

UNWRAPPING HERITAGE: TRACING THE CULTURAL ORIGINS AND TRADITION OF PATUPAT IN BALLESTEROS, CAGAYAN

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Abstract— This study explored the historical and cultural significance of Patupat, which is one of the traditional rice cake delicacies of Ballesteros, Cagayan. Patupat is made out of glutinous rice, coconut milk with sugar, and salt to balance the sweetness, whereby its ingredients, reflects the town's agricultural prowess. This research aims to document the traditional preparation methods of patupat, investigate its historical evolutions, and assess its role in the Ballesteros. In addition, the study examines how preserving this delicacy can support cultural heritage in the region. The significance of this study lies in providing a comprehensive record of patupat-making and its information, ensuring the transmission of knowledge to future generations, and promoting its role in local tourism. This study used a qualitative design to document the complex information linked to Patupat making. A semi-structured interview guide was created to explore the traditional method and the information of Patupat and serves as the data collection tool for this qualitative study. The result shows that Patupat plays a central role in community events, fostering unity and cultural continuity, particularly during festivals and religious ceremonies. The findings highlight the Patupat's potential as a tool for preserving cultural heritage, as it provides a valuable resource for local government units and NGOs in developing strategies for cultural preservation and culinary tourism. The results of the study are expected to guide future research and initiatives that aim to protect and promote traditional Filipino culinary practices.

Keywords— *Cultural Significance, Delicacy, Document, Patupat, Preserve*

I. INTRODUCTION

In various regions around the world, people have distinct differences when it comes to food, culture, and traditions. These unique aspects not only define our identity but also connect us to our heritage. Moreover, these differences often attract visitors and promote cultural tourism, offering an economic benefit that supports local communities. However, preserving these unique aspects involves careful planning and respect for local traditions while adapting to modern challenges. According to Palomares et al. (2023), delicacies's importance in the community is vital, as this is where the community comes from. The local people put their hearts out to produce these products, as they know that this is a gift from their ancestors for them to continue and preserve the cultural heritage through food delicacies.

Ballesteros, regarded as a town rich in history and tradition, could also be regarded as a province with a very rich cuisine. The town was actually a part of the municipality of Abulug which became an independent municipality in 1911 with rich and fertile land and such marine products as have determined its economic and cultural life in the past. According to Coballes (2022), the Cagayan Valley Region is located within the expanse of this rice geographical sphere, and being a melting pot of many ethnic groups and foreign influences, it offers a broad assortment of local rice cake recipes. Ballesteros, as part of the Cagayan Valley Region, takes great pride in its delicacy, the patupat.

Patupat is a beloved traditional food celebrated across various regions in the Philippines, each with unique variations in preparation and cultural significance. Though patupat is associated with a specific taste, the methods of processing and preparation differ from one region to another, highlighting regional diversity. In Ballesteros, Patupat is no longer merely a delicacy; it has become an emblem and icon of the town's collective identity. It symbolizes the main activity of the town in the past which was agriculture, especially sugarcane farming, and embodies the artisanal skills and culinary practices which have been inherited over the centuries. That is why Patupat is prepared on the happiest days, during festivals, and even religious ceremonies – which serves to underscore its importance in the social and cultural life of Ballesteros. It has made the people of Ballesteros proud of their Patupat especially since it is now under the list of intangible cultural heritage of the local government. According to Campañano (2017) Ballesteros, Cagayan is well-liked for its food specialties, particularly the small shellfish gakka that has made Ballesteros the Gakka Capital of the World; and the pyramid-shaped rice cake, patupat with its special sweet taste.

