these historical communities.

According to the fieldwork, tourist set menus in homestays of Ban Thung Luang and Ban Wang Won in Sukhothai stressed on the presentation of local food of the individual communities. "Food tales" are obvious backgrounds of list menus and food containers that encourage the identity of the community.



To illustrate this, *cha leom kai* (a northern Thai style chicken spicy salad) is cooked from only local ingredients. That is to say, cooks will select only Thai domestic fowl as the main ingredient because of its thick meat and less fat. The quality of meat affects the taste when the menu is cooked. Moreover, since the processes of cooking *cha leom kai* is too complicated, it rarely cooks as a daily menu. In contrast, it is recommended as a signature dish on special occasions such as a party after harvesting crops and a welcome party for relatives and friends.

Cooking cha leom kai has the processes as of the following: a domestic fowl is brought to smoke with a medium temperature from firewood. The fowl's skin is covered with a nice smell of firewood. During smoking fowl, the cook must turn over the fowl's body until its skin becomes yellow. When it is cooked, the cook will chop and rip the smoked fowl into small pieces. After that other ingredients and seasonings which are red chilipaste, liver, domestic fowl's blood, galangal, dried red chilies, kaffir lime leaves, and dried garlic are prepared. The cook mixes a prepared fowl with other ingredients and stirs it over a low temperature stove. Cha leom kai is served on a clay plate and decorated with a round trimmed banana leaf. People prefer to eat cha leom kai with fresh vegetable and steam rice. According to the cook's tale, cha leom kai was introduced as a signature dish in the community of Ban Thung Luang for a long time ago. Her great grandparents cooked this menu to share with their friends, especially when they finished their work in the field or gathered with their friends. However, they did not cook it as a daily menu because the ingredients and methods seemed to be too meticulous and complicated. The difficulties of cooking this menu is literally expressed as a local idiom, "if we do not love you very much, we never ever cook cha leom kai for you". The tale behind this menu makes tourists impressed as they can sense of friendship and sincerity served by hosts.

Another thing is that the homestay's host at Ban Thung Luang chooses local crockery as food containers to serve the tourists. According to the history of the community of Ban Thung Luang, it is famous for making objects from red clay, a special quality of clay which can be found only in this area. Once, these community people made "Mhor Gran Phra Ruang" (an urn-shaped jug) offered the Sukhothai king. It gained a massive appreciation. The special quality of clay in the area of Ban Thung Luang is when it is burnt, its color will turn to be red. Nowadays, the homestay's host prefers Ban Thung Luang crockery to serve as food containers. They decorate dishes with a clean and round- trimmed banana leaf in order to prevent food attaching directly with clay plates. It also makes food more colorful. The selection of food decoration performs the feasibility of local wisdom and identity in the contemporary society.

Other menus in the set menu of Ban Thung Luang are selected from daily menus. They are cooked with local ingredients and seasonal herbs as of the description in the following table:

Table 1 Tourist Set Menu at Ban Thung Luang, Kirimas District, Sukhothai

Menu	Cooking Methods
Kaow Ob Mor Din	Fill rice with clean water in a clay pot. Prepare steamer to steam rice. When the water
(steamed rice in a clay pot)	boils, put the clay pot in the upper layered of the steamer and wait for about 20-30
(steamed rice in a ciay pot)	minutes. When the rice is cooked, steam rice will have clay's smell. Ready to serve.
Pla Dook Yang (catfish grilled)	Select the medium size of catfish. Clean the body and stab it with a bamboo stick.
	Grill it on a medium temperature of stove that cover by lemongrass. That makes fish's
	skin still glossy and creates a nice smell.



Table 1 (Cont.)

