

Moho and miku, Peranakan Chinese twin cakes: history, production, and conservation through schools



Hendra Kurniawan^a  | Anton Haryono^a | Yoel Kurniawan Raharjo^a 

^aHistory Education Study Program, Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, Sanata Dharma University, Yogyakarta, Indonesia.

Abstract Moho and miku are like twin cakes because the raw materials and manufacturing process are the same, only the shape and filling are different. The taste is distinctive and familiar to the tastes of the older generation. This cake is rarely found and has difficulty competing with modern cakes. In this study, the history and production process of the twin cakes are described, including the idea of its conservation. This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach by utilizing historical methods. Data were collected through interviews, observations, focus group discussions, and strengthened by literature studies. The results showed that the history of moho and miku cakes as part of Peranakan Chinese cuisine in Central Java is closely related to the tradition of ancestral worship. The ingredients and production processes display the acculturation of Chinese culture with Javanese locality, resulting in a distinctive traditional cake taste. Educational channels, in this case schools, can be a means for preserving moho and miku cakes to be closer to the younger generation. In a more practical context for instilling the values of diversity and cultural conservation, this idea can be applied in history learning in vocational high schools in the Culinary Arts department. Further studies that can be done are the development of effective teaching materials and learning designs.

Keywords: moho, miku, Peranakan Chinese, culinary history, conservation

1. Introduction

Moho and miku cakes can be said to be similar but not the same. Both are made from wheat flour. In Indonesia, wheat flour consumption is quite high, and many local traditional foods and those produced by immigrants are made from this flour (Frederick & Worden, 2011; Manalu et al., 2024). Like most cakes made from processed wheat flour, moho and miku cakes are dull white, sometimes with red or brown markings. The manufacturing process is also mostly the same and differs only in the finishing stage. The surface of the moho cake is made to bloom like a flower and without filling. The miku cake is a molded oval with a surface similar to that of bakpao. Miku cake is filled with green beans, peanuts, or chocolate. The texture of the moho cake tends to be lighter than that of the miku cake, with the filling feeling increasingly dense and heavy.

Moho and miku cakes are famous in Indonesia, especially in Central Java. Large moho and miku cakes are often found in the traditions of Peranakan Chinese people in the areas of Semarang, Tegal, Lasem, Temanggung, Magelang, Solo, Purwokerto, Gombong, and several cities in Central Java. Not only pray in the temple but also in Chinese homes when holding ancestral prayer ceremonies. This ceremony is held at least three times a year, during Chinese New Year, *Qingming* Festival or grave cleaning, and *King Ho Ping* or The Hungry Ghost Festival, which is also known as the *Rebutan* prayer (Kurniawan, 2020). In addition to ritual purposes, moho and miku cakes are also known as everyday snacks as accompaniment to tea or coffee in the morning or evening. This habit was generally carried out by the older generation in the past. Moho and miku cakes are often the menus of choice for breakfast because they provide a long-lasting feeling of fullness.

In addition to being popular in Central Java, Moho cakes are also found in East Java, West Java and North Sumatra. Sometimes, the model and taste are slightly different. The shape of the Moho cake is similar to that of the cup cake or huat kuih, whereas the Miku cake is almost never found outside Central Java. In Central Java, both cakes can be purchased at several legendary cake shops that sell traditional foods, especially Peranakan Chinese snacks. Outside Indonesia, such as in Malaysia and Singapore, Moho cake is called blossom mantou or smiling mantou, which can be found during the Qingming Festival and Ghost Festival (Pang, 2012). In these two countries, not all regions are familiar with this snack. In general, the makers are also from Peranakan Chinese communities.

Some Peranakan Chinese cakes are often uniquely known in certain regions, but there are also those that cross countries. In the series *The Little Nyonya* (2019), Peranakan Chinese cakes and cuisine are exposed very extraordinarily (Eng, 2020; Kurniawan et al., 2023; Montsion & Parasram, 2018). This series strengthens the evidence that Peranakan Chinese cakes



commonly found in Indonesia are also developing in Malaysia and Singapore (Lee, 2008; Ng & Karim, 2016). In the film by *Gadis Kretek* (2023), the city of M was mentioned, which was later believed to be Muntilan, a subdistrict town in Magelang, Central Java. In the novel, this city is where the name Nyonya Pang's shop, which sells traditional Peranakan Chinese snacks, is mentioned (Kumala, 2012). Although the story is fictional, the existence of this shop is real and can still be visited today. Nyonya Pang's shop sells a variety of Peranakan Chinese cakes, including moho and miku, which have also been signature snacks from her shop since the 1950s. Nyonya Pang's shop and the Muntilan locality are the study areas in this research.