Collectively, these regional variations of Patupat and their associated festivities highlight the cultural associations and beliefs surrounding the delicacy, promoting appreciation of cultural diversity. Of the many benefits associated with travel, hospitality, and tourism research findings have suggested that travel provides the opportunity to enjoy new food and drink experiences (Andersson & Mossberg, 2017), learn about local food heritage (Farsani et al. 2018), and connect food consumption with local culture (Wijaya, 2019). According to Luoh et al. (2020), learning about local cuisines is arguably the fastest way for tourists to get to know a tourist destination and

bond with locals. Hence, for travel destinations hoping to deliver these recognized benefits to potential visitors, it may be beneficial for locals, particularly young residents, to be better informed of local food and drink offerings, as well as the cultural bonds associated with them. According to Berris (2019) While perspectives differ, some argue that in a globalized society, local cuisine cultures are always threatened. According to Gutierrez et al. (2022), many traditional Filipino recipes, including those for dishes like patupat, have been passed down through generations. Filipino food celebrations, pre-colonial cooking techniques, and the contributions of remarkable Filipino chefs are increasingly emphasizing Filipino cuisine as a cultural asset. However, the Philippine National Tourism Development Plan recognizes the need to better differentiate and brand Filipino cuisine to enhance its appeal as a tourism product, suggesting that there is still work to be done in this area.

Despite the recognized benefits of culinary tourism, there is limited research on its specific impact on local communities, particularly in Ballesteros, where delicacies like Patupat are celebrated. There is a need for studies on effective methods to educate and engage young residents in their culinary heritage. Additionally, while globalization threatens local food cultures, empirical research is needed on how global trends affect traditional foods like Patupat. Understanding tourists' perceptions and experiences of local cuisine is crucial for improving culinary tourism strategies. At present, Ballesteros, Cagayan is known for its agricultural products and its boulevard by the beach. However, its potential for culinary tourism remains unexplored.

II. METHODS

This study employed a qualitative research design with an ethnographic approach to explore the historical and cultural significance of Patupat in Ballesteros, Cagayan. The study utilized participant observation, interviews, and document analysis to gather rich, descriptive data on traditional Patupat preparation, its role in community cultural identity, and its potential for heritage preservation and tourism promotion. As part of the study's deliverables, a booklet was developed to document the findings and serve as a reference for future generations.

The study was conducted in Ballesteros, Cagayan, where informants were identified using a simple random sampling method based on their roles and ages within the community. Selected informants included Patupat makers, vendors, the Tourism head, and residents, ranging in age from 21 to 75 years. The researchers employed self-constructed, semi-structured interview questions, which allowed for both a guided topical focus and the flexibility to probe deeper insights as recommended by Magaldi and Berler (2020). The interviews explored the historical background, traditional preparation methods, and cultural significance of Patupat within the community.

Prior to data collection, permission was sought from the Vice-President for Academics through the Academic Dean of the School of Accountancy, Business, and Hospitality. Potential

informants were identified through referrals, and formal consent was obtained before scheduling interviews at their convenience. Data collection was conducted systematically and ethically, ensuring participants' comfort and willingness to share detailed insights.

The creation of the Patupat booklet began with field visits to Ballesteros to observe local traditions and gain hands-on experience in the preparation process. Researchers documented all stages, including ingredient preparation, cooking of glutinous rice with coconut milk and sugar, wrapping in banana leaves to form the distinctive balisungsong (cone shape), and the final steaming process, under the guidance of local makers. This immersive approach provided a practical understanding of Patupat as both a culinary and cultural symbol.

The booklet production process involved several steps. Researchers first obtained formal approval from the research instructor and the University Research and Innovation Office (URIO) Director, followed by a formal letter to the Mayor of Ballesteros requesting support for the study. Data were then collected through interviews and direct observation. Using the information gathered, researchers successfully recreated Patupat following traditional methods and structured the booklet to present step-by-step procedures. A skilled layout artist was engaged to design and visually enhance the booklet, after which a preliminary review was conducted by the research adviser and the URIO Director. Revisions were made based on feedback to improve both content accuracy and visual presentation.

Data analysis was conducted using document analysis and thematic analysis, enabling the identification of patterns and key cultural insights from the collected data. Ethical standards were strictly followed throughout the research process. Participants were fully informed of the study's purpose, objectives, and procedures, and consented voluntarily, with the assurance that they could withdraw at any time without repercussions. Confidentiality and anonymity were maintained by anonymizing all personal information and securely storing data in digital format, which was permanently deleted upon study completion. Results were reported in aggregate to prevent identification of individual informants.

