

LOCAL FOOD TRADITIONS AND STAPLE FOOD CONSUMPTION: A STUDY OF NASI ARON IN TOSARI VILLAGE

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Abstract This journal is the result of direct research in the field, the Tengger tribe is an indigenous people who inhabit the highlands around the Bromo mountain area to be precise in Tosari Village, Pasuruan District, East Java Province. The purpose of making this journal is: to be able to find out the origins of the consumption of "aron rice" as a culinary food of the Tengger tribe. This food is usually served with a variety of vegetables and side dishes such as tempeh, tofu and chicken. Nasi Aron has a distinctive taste and is rich in spices. This food has its own uniqueness because the spices used use natural and traditional ingredients such as tamarind, cayenne pepper, galangal, and shallots. Nasi Aron is also a food that is part of the cultural identity of the Tengger tribe and is one of the favorite foods for the people in the area. Nasi Aron can also be a way to maintain the culture of the Tengger tribe which is unique and rich in cultural values.

Keywords: Culinary, Tengger Tribe, Nasi Aron

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1. INTRODUCTION

Pasuruan City, located in East Java Province, covers an area of 1,474.015 km² and has a number of tourist attractions that serve as travel destinations. This regency has developed as both an industrial and agricultural area. The Pasuruan region also has tourism destinations with mountainous panoramas, one of which is Mount Bromo located in Kecamatan Tosari. This district has an average temperature of 5–10 degrees Celsius, and its population is predominantly from the Tengger Tribe, whose local wisdom is still well preserved. There are several villages in Kecamatan Tosari, including Tosari Village, Baledono Village, Kandangan Village, Simorejo Village, Wonokitri Village, Ngadiwono Village, Sedaeng Village, and Podokoyo Village [1].

The Tosari community has unique characteristics that influence the types of traditional foods found in their area. One of these is *nasi aron*, which is the staple food of the Tengger Tribe. Their characteristics, which differ from those of the Madurese and Javanese communities, influence their food consumption culture, including in Tosari Village, where *nasi aron* is consumed as the main staple food. *Nasi aron* itself is a corn-based food [2].

The people of Tosari Village enjoy a traditional dish called *nasi aron* served with special side dishes such as spices, corn omelet, fried salted fish, pelasan, tofu and tempeh curry broth, boiled cassava leaves, blendrang, and sambal kotok. This uniqueness has attracted the interest of many researchers to conduct further studies. *Nasi aron* is a staple food made from corn that is soaked for two days, dried under the sun until completely dry, and then ground. The people of Tosari Village produce *nasi aron* on a large scale, both for sale and for personal consumption. Some residents also operate home-based *nasi aron* industries and distribute the product to shops, markets, or supermarkets in Pasuruan City. Thus, people can enjoy *nasi aron* without having to visit Tosari Village [3].

2. RESEARCH METHOD

The type of research conducted was descriptive qualitative research. The data were obtained through interviews with residents of Tosari Village, the profile of Tosari Village, and related articles that support the validity of the research findings. The research subjects were the people of Tosari Village, who served as sources of information, with key informants consisting of community leaders, village officials, and village residents.

Data collection methods included observation, interviews, and documentation. The research instruments used in this study included interview question lists, stationery and notes, and a camera.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Characteristics Of the Community of Tosari Village

Tosari Village is one of the villages located in Kecamatan Tosari, Kabupaten Pasuruan. This village has an area of 5.51 km² and a total population of 3,215 people, with a population density of 583 people/km² [4]. The village is well known because it lies along the Mount Bromo tourism route, surrounded by mountains and cool air, making it frequently visited by tourists. The identity of the Tengger people is often questioned. They are not a primitive tribe, an isolated tribe, or a tribe separate from Javanese society.

Before the Hindu reform movement in the 1980s, the Tengger people attempted to redefine their ancestral heritage in relation to Javanese society based solely on local cultural sources. At present, most residents of Tosari Village adhere to Islam, and their educational level is dominated by people who have only completed elementary school [1].

The economic facilities owned by the residents of Tosari Village are agriculture and hotel/villa rental businesses. The Tengger Tribe is known as resilient traditional farmers who live in groups in hilly areas not far from their agricultural land. The percentage of residents whose livelihood is farming is very high, reaching 95%, while a small portion (5%) work as civil servants, traders, laborers, and in service companies. Corn is the staple food of the Tengger community, although some of their agricultural land is still planted with corn.

However, to harvest corn, the Tengger community must wait a long time, almost one year. Currently, Tengger *nasi aron* is still recorded as a traditional food within the richness of Indonesian culinary heritage.

3.2 Origin Of Nasi Aron

The Tengger community has a traditional dish known as *nasi aron*. It is made from white corn commonly found in the Tosari Village area. The preparation process takes approximately four days. The taste of *nasi aron* is similar to *nasi uduk*, *nasi gemuk*, or *nasi lemak*, which are savory in flavor. Its advantages include a relatively long shelf life and low cholesterol content. In addition, this rice is believed to help reduce blood sugar levels that may cause diabetes and to maintain a feeling of fullness after consumption.

Initially, the Tengger people depended on corn as their staple food; however, at present, its low economic value has led them to prefer cultivating vegetables that are more profitable. Nevertheless, some farmers still continue to plant corn, although not all Tengger people have shifted to rice. The corn harvesting process also takes a long time, approximately one year. Tengger *nasi aron* remains one of the traditional foods recorded in the richness of Indonesian culinary heritage [3].

3.3 Processing Method Of Nasi Aron

To make *nasi aron*, corn must be dried for nearly one month before being shelled and pounded. Then, the refined and sifted corn kernels are cooked using a traditional stove or firewood.

After being fully cooked, *nasi aron* is cut into square pieces and is usually served with various kinds of traditional rural side dishes, such as *sambal terasi*, salted fish, corn omelet, tempeh, and tofu, as well as *daun ranti* vegetables, which are believed to cure various types of diseases [3].

3.4 Reasons Why the Community Consumes Nasi Aron

The people of Tosari Village have long been familiar with a staple food other than rice, namely *nasi aron*. *Nasi aron* can substitute rice as a source of carbohydrates for the body. Village residents who work as farmers or farm laborers state that after consuming *nasi aron*, they feel fuller and satiated for a longer period. This is because the corn in *nasi aron* contains dietary fiber that can slow digestion in the intestines.

The community also believes that *nasi aron* tastes better when consumed with other dishes and provides a quicker sense of satiety. In addition, *nasi aron* contains good nutritional value for the body, especially carbohydrates that function as the main source of energy. This condition enables the people of Tosari Village to focus on their work, as they consume *nasi aron* for breakfast before starting their daily activities [5].

3.5 Function Of Nasi Aron in The Consumption Pattern of The Tosari Village Community

The daily eating habits of the Tosari Village community are generally similar to those of society in general, consisting of main meals (staple food, side dishes, and desserts), snacks, and beverages. The meal times of the local community include breakfast, lunch, and dinner. The community consistently serves *nasi aron* along with its side dishes in their daily meals.

Typically, *nasi aron* is served together with complementary dishes such as *daun ranti* vegetables, tofu, a mixture of potatoes and tofu, tempeh, and sea fish. Additionally, *sambal terasi* is always included to provide an extra sensation on the palate and to warm the body amid the cold air of the Bromo area.

3.6 Sustainability Of Nasi Aron