Although it has exceeded the boundaries of generations, in the current era, traditional food is less competitive with modern food. When the younger generation no longer knows or feels that their tastes are different, traditional food is just a memory. Currently, efforts to introduce traditional food, including Peranakan Chinese cakes, through popular media do have an impact but are incidental and not very deep. Preserving traditional food also requires a more structured and long-term breakthrough through the role of education.

Thus, the existence of traditional Peranakan Chinese food, including moho and miku cakes, can be increasingly recognized by the younger generation. The presence of culinary studies in history learning is expected to make traditional snacks ready to compete with modern cakes that are practical and fast to make with a variety of flavors and attractive appearances. Thus far, there has been an assumption that the process of making moho and miku cakes is not easy and takes a long time, and the taste is not familiar to the tastes of the younger generation, making survival difficult. For this reason, this study focuses on the following issues: (1) How is the history of the development of moho and miku cakes? (2) How is the process of making moho and miku cakes? (3) What conservation ideas can be offered through schools? This research is expected to be useful in revealing the richness of traditional Peranakan Chinese cuisine in Indonesia. At the same time, it also encourages efforts to preserve it by studying its history and manufacturing process through schools.

2. Literature Review

The context of this research is related to the study of culinary history. In recent years, culinary studies have indeed become increasingly enthusiastic. This research not only focuses on food preparation, cooking techniques, and food culture but also expands into the topics of healthy food, food preservation, food culture from community groups, and food development to food history (Engler-Stringer, 2010; Twiss, 2012; Zuberbuehler, 2023). Exploration of food history and the development of cuisine are fundamental aspects that provide insight into the development of cuisine over time (Ecoleducasse, 2023). It is not surprising that contemporary research on cuisines often focuses on culinary traditions in various regions. As in this study, in addition to the Muntilan locality, Chinese ethnicity is also specifically highlighted.

The Chinese influence on the development of culinary history in Indonesia was formed by layers of time. Various foods have been constructed as cuisine since the 10th century along with the entry of cross-cultural Chinese, Indian, Arabic, and then European cultures that influence the taste of Indonesian cuisine (Rahman, 2016). The role of the Chinese is significant in the development of cuisine in Indonesia. This group is divided into total and peranakan. Totok Chinese are native immigrants from China. They bring their original cuisine with an original taste. While Peranakan Chinese are the result of intermarriage with the local population, cultural acculturation occurs (Hoon, 2006; Setiono, 2008; Suryadinata, 1986). For that reason, rather than totok, peranakan are more dominant in producing local food creations that have become local traditional foods.

In China, bean sprouts, taucu, tofu, green beans, flour, and several other food ingredients have been introduced (Lombard, 1996). The Chinese also brought several foods that are now very familiar, such as Soto or Cao Du, Noodles, Meatballs, Bakpia, Bakpao, and many others (Intisari & Indonesia, 2018; Kurniawan, 2020; Lombard, 1996). However, acculturation to local culture has been proven to produce a variety of local foods that actually have the same origin. The taste of Soto in Indonesia varies according to the region, such as Soto Betawi, Soto Lamongan, Soto Bandung, Soto Semarang, Soto Sokaraja, Tauto Pekalongan, and Coto Makassar (Kurniawan, 2020). Like tofu, there are Sumedang Tofu, Kediri Tofu, and others. Not infrequently, owing to their uniqueness, several Peranakan Chinese processed foods, such as Bika Ambon from Medan, Pempek Palembang, Bakpia Pathuk from Yogyakarta, Lunpia Semarang, and Timlo Solo, have become regional icons.

Adaptation to local localities results in a diversity of local cuisine flavors that, when combined, will form the foundation of national cuisine (Kassis, 2022; Rutynskyi & Kushniruk, 2022). The same food used in Java can differ from that used in Sumatra, Kalimantan, Sulawesi, or the Eastern Indonesian region. Even related countries such as Indonesia, Malaysia, and Singapore know some of the same foods, including tempoyak (Anggadhanita et al., 2023) and Baba Nyonya cakes and dishes (Lee, 2008; Ng & Karim, 2016). The availability of raw materials in the local area and cultural differences in the food processing process are factors that determine the form and taste of food, which are actually the same. The long journey of culinary cross-culture strengthened the position of food with Peranakan Chinese influences as local traditional food. Although it has crossed the boundaries of generations, in the current era, traditional food is less competitive than modern food. When the younger generation no longer knows or feels that their tastes are different, traditional food is just a memory.