Participation posed minimal risk and no financial incentives were provided; however, respondents contributed valuable knowledge on the historical evolution of Patupat and its significance in Ballesteros. The study was conducted independently with no conflicts of interest, and it received approval from the University of Saint Louis Research Ethics Board (USL-REB), ensuring adherence to ethical research standards and safeguarding participant rights.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This research explored the history, traditional methods, and procedures involved in the preparation of Patupat as a basis for the proposed booklet. After a careful review of the Informant's answers and careful analysis of the interview transcripts, commonalities were clustered together and the researchers came up with major themes. These were; (1) Patupat of Ballesteros, Then and Now, and (2) Creation of Patupat, the Ballesterians Way.

Patupat of Ballesteros, Then and Now

The informants share what they know, their experiences, observations, traditions, and culture of how it changed over time. The themes among the respondents include: (A) The Origin of Patupat in Ballesteros, (B) The Patupat Festival, (C) Its Cultural and Economic Significance, and (D) The Future of Patupat. These themes provide a comprehensive understanding of Patupat's journey in Ballesteros, from its historical roots to its evolving role in contemporary society and its prospects for the future.

A. Origin of Patupat of Ballesteros

Tracing the origins of this delicacy, including its customary preparation and significance in early community life. Patupat has long been a popular delicacy in Ballesteros, Cagayan, and is strongly rooted in the town's agricultural heritage. This delicacy has been enjoyed by Ballesteros for generations, changing while keeping its cultural essence. The origin of Patupat to the Ballesterians is an important matter. However, several informants are unsure about when or where Patupat originated. The lack of specific historical data does not negate the need for additional research and documentation regarding its origins. Yet, amidst the uncertainty, Patupat remains a beloved custom, an integral part of the Ballesteros' identity.

Some of the verbalizations are as follows:

I01: "*Hindi ko na alam kung anong taon na nagstart ang patupat ang naalala ko noong 1972 tumapat sya sa taon nang isinilang ko ang anak kong pangalawa, dati ng meron ang patupat sa mga special occasion gaya ng birthday ken dadduma pay*" (I'm not so sure to the year, what I just remember is that it's in year 1972 since my second born son is the same year that the patupat became popular to every occasion like birthdays)

I02: "*Sikami met ti nagmana, mga 1979 kasjay Ma'am*" (We are the one who inherit it, I think it's in year 1979)

I07: "*matagal na yan ma'am mga taong 19's ganun*" (that's a long time ago ma'am, I think it's in year 19's like that)

I010: "*Hindi ko po alam, may patupat na po kasi dati simula no'ng pinanganak ako*" (I don't know because there's already a patupat since I was born)

I01: "*pagsasaka gamin ti pinaka trabaho ti kaaduan su dagijay ingredients ti panagaramid ti patupat kit maaddaan*" (Farming is indeed the main job of most, as it provides the ingredients for making rice cakes.)

I04: "*Sikami gamin nga babbaket ma'am nahilig kami ti agaramid ti dikdiket*." (We, as women ma'am, love to make food made from glutinous rice.)

I09: "*Maysa gamin ti kayamanan ti Ballesteros agiti agricultural product ma'am*." (One of the wealth of Ballesteros is its agricultural products, ma'am.)

I010: "*adu gamin ti glutinous rice ittoy Ballesteros*" (there is a lot of glutinous rice here in Ballesteros.)

Preserving information on culinary heritage plays a crucial role in maintaining a region's cultural identity. Yet, based on the observation, the result indicates a lack of documentation or knowledge of their food delicacy. According to Rt et al. (2017) highlight the scarcity of programs aimed at preserving culinary heritage in the Philippines; if they do exist, they are virtually unknown. Several measures can be used to guarantee that traditional culinary knowledge is preserved. Formal documentation through research projects, cookbooks, and digital archives should be prioritized.