Menu	Cooking Methods
Kang Cheud Look Ngor (Soup with minced pork and vermiceli)	Mix minced pork, vermicelli, salt and pepper altogether. Mold it into a rambutan-
	shaped like. Leave it for ten minutes. Prepare soup with chicken stock. When the stock
	boils, fill Chinese cabbage, radish and prepared minced pork in the pot. During it
	boils, often ladle oily bubble out of the pot to make soup clear.
Nam Prik Pak Luak (Chili paste with steamed vegetable)	Nam Prik (Chili paste)
	- Pestle red chilies with pieces of catfish meat. Add some salt and local seasonings in
	a mortar. Serve with steamed vegetables.
	Pak Luak (steamed vegetable)
	- Put vegetables i.e. cow-pea, gourd, pumpkin, sweet basil, sesabania flower in
	boiling water. Waited for 5-10 minutes. Freeze them with cold water.
Kai Tom Matoom	Fill duck eggs in boiling water. Wait for 7-8 minutes. Take them out and freeze them
(medium hard boiled duck egg)	in cold water to make them peel easier. Serve with chilli paste and steamed vegetables.
Kanom Dok Din (Aeginetia indica dessert)	Sieve flour and fill with lukewarm water. Thresh flour and add some oil to protect it
	sticky. Drip a few drops of Aeginetia indica made colour. Then, prepare steamer.
	During this, wrap prepared flour with double layered of banana leaves in rectangle
	shaped. Put the wrapped in the steamer and wait for 20-30 minutes. When it is
	cooked, it will turn into black. Serve with slices of coconut.



Figure 1 A Decorating Style of Tourist Set Menu in Homestay at Ban Thung Luang, Kirimas District in Sukhothai. (Photo taken by Nattaporn Kaimook)

Secondly, the tourist set menu at Ban Wang Won homestays in Sukhothai focuses on local foods and desserts that are mostly from local ingredients and seasonal fruits. Tourists will gain different experiences due to the difference of cooking ingredients in each season. At the same time, this also inspires tourists to revisit the community in order to taste other menus in another season. Based on the fieldwork period which is in summer, the community people prefer to grow banana trees as it is the most greenery period of the year. Accordingly, Ban Wang Won hosts cooked Kang Yuag (Banana stalk with coconut milk soup) and Yam Yuag (Banana stalk spicy salad) as signature dishes in the tourist set menu. Moreover, food cults related to the set menu are elaborated. The tales make the tourists interest about the significance of the community and create a strong bond between hosts and guests. A 50s woman cook told



the researchers about the cult of *kang yuak*. She said, "*kang yuag* will be cooked for only celebrating purposes because the special quality of banana stalk which has high fibre literally implicates mutual interpretations; in good and bad senses. So, the community people believe that if *kang yuag* is cooked in funeral ceremony, the dead will not rest in peace because he or she is still worried about his or her family."

Ban Wang Won set menu are served on *Thok* (a wooden utensil in Northern style) instead of a table. Each menu is in tiffin carriers. Tourists will sit around *Thok* and have a meal altogether.



Figure 2 A Decorating Style of Tourist Set Menu at Ban Wang Won Homestay, Srisatchanalai District in Sukhothai. (Photo taken by Nattaporn Kaimook)

Other menus in Ban Thung Luang are provided in the following table:

Table 2 Tourist Set Menu at Ban Wang Won, Srisatchanalai District, Sukhothai

Menus	Cooking Methods
Yam Yuag (banana stalk spicy salad)	Select banana stalk from the species of <i>Musa balbisiana Colla</i> . Soak it with water until the fibres unwind and turn into white. Mix the prepared stalk with dried pieces of coconut and red onions. Season with lemon juice, red dried chili, syrup, fish sauce and decorate with parsley.
Kaow Hung Kratha Bai Bua (rice cooked in a large frying pan)	Set a large frying pan with water on the stove. Use teak as fuel. When the water boils, add rice in the pan. Drain off the water from the boiled rice and wait until the rice is cooked. Serve rice in small pots.
Pla na Tod (fried fish)	Catch small fishes from the fields, clean them with water and dry them with the air. Set a pan with a high temperature and put small fishes. When they turn into yellow and crispy, it is time to serve.
Nor Mai Dong Pad Prik (spicy stir fried with fermented bamboo shoot)	Select bamboo shoots grown in local field. Fermented them with salt water for a week. Then, rinse out salt water and clean them with clean water. Set the pan with a medium temperature. Put chopped garlic, red chili paste and chicken in the pan. Fried them until they are cooked. Then, put the prepared bamboo shoot and season with sugar and fish sauce.
Kang Yuak (banana stalk with coconut milk soup)	Select banana stalks from the species of <i>Musa balbisiana Colla</i> . Soak them with clean water until the fibres unwind and turn into white. Boil coconut milk with chili paste, chicken, and prepared banana stalks in the pot and add seasonings like sugar and salt. Decorate with basil and ready to serve.