Currently, efforts to introduce traditional foods, including Peranakan Chinese cakes, through popular media are not impactful enough because they are incidental and lack depth. Preserving traditional foods requires a more structured and long-term approach through the role of education. Education plays an important role in preserving traditional culinary practices and local food culture through cross-generational dialog through learning (D'Andrea & D'Ulizia, 2023). Among others, the

importance of food processing culture, the story of the origin of food, and the health of food should be considered. With respect to the origin of food and its philosophy, historical studies play an important role through the use of museums, historical research, and history learning (D'Andrea & D'Ulizia, 2023; Kurniawati & Lestari, 2016). The importance of studying culinary history to foster an attitude of appreciation and sensitivity between cultures through the educational process is important (Bakhov et al., 2024).

History learning in the *Kurikulum Merdeka* (freedom curriculum) in Indonesia requires a paradigm shift while providing ample space to accommodate multidimensional content, including culinary history (Kemendikbudristek, 2022c, 2022a; Purwanta, 2023). Culinary history learning in the context of value education helps shape national identity and is in line with the *Pancasila* Student Profile, especially the global diversity dimension (Ammert, 2015; Barton & Levstik, 2004; Carretero et al., 2012; Kemendikbudristek, 2022b; Zajda, 2015). The creative pedagogy paradigm further strengthens efforts to accommodate culinary history studies in history learning that involve students as historical actors in their time (Cooper, 2018; Dasgupta, 2019; Douma, 2018; Supriatna & Maulidah, 2020). In the context of school type, the presence of culinary history in history learning at *Sekolah Menengah Kejuruan* (SMK) or vocational high schools, majoring in Culinary Arts, is highly relevant and supports students' core competencies.

3. Methods

This study refers to a naturalistic qualitative approach for explaining a phenomenon and exploring its meaning (Creswell, 2007). Specifically, the historical method is used as the initial procedure of the study. The historical method reveals as much complete information as possible about various events that happened in the past, which are the focus of the study (Sjamsuddin, 2007). Practically, the study follows the steps of the historical method, starting from heuristics, criticism, interpretation, and historiography (Gottschalk, 1985; Sjamsuddin, 2007). The focus of the historical study in this research is to clarify the origins and development of the moho and miku cakes. Furthermore, the research culminates in the idea of preserving these cakes through education.

The heuristic stage is carried out by collecting primary data through in-depth interviews with the owner of Nyonya Pang Shop on Jalan Pemuda Number 71, Growong, Pucungrejo, Muntilan District, Magelang Regency, Central Java. The resource person is the sixth generation of Nyonya Pang Shop. The interviews aimed to explore information about the production of moho and miku cakes in the shop. In addition to interviews, observations were also conducted to observe the raw materials, equipment used, manufacturing process, and sales of the moho and miku cakes. The secondary data were obtained through journal articles, books, and relevant internet sources. The verification stage was carried out by comparing data obtained from various sources to achieve accuracy. The interpretation stage relies on historical imagination to understand the relationships among facts and to carry out a synthesis process to make it meaningful. Finally, historiography or writing of works on moho and miku cakes was carried out from a perspective that was in accordance with the objectives of this study.

Focus group discussion aims to explore the views and needs of a community group related to the focus of the research (Sutopo, 2006). The focus group discussion in this study was conducted with history teachers at SMK Pius X Magelang, who were considered appropriate as the target community. This school provides two majors that students can take, Culinary Arts and Fashion Design. The idea of learning culinary history, especially preserving Moho and Miku cakes through schools, was discussed by researchers together with history teachers as resource persons. The results of the focus group discussion were supported by a relevant literature review to strengthen the findings to construct the ideas described.