B. Patupat Festival

Festivals are events that provide a platform for cultural preservation, tourism promotion, and community involvement. The event recognizes the abilities of local artisans while also educating future generations about the importance of this delicacy in Ballesteros' history through a variety of activities such as patupat-making competitions, culinary exhibitions, trade fairs, and cultural performances. According to the informants, they celebrate the Patupat festival in May and December, and it is always served on special occasions since the patupat is delicious and serves as a form of thanksgiving. As the festivals continue to grow, they reflect the appreciation of the town in their traditions. Through each celebration, Ballesterians ensure that the patupat legacy is passed down to future generations, maintaining it as the treasured symbol of their identity and appreciation.

Some of the verbalization are as follows:

I02: "*ay hindi ko po alam ma'am kung anong taon, pero mga mayo ma'am ganun*" (I don't know ma'am what year it is, but the month I think is May like that ma'am)

I07: "*kada mayo ti celebration da itta*" (every month of the May where they celebrate the festival)

I08: *In the month of May and December*

I09: *“mga mayo ma’am, nakikisali rin ako sa pagdiriwang nyan, nakikiparada at dinedesenyo ang patupat para iparada” (in the month of May ma’am, we also cooperate in the celebration, we parade and design and platethe patupat to parade it)*

I010: *“mayo at desyembre, mga wala pang decada” (May and December, I think, it’s not yet a decade since it is celebrated)*

I01: *“importante ito sa mga selebration dahil ito ang hanap hanap nila.” (this is important in celebrations because this is what they look for.)*

I04: *“naging tradition nalang naming na maghanda ng patupat tuwing may occasion.” (It has become our tradition to prepare patupat during occasions.)*

I06: *“isu ti ags-serve nga pang thanksgiving mi nukwa nu adda occasions Ma’am. Isu ti ialay or ited mi.” (It serves as our thanksgiving offering, especially if there are occasions, Ma’am. It is what we offer or give.)*

The Patupat Festival in Ballesteros, Cagayan, plays a vital role as this would be a tool in preserving cultural heritage. It will serve as a showcase for the town's unique delicacy, patupat, while also teaching both locals and visitors about its historical and cultural importance. According to Deng and Li (2013) Participating in such an event, for example, provides visitors with a unique experience and a better understanding of the local culture and characteristics, which alters their perceived destination images associated with the economic, sociocultural, and environmental aspects of the hosting community. Patupat festivals contribute to the sociocultural of Ballesteros as they strengthen the identity of the community educate visitors about the town’s rich traditions, and foster appreciation and cultural exchange.

C. Cultural and Economic Significance

The Patupat holds both cultural and economic significance in Ballesteros, Cagayan, as their beloved local delicacy and a symbol of the town’s rich culinary heritage. Patupat also contributes to the local economy as it supports small-scale producers, vendors, and farmers, not just its contribution to festival celebrations. Its continuous production and popularity not only preserve a major cultural tradition but also provide livelihood opportunities, making it an essential component of Ballesteros' identity and economy. According to the informants, patupat contributes significantly to their daily expenses and has become a delicacy as a result of their abundance of agricultural products.

Some of the verbalization are as follows:

I02: *“gapu iti naiyan anay a pangluto ken pagkakakilanlan ti ili su nagbalin atoy nga delicacy ti Ballesteros” (Patupat is Ballesteros' delicacy due to its unique cooking style and cultural identity)*

I04: *“Sikami gamin nga babbaket ma’am nahilig kami ti agaramid ti dikdiket” (We old ladies fond in making different cooking of glutinous rice)*

I05: *“Masarap po kasi siya, hindi siya matamis, saktong lang” (because it’s delicious, it’s not too sweet and the taste is just balance)*

I08: *balance gamin jay lasa na ma’am. Haan nga nasam-it saktong lang ba. Haan nga nakakaumay (the taste is just balance, it’s not too sweet, it’s just right. And the taste is not that overwhelming)*