Table 2 (Cont.)

Menus	Cooking Methods
	Nam Prik (Chili paste)
	- Pestle red chilies with pieces of catfish meat. Add some salt and local
Nam Prik Pak Luak	seasonings in a mortar. Serve with steamed vegetables.
(chili paste with steamed vegetables)	Pak Luak (steamed vegetable)
	- Put vegetables i.e. cow-pea, gourd, pumpkin, sweet basil, sesabania flower
	in boiling water. Wait for 5-10 minutes. Freeze them with cold water.
Khao Tang Mapraow On	Cut into pieces of crispy rice from the bottom of a large frying pan. Serve with
(crispy rice with slices of coconut)	slices of coconut and sugar

According to the fieldwork conducting in two homestays, the researchers found that desserts and local fruit were served out of the set menu. The hosts were likely to provide opportunities for the guests to learn and try cooking desserts by themselves. Meanwhile the Ban Thung Luang homestay served *kanom dok din* (Aeginetia indica dessert) as a signature dessert, the Ban Wang Won homestay served *khao tang mapraow on* (crispy rice with slices of coconut) and mango as the recommended menus.

2. The Dynamic Transmission of Local Wisdom, Intellects, and Food Cults into the Context of Contemporary Tourism

According to the empirical data above, the tourist set menu remarkably shows the dynamic transmission of local wisdom about food and cultural ideas about "eating like the local". It can be assumed that local food symbolized "the central hub of the community" which connected the relations between "insider(s)" and "outsider(s)" of the community. Moreover, the local food emphasizes the strong bonds of local people in the community from the portrayal of food tales and food cults in the background of each menu. Such the ideas nowadays are shifted the roles to encourage the identity of the community as well as to generate social and economic advantages to the community.

The Transmission of Local Wisdom into Modern Food Containers

The selection of local kitchenware is a way to contribute economic value from local wisdom in the contemporary society. For instance, a Ban Thung Luang homestay uses earthenware as food containers. Since the knowledge of making earthenware in Ban Thung Luang is taught from generation to generation, this mastery is applied with modern design and turns to be the unique style of Ban Thung Luang crockery. Recently, they are made more various styles and functions. The special quality of clay in Ban Thung Luang that turns to be red when it is burnt makes the earthenware unique from other areas in Thailand. Additionally, the host is held an earthenware workshop for tourists. They are able to learn how to make earthenware and clay—made crockery and take part in designing their own pieces of art. This workshop aims to make the tourists gain co—experiences about the exquisite of earthenware. Moreover, the crockery used in the tourist set menu also inspires tourists to buy crockery as souvenirs. So, Ban Thung Luang community gains not only the recognition but also the economic advantage.

Secondly, the use of clay pot and the large frying pan to cook rice in Ban Wang Won emphasizes how the local integrate local wisdoms into modern practices in which make young tourists feel impressed with their cultural root. At the same time, the use of local containers reveals that the community people are more concerned about food hygiene. As a result, the cooks sorted out this problem by engaging with the outside experience about cooking. By doing this, they use clean and round-shaped trimmed banana leaves to put at the bottom of each container to prevent food attaching directly to the clay-made containers. Moreover, they know that the banana leaves have a



mild smell and it can resist with high temperature. Accordingly, the selection of crockery and decoration shows the attempt of the community people to adapt themselves into trendy lifestyle. Simultaneously, the community people make an attempt to adapt themselves into the modern world and also to establish the stability of local identity.