Data analysis was carried out descriptively, as the characteristics of qualitative research include data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions (Miles & Huberman, 1984). The analysis emphasizes what is naturally found in the field, does not intend to prove a hypothesis, and is flexible and open (Creswell, 2007; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Sutopo, 2006). The data were analyzed via a multidimensional approach that included culture, gastronomy, and education. The origins of moho and miku cakes are understood from the perspective of local culture as well as the acculturation process that surrounds them. A gastronomic perspective is used to explain the raw materials and production process of these twin cakes, which are closely related to the philosophy and socioculture of the supporting community. Next, the idea of preserving moho and miku cakes is reviewed from an educational perspective. In addition to this focus, the data are reduced and presented again to arrive at a conclusion on the history of the development of moho and miku cakes, the process of making them, and the important role of history education in preserving the two cakes as local cuisine. The multidimensional perspective further enhances the meaning of the research results to be more impactful and practically useful.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1. The origin of the moho and miku cakes

Moho and miku cakes at Nyonya Pang's Shop have not been produced and sold since the beginning of this business. An interview with Jeffry, the sixth generation owner of Nyonya Pang's Shop, revealed that there is a habit in which each generation of the next daughter-in-law brings along the family's signature cake recipe to be tried in Nyonya Pang's kitchen (April 1, 2024). The third-generation daughter-in-law of Nyonya Pang's Shop comes from Magelang. It was this *nyonya* (madam) who in the

1950s introduced moho and miku cakes from her family's recipe at Nyonya Pang's Shop until it reached the sixth generation today. Jeffry suggested that the tastes of the Moho and Miku cakes at Nyonya Pang's Shop are very distinctive and authentic.

The moho and miku cakes here are unique, and the recipe comes from makco [great-grandmother] of [a person from] Magelang. There is only one cake shop in Magelang that can match the taste. It happens to be from the same family as makco. I tried moho and miku cakes from Yogyakarta, Pati, Solo; the tastes are different. We still maintain the original recipe from Makco, which is passed down from generation to generation, unchanged (interview conducted on April 1, 2024).

This source's statement implies two things. First, we address the role of *nyonya* in Chinese families. *Nyonya* (*niowa*) is a Hokkien term meaning woman (Liem, 2004). The terms *nyonya* for women and *baba* for men refer to the Peranakan Chinese community. They are a community group formed from mixed marriages between Chinese men (*totok*) and local women (Hoon, 2006; Neo et al., 2020; Setiono, 2008; Suryadinata, 1986). Although also known in Indonesia, the term *baba-nyonya* is more popular in Malacca and Singapore (Intisari & Indonesia, 2018; Lee, 2008; Montsion & Parasram, 2018). Nyonya culture is identical to domestic affairs, especially food, clothing, and traditions (Ng & Karim, 2016). In Indonesia, Nyonya's kitchen produces a variety of dishes, cakes, and desserts typical of Peranakan Chinese (Intisari & Indonesia, 2018; Kurniawan, 2020; Kurniawan et al., 2023). These foods are not known in China. If there are any, the taste is certainly different because of the strong element of acculturation with local culture (Aji Chen Bromokusumo, 2013; Deerona & Ulung, 2014). This kind of cuisine has transformed into a new culinary identity that has also become the foundation for Nusantara cuisine (FoodPrint, 2024; Kassis, 2022; Rutynskyi & Kushniruk, 2022). Thus, it is clear that moho and miku cakes are the result of Peranakan Chinese culinary works. An acculturation snack that naturally emerged as a result of the cross-breeding of Chinese and local Javanese cultures (Rahman, 2016).

Second, the source's statement about the original makco recipe that has been passed down from generation to generation is believed to produce an authentic taste, confirming the differences in recipes or variants of moho and miku cakes over time. Regionally, Muntilan and Magelang, two neighboring cities in Central Java, are not far from the two cities where Yogyakarta and Solo are found. Moreover, Pati is an area on the north coast of Central Java. Therefore, there are sources that say that moho cakes come from Solo and its surroundings (Bagus, 2022; Primus, 2023), but there are also those who believe that moho cakes are traditional cakes from Pati and the north coast of Central Java (Bidang, 2020; Wisnu & Sushmita, 2022). Moreover, unlike moho cakes, miku cakes, such as Wonosobo, Purwokerto, Gombong, and Purworejo, and their surroundings, are not familiar with each other and are only known in Muntilan and Magelang to the west. However, Central Java is clearly the largest (and main) center for the production of these twin cakes. However, in reality, each region has differences in terms of taste, form, and texture of the cake. This is inseparable from the aspect of acculturation with the locality, even more specifically, the differences in family recipes that are inherited. This phenomenon can be analogous to the diversity of other foods, such as soto with the taste of each region; tofu, bakpia or pia; and several other Peranakan Chinese foods.