I09: *“Maysa gamin ti kayamanan ti Ballesteros agiti agricultural product ma’am” (one of the wealth in Ballesteros are agricultural product ma’am)*

I010: *“adu gamin ti glutinous rice ittoy” (because there’s a lot of glutinous rice here in Ballesteros)*

I02: *“Tinutulungan na kami Sir. Ngem jay panaglako mi sir ket ipasyar-pasyar mi tapnu adda met igatang mi ti sanga salup nga bigas kin tapnu adda usaren mi ti pang araw-araw. Ibis bisikletak nukwa Sir kadwa jay lakok nga ik-ikan”. (It helps us, but when we sell it, we need to travel it, so that we can buy 1 kilo of rice and we can use the money for expenses in our daily living. We used bicycle for selling it and also I sell fish)*

I05: *“Nakatutulong naman siya sa pang-araw-araw na gastusin” (It is helpful for everyday expenses)*

I06: *“nakakapagbigay naman ng dagdag nakita sa aming pamilya para sa pang araw- araw namen” (It helps provide additional income for our family’s daily needs)*

I03: *“Ok naman. May ganansya, may panggastos sa pang-araw-araw” (It’s good. We have profit, it helps our daily expenses)*

According to Briones et al. (2013), the economic benefits that culinary tourism provides in their community enable the tourism sector to create and increase revenue for the local government, particularly during the Festival. The increasing demand for Patupat during festivals benefits not only local vendors and small-scale entrepreneurs, but also other industries including as agriculture, transportation, and lodging. As more people visit the town to sample its unique culinary offerings, the local government receives greater revenue from tourism-

related activities such as permits, market fees, and other business transactions. This economic cycle emphasizes the importance of sustaining traditional food culture by demonstrating how culinary tourism may act as a long-term driver of economic prosperity in the region.

D. The Future of Patupat

Patupat's future depends on maintaining the balance between tradition and innovation. As demand for national and cultural cuisines grows, there is enormous scope for expansion with the help of tourism, online sales, and commercial production, but it will continue to ensure its authenticity. Sustaining its production involves ongoing assistance for local farmers, craftspeople, and small-scale producers, as well as efforts at passing on knowledge and skills to future generations.

Some of the verbalization are as follows:

I08: siguro magkaroon ng online recipe archive which is, it is a big help talaga sa pag preserve ng patupat making (Maybe there should be an online recipe archive which is really a big help in preserving patupat making.)

I09: Para po mapanatili yung Patupat siguro need na turuan yung mga dalaga na gustong matuto para may next generations sa paggawa. Para rin hindi mawala yung Patupat kailangan Ma'am na ipasa sa next generations. (To maintain Patupat, it might be necessary to teach young women who want to learn so that there are next generations in making it. To ensure that Patupat does not disappear, it needs to be passed on to the next generations.)

I010: by continuous production and by preserving its historical data

Within the context of this study, informants emphasize the importance of strategic strategies to maintain Patupat-making and pass it on to future generations. According to Harrison (2012), heritage is what we inherit from the past and apply in the present through tourism, education, and community development. To ensure its long-term viability, informants propose a strategic plan that includes hands-on workshops for adolescents and documentation of traditional Patupat-making skills and historical data. Furthermore, the government and business sector may promote the marketing and promotion of Patupat beyond Ballesteros in order to increase its economic value while maintaining its authenticity. By taking these proactive measures, Patupat-making can thrive as both a cultural legacy and a source of livelihood, ensuring that future generations continue to cherish and benefit from this traditional delicacy.