The Transmission of Food Cults from "Stories" behind Local Ingredients

The selection of food ingredients shows special characters of local people which are elaborated and service-minded. For example, a Ban Wang Won homestay used teak as fuel for cooking tourist food. Although the teak is an economic crop and expensive, the community people still choose the teak as they believed that the teak gives food nicer smell and releases a higher temperature with slower combustion than other woods. Consequently, the community's intention to use the best quality of fuel makes the tourists feel satisfied and motivates them to revisit again.

Discussion

From dynamic transmission of local wisdom, concepts, and beliefs about local food to the context of contemporary tourism illustrates an emerging role of community culture as a form of "cultural capital." Culture once appeared to be a social capital. Nowadays, it has been developed as a "product" to generate income (Na Thalang, 2019, p. 40). According to the case study of tourist set menus in Ban Thung Luang and Ban Wang Won, it was found that the villagers themselves managed their local cultures in order to increase values in terms of social and economic prospects of the contemporary society. According to Na Thalang (2019, p. 41), local people and community recently present themselves as "the owner of culture." They play a role in organizing the application of culture involving economic dimension of the community. It illustrates from "Wi Thee Thai" (Thai style) in tourism. "Thai style" Tourism shows Thai culture including traditional customs, eating styles, and Thai lifestyles becomes a form of economic capital that can contribute income to the country. Thai culture is also recognized as a public wisdom which anyone can apply for commercial purposes (Jaruworn, 2016). According to the transmission of local culture and wisdom in the context of food for tourism in Ban Thung Luang and Ban Wang Won, it can be presented as a paradigm of the relationship between the presentation of local wisdom in food tourism context and the methods to increase economic advantage to the community as the following:



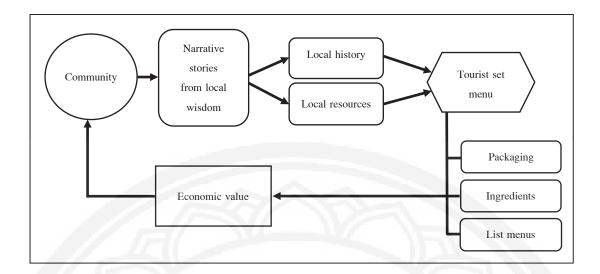


Figure 3 A Paradigm of the Transmission of Local Wisdom to the Decoration of Tourist Menu to Increase Economic Value in Ban Wang Won and Ban Thung Luang, Sukhothai Province

The study found that tourist set menu provided a negotiating sphere for villagers and local people to conserve and promote their identities. Moreover, the set menu appears to be a service commodity for tourism. It creates communities' identities and plays significant roles in social, economic and cultural perspectives. Local people become "producers" of cultural products. When they take part in expressing opinions and managing local wisdom, it create sense of proud and consciousness of the cultural worth. Moreover, the local management help to decreases conflicts from the intervention of authorities and public.

Conclusion

The simplicity of way of life but elaborated with fascination of cooking talent and colorful stories behind the origins of Ban Thung Luang and Ban Wang Won tourist set menus in Sukhothai distinctively encourages these cultural communities to be famous and to be acknowledged as the modern cultural tourism attraction and spotted homestays in Thailand. The intimacy of the local people creates quickly a strong relationship between "insider(s)" and "outsider(s)" of the community. The service-minded of hosts and the way they take care visitors as their family members such as offering opportunities to cook food with the local, helping children to set the table, and cheering up a chef who is going to lit the fire play an important part in fulfilling tourism experiences. Moreover, the tourists also learn the origin of local ingredients, seasonings and cooking methods that lead to consumers' confidence about taste and hygiene. Consequently, the tourist set menu is not only a food for eat but also the "mental nourishment" for tourists. The tourist set menu of the communities of Ban Thung Luang and Ban Wang Won in Sukhothai plays a significant role in creating uniqueness of these two homestays. It becomes a way to raise the standard of local wisdom into an emerging form of modern economy. It also helps stabilize the identity of community. Local knowledge and wisdom expand people's opportunities to transmit their knowledge into modernity and become an alternative strategy for future businesses.



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