In Figure 1, as an acculturative snack, the form of moho cake is most likely inspired by huat kuih known by Totok Chinese. The main ingredient of Huat kuih or *mangkok* cake, also known as apam mangkok, is rice flour (Deerona & Ulung, 2014). This is different from that of moho cake, whose main ingredient is wheat flour. In Malacca and Singapore, moho cake is known as part of baba-nyonya cuisine (Lee, 2008; Ng & Karim, 2016). Other sources note that moho kuih is also known as blossom mantou or smiling mantou (Pang, 2012). The raw materials are indeed the same, but the complementary ingredients used in processing the Moho cake are different. Moho cake and miku in Central Java use a mixture of cassava tapi in the dough. This finding emphasized by Jeffry that one of the authenticities of the moho and miku cake recipes at Nyonya Pang's Shop lies in its consistency in the use of cassava tapi in the fermentation process (interview conducted on April 1, 2024). The use of cassava tapi, not yeast directly or other cake-raising agents, shows an element of acculturation. This is because cassava tapi is a food that has long been known in Central Java. In fact, cassava tapi is repeatedly mentioned in recipes for various cake preparations in the Mustikarasa book initiated by President Sukarno in 1967 (Hardjohutomo & et al, 2016).



Figure 1 Moho and miku cakes made by Nyonya Pang's Shop, Muntilan, Central Java.

Source: Private documentation by Hendra Kurniawan (2024).

Further investigation through observation, as shown in Figure 2, reveals another common thread that confirms the origin of the moho and miku cakes as part of Peranakan Chinese cuisine related to ritual interests. Moho cakes are often used as offerings in the ancestral prayer tradition of the Chinese community (Aji Chen Bromokusumo, 2013). Miku cakes in some areas are also sometimes used as offerings but are often replaced with bakpos. Moho cakes are also sometimes replaced with apam mangkok because in addition to being easier to obtain, they also have the same philosophical meaning. Moho, miku, apam mangkok, and bakpao, with red colors, are interpreted as symbols of joy or happiness. Other irreplaceable cakes have different philosophical meanings. Red wajiks made from cone-shaped glutinous rice symbolize soaring good hopes. The sticky texture of wajiks is also a symbol of close kinship. Angku cakes or thok cakes are red and shaped like a turtle shell symbolizes longevity (Aji Chen Bromokusumo, 2013). According to Jeffry, praying for someone who has not died for a year should not use red cakes. His family will order white moho and miku cakes without other colored patterns as symbols of mourning as well as colored wajik and angku cakes (interview conducted on April 1, 2024).



Figure 2 Moho cake and other Peranakan Chinese snacks as offerings. In Qingming prayers at the Gotong Royong Columbarium, Ambarawa, Central Java.

Source: Private documentation by Hendra Kurniawan (2024).

The Moho and miku cakes used for offering in temples are usually large, approximately 15 cm in diameter (Deerona & Ulung, 2014). This unusual size implies specialness. In fact, these two cakes not only are used for prayer purposes but also have become popular daily snacks. In terms of nutrition, moho and miku cakes contain carbohydrates, protein, glucose, and some fat. Like most wheat flour and tuber snacks, moho and miku cakes are the right choices for breakfast or snacks between meals (Hardjohutomo & et al, 2016). In Figures 1 and 2, the miku cakes look like steamed sponge cakes that are blooming and without filling, whereas the moho cakes are similar to bakpao and are generally filled with green beans or peanuts. Therefore, miku cakes can be said to be a variation of moho cakes. The creative idea of providing fillings may also be inseparable from the habit of consuming moho cakes as daily snacks to make them more flavorful.

The discussion on the origins of moho and miku cakes makes a major contribution to enriching the study of Indonesian culinary history. This culinary history also strengthens the reality of the diverse Indonesian nation. The long journey of culinary cross-culture from moho and miku cakes has helped shape the reality of food and the richness of culinary tastes in Indonesia today. The identity of Indonesian cuisine was created, among other things, by the acculturation of Peranakan Chinese cuisine with local cuisine (Lombard, 1996; Rahman, 2016). This syncretism of taste is the main key to the acceptance of foreign culinary influences as part of the daily food of the general public. In fact, often without realizing it, because it is too close and familiar, food that actually has foreign influences is considered local traditional food. This phenomenon is called ambiguity of origin, ambiguity of artefacts, and ambiguity of ownership of cuisine as a cultural heritage (Cappelen & Pedersen, 2021). This ambiguity is then used as a tool to construct a legitimate mainstream historical narrative and claim to a shared cultural heritage. Food has been shown to be a tool for social change (Motta & Martín, 2021). Therefore, cuisine and its historical stories need to be given their proper place as a medium that strengthens social cohesion. A well-understood origin of food can be a central element that unites members of a society and strengthens social bonds.