Creation of Patupat, the Ballesterians Way

The patupat of Ballesteros, Cagayan is a traditional delicacy which is a reflection of the culinary talents and the cultural background of the people from Ballesteros. Based on the gathered data of informants, the taste of Patupat is sweet and salty due to the use of coconut milk, sugar, and salt. This sweet treat, made from glutinous rice, wrapped in a banana leaf, is a nice gesture in the tradition of enjoying. The process of Patupat represent the mixture of the natural ingredients, creative effort, and also community pride. Its preparation consists in picking good-quality glutinous rice and coconuts, making the coconut milk, and subsequently wrapping the rice mixture in banana leaves to become its characteristic rectangular shape. This kind of approach, which is quite labor-intensive, is a clear demonstration of the people of Ballesteros' commitment to maintaining their culinary traditions. According to Ramli & Zahari (2014), food heritage can be understood in several ways. It is linked to agriculture, including native fruits, vegetables, and livestock that naturally adapt to specific regional climates. Additionally, it is associated with traditional production methods, such as time-honored techniques, cooking skills, and the use of locally sourced ingredients.

Step-by-Step Process in making Patupat

I. Purchasing the ingredients

One kilogram of glutinous rice (malagkit), two pieces of old coconut, sugar, and salt were obtained at the local market in Tuguegarao City. In choosing old coconut, drier with stiffer shell are the best one to pick, as they are simpler to grate and get coconut milk from.



Figure 1. Preparing the ingredients

II. Preparing and Cooking the Glutinous Rice

The glutinous rice was washed two times with water to eliminate any contaminants. And then, an equal amount of water was put for every cup of rice. In the figure 2, the rice was cooked using a pot over medium heat. The mix was brought to a boil and left to simmer for 15–20 minutes or until the rice was soft and all water had been absorbed.



Figure 2. Cooking the glutinous rice.

IV. Prepare the coconut

The coconut flesh was grated in a modern coconut grater. Hot water was included in the grated coconut, and the mixture was squeezed many times by hand in order to get as much milk as possible into a bowl or container, as shown in Figure 3.



Figure 3. Process in preparing the coconut milk

V. Simmering the Coconut Milk

The extracted coconut milk was poured into a large pot and boiled on medium heat while stirring regularly. Then the heat was lowered and the coconut milk was cooked for roughly 10-15 minutes, as shown in figure 4.



Figure 4. Simmering the coconut milk until the oil separates

VI. Adding the Salt and Sugar.

A quarter cup of white sugar and one teaspoon of salt to the simmering coconut milk were added and it stirred well to ensure that it was dissolved completely.



Figure 5. Adding salt and sugar to the coconut milk

VII. Combining all the Ingredients

The cooked glutinous rice was added to the coconut milk mixture and stirred thoroughly to combine.



Figure 6. Cooking the glutinous in coconut milk, sugar with salt

VIII. Getting the Banana Leaves Ready

The banana leaves were harvested from the banana trees of the neighbor. They were cut into square pieces about six to eight inches wide and eight to ten inches long. The cut leaves were cleaned and washed with water, and also treated.

IX. Patupat wrapping

A small quantity of mixed Ingredients was spooned down and put on the center of the banana leaf. The leaf was folded over the cooked mixture to create a rectangular shape and then locked with a small stick or string, as shown in figure 7.



Figure 7. Process of wrapping the Patupat

X. Steaming of the Patupat

The wrapped Patupat was steam heated over boiling water for around 15–20 minutes or until the banana leaves had a sweet scent.



Figure 8. Process of steaming the Patupat

XI. Serve the Patupat

The Patupat will be served warm or at room temperature, as shown in Figure 9.



Figure 9. Presenting the Patupat

IV. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study concludes the importance of preserving the historical background of Patupat and its cultural significance within the community. It highlighted the significance of documenting the traditional methods and procedures involved in the preparation of Patupat in Ballesteros, Cagayan. The study also emphasized the need to propose methods for preserving Patupat, including the creation of online recipe archives, teaching younger generations, and ensuring continuous production and documentation. Furthermore, this study identified challenges in obtaining clear and accurate information from the informants. These difficulties stemmed from factors such as the fading memory of older generations with prior knowledge, the lack of documented materials, and the informal nature in which this knowledge was traditionally passed down. Additionally, some informants provided imprecise information, necessitating further verification. These challenges underscore the need to actively practice and preserve cultural artifacts like Patupat to ensure their survival for future generations.

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