4.2. Moho and Miku cake production process

Moho and miku are called twin cakes because the ingredients and processing methods are exactly the same. The differences only appear at the finishing stage. The main ingredient is wheat flour. Another ingredient that strengthens the acculturation of moho and miku cakes is the use of cassava tapai. In the first step, cassava tapai is mashed with water and then mixed with wheat flour until smooth. This initial dough was covered and left for 12 hours until it rose. According to Jeffry, this

initial dough is usually called *biang* or yeast (interview conducted on April 1, 2024). This initial dough is made in the afternoon and left overnight. The next day, some of the *biang* is taken to be used as a base for making dough that is ready to be cooked. The method involves taking some of the starter dough and mixing it with wheat flour and sugar again. The mixture is mixed well until it is no longer sticky to the hands, and the dough is ready to be used to make moho or miku (as shown in Figure 3).



Figure 3 Stages from the initial dough (*biang*) to dough that is ready to use.
Source: Private documentation by Hendra Kurniawan (2024).

The habit of replacing moho cakes with apam and miku cakes with bakpos for ancestral worship purposes has an impact on the production process of these two twin cakes. This type of association has succeeded in making some people completely wrong in defining moho and miku cakes. Moreover, apam and bakpao are indeed more familiar than moho and miku. As a result, it is not uncommon for the recipe for the twin cake dough to be modified until the end result is similar to apam and bakpao, even though they are named moho and miku. Although similar, apam is made mainly from rice flour (Deerona & Ulung, 2014), while bakpao contains additional ingredients such as eggs, milk, or butter (Molodysky, 2019). The taste of Moho decreases when cassava tapai is replaced with yeast or baking powder (Marahimin, 2011). Similarly, miku cakes are often modified in texture and shape to resemble bakpao (Marahimin, 2011). Some people may have a greater appetite to enjoy them, but the original tastes of moho and miku cakes have been lost.

When making a Moho cake, some of the dough is red, brown, or green according to needs or taste. The colored dough is covered with white dough and rolled lengthwise. The dough is then divided and arranged on a prepared leaf base (as shown in Figure 4). For the Moho cake to bloom, a line was made on the top of the cake with scissors before steaming. Moreover, to make miku cake, it is necessary to prepare the filling in the form of green bean paste or peanuts first. According to Jeffry, Toko Nyonya Pang also produces a variant of chocolate-filled miku cake (interview conducted on April 1, 2024). After the filling is ready, the dough is divided and flattened. Put in the filling, form a ball, cover the end of the ball with colored dough, and ensure that the filling does not occur. The filled dough was placed into a medium or large angku cake mold (as shown in Figure 4). The dough is pressed and removed from the mold, and the miku cake is ready to be steamed (as shown in Figure 4).



Figure 4 Stages of making moho and miku cakes.
Source: Private documentation by Hendra Kurniawan (2024).

The Moho and Miku cakes are steamed for approximately 10 minutes (as shown in Figure 5). If you want the cake to be cooked more thoroughly, especially for miku cakes that have fillings, the steaming time can be extended by 3--5 minutes. Nyonya Pang's shop uses a traditional steaming method. In the past, this type of steamer was made of bamboo called *klakat*. Currently, the steamer used is made of metal or sometimes called *langseng*. This steamer is heated on a large pan filled with water. Nyonya Pang's shop has consistently maintained this traditional steaming method since the beginning of producing moho and miku cakes.



Figure 5 Moho and miku cakes that have been steamed.

Source: Private documentation by Hendra Kurniawan (2024).

We have consistently used some traditional equipment and methods since the beginning. We also continue to use banana leaves as the base for moho and miku cakes, not replacing them with baking paper. We do not want the taste to change, [because] banana leaves give a distinctive aroma. Likewise, we continue to use cassava tapai as a leavening agent [for the dough] (interview conducted on April 1, 2024).

Nyonya Pang's shop produces moho and miku cakes every day. According to Jeffry, on a normal day, his shop produces approximately 200 moho and miku cakes (interview conducted on April 1, 2024). In addition to Muntilan, these cakes are also sold at the Nyonya Pang Shop outlet in Pakuwon Mall Yogyakarta. Jeffry also noted that production increases when there are orders for ancestral prayers or offerings during Chinese New Year, the Qingming Festival, or *Rebutan* prayers (interviews conducted on April 1, 2024). Indeed, in many areas in Central Java, moho and miku cakes are usually ordered specifically for ancestral prayers or temple rituals (Aji Chen Bromokusumo, 2013; Deeron & Ulung, 2014). These twin cakes are usually produced and marketed by producers of ancient traditional snacks. In Purwokerto, Gombong, Purworejo, Wonosobo, and several surrounding areas, moho and miku cakes are often sold around with *tenong* carried on the back. Moreover, Baluwarti Moho cakes in Solo are usually sold at market snack stalls (Agustina, 2019).

4.3. The role of schools in conservation efforts

The tastes of moho and miku cakes tend to be less familiar, so few people like them. The mixture of the main ingredients of wheat flour and cassava tapai without other ingredients caused the texture of the Moho and Miku cakes to tend to be slightly flat, dense, and heavy. The taste is also distinctive: it is sweet from sugar and slightly sour from cassava tapai. The texture and taste of moho and miku cakes are very different from those of modern cakes, which are smooth, soft, and light with a more fragrant aroma. On the other hand, moho and miku cakes are also identical as offering cakes. This fact makes it difficult for moho and miku cakes to compete. Several moho and miku cake producers have attempted to modify the recipe by replacing cassava tapai with yeast or even adding eggs, butter, or milk (Marahimin, 2011). The result is, of course, a change in the texture and taste of the cake so that it becomes similar to apam, bakpao, or steamed sponge cake.

Nyonya Pang's shop is one of the few moho and miku cake producers in Central Java that maintains its original taste. The ancestral recipe of the family has not changed, resulting in authentic moho and miku cakes. Nevertheless, Toko Nyonya Pang continues to attempt to respond to changes in the tastes of different generations by producing miku cakes filled with chocolate. Jeffry even admitted that he had tried to make a variant of miku cake filled with cheese, but it was deemed unsuitable, so it was not mass produced (interview conducted on April 1, 2024). To maintain the authentic taste of moho and miku cakes, few innovations can be made. Toko Nyonya Pang's efforts to introduce and preserve these traditional cakes include attractive promotions on social media. This method is quite effective but less structured and not long term. On the other hand, Nyonya Pang's shop has the potential to be a source of culinary history for schools.

Therefore, more structured efforts to introduce and preserve moho and miku cakes can actually be achieved through education. Moreover, in recent times, the development of culinary studies has been very rapid in terms of reaching the topic of food culture and history (Engler-Stringer, 2010; Twiss, 2012; Zuberbuehler, 2023). Exploration of culinary traditions, including their history, can provide insight into the development of cuisine in a region from time to time, which is useful for the younger generation (Ecoleducasse, 2023). In the *Kurikulum Merdeka*, history learning has the freedom to explore sources and learning materials (Kemendikbudristek RI, 2022a, 2022c). Knowledge of culinary history is important for increasing awareness of diverse national culinary identities. Thus, the role of history education is increasingly strong in instilling students' values and character (Ammert, 2015). This idea also represents one of the priorities of the *Profil Pelajar Pancasila* (Pancasila Student Profile), namely, global diversity (Kemendikbudristek RI, 2022b). Moreover, we can also present local and traditional cuisine as part of international cuisine (FoodPrint, 2024; Kassis, 2022; Rutynskyi & Kushniruk, 2022). Learning about the history and culture of diverse culinary arts raises awareness of diversity as a pillar of nation-building as well as part of the culture of world citizens (Bakhov et al., 2024; Barton & Levstik, 2004; Carretero et al., 2012; Zajda, 2015).

The idea of teaching culinary history is relevant to Culinary Arts students in vocational high schools. A history teacher at SMK Pius X Magelang said that contextual history learning for students majoring in culinary arts can be accomplished through a visit to Nyonya Pang's Shop to learn culinary history (Focus Group Discussion on June 21, 2024). Thus, history learning is designed contextually with the science majors studied by vocational students. To date, the benefits of history learning for everyday life have often been questioned (Milo, 2015). Therefore, efforts to contextualize history learning with students' needs and interests can address this concern. History learning becomes close and meaningful to students, thus strengthening efforts to instill values that are useful for life in society (Komalasari, 2012; Morris, 2009; Saripudin & Komalasari, 2016).

A history teacher at SMK Pius X Magelang also said that the current curriculum allows for collaborative learning (Focus Group Discussion on June 21, 2024). Culinary history learning can collaborate with the subjects of *Produk Cake dan Kue Indonesia* (Indonesian Cake and Cake Products) to produce traditional Peranakan Chinese cakes while understanding their history and philosophical meaning. Collaboration can also be carried out further with the subjects of *Produk Kreatif dan Kewirausahaan* (Creative Products and Entrepreneurship) to produce traditional cake products with packaging containing historical information from the cake. This new paradigm in history learning is indeed needed in the implementation of the 2024 National Curriculum in Indonesia, which is known as the *Kurikulum Merdeka* (Purwanta, 2023). The spirit of freedom learning provides a wide space for creative history learning by involving students in a responsive manner to the amount of time they take to use history (Cooper, 2018; Dasgupta, 2019; Douma, 2018; Supriatna & Maulidah, 2020). Thus, not only are the values obtained, but culinary history learning also supports the main skills learned by students. On the other hand, efforts to preserve traditional cuisine are also increasingly gaining a place and opportunity to be developed by the younger generation.

In the conservation efforts, it must first be realized that the existence of traditional culinary that has a history and transcends generations is not competitive with modern food. Creative rejuvenation in processing food is needed to accommodate the tastes of the new generation. A positive perspective on traditional culinary can be formed, especially for those who value cultural heritage, through acceptance in the form of nostalgia, authentic taste, and the ability of the food to adapt to the local environment. For this reason, the preservation of traditional food through education in relevant vocational schools is not without reason. Education is the first recommendation to increase food knowledge among the younger generation while facilitating cultural sustainability (Stone et al., 2021). Adaptation of local traditional food to communities outside the owners of the cultural heritage does not only require the idea of protection alone. Promotion of sustainability through various publication media, inclusive growth to mutually enjoy the diversity of local culinary, and innovation that is responsive to community dynamics are urgently needed (Cappelen & Pedersen, 2024; Mercado, 2021). Although it is called traditional culinary, innovation is needed according to the demands of the times without sacrificing its cultural roots. In addition, in this era of globalization, behind the deliciousness and popularity of traditional food, there is a long story about the struggle for identity and cultural sustainability. Various efforts to maintain traditional food, original recipes, and authentic ways of making traditional food cannot be separated from the view that eating and food have now become global material symbols (Germann Molz, 2007). Mobility, population movement, tourism, traveling, and the like are opportunities to explore food while consuming cultural differences. For this reason, the method of preserving cultural heritage by utilizing social media, which invites its viewers to "travel" digitally, is a new breakthrough. In order to be more structured, massive, and long-term, education as an effort to conserve culinary cultural heritage is predicted to be much more effective.

5. Conclusions

Moho and miku cakes, which are often found in Central Java, Indonesia, are rooted in the Peranakan Chinese culinary tradition or are often called *Nyonya* cakes in Malacca and Singapore. Moho and miku cakes in Central Java present elements of acculturation between Chinese culture and the Javanese locality. The origins of moho and miku cakes are identical to those of offerings in ancestral prayers or rituals in temples but are also known as daily snacks. One producer that consistently maintains ancestral recipes so that they produce authentic moho and miku cakes is Nyonya Pang in Muntilan, Magelang, Central Java. Moho and Miku cakes made by Nyonya Pang's Shop are processed carefully using cassava tapai to produce a distinctive traditional taste. These two cakes have the same basic dough, so they are suitable for being called twin cakes. The

difference lies in the finishing, the Moho cakes are not filled, and the surface is cut so that it blooms when steamed, whereas the miku cakes are filled and molded before being steamed.

The authentic tastes of the moho and miku cakes are less familiar to the tastes of the younger generation. Recalling innovation efforts to make these two cakes more contemporary can have an impact on changing their authentic taste. Therefore, in addition to social media, education can be an idea for preserving moho and miku cakes that are more structured for the younger generation. In a practical context, this effort is highly relevant for application in history learning in vocational high schools majoring in culinary arts through contextual and collaborative learning. On the other hand, the *Kurikulum Merdeka* provides space for the development of history learning that utilizes this culinary wealth as a learning resource. Thus, it is projected that the existence of moho and miku cakes as traditional snacks will be increasingly known, liked, and preserved among young people. Preserving local cuisine will strengthen the national culinary identity as part of international cuisine.

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Ethical considerations

Not applicable.

Conflict of interest

The authors declare that they have no conflicts of interest.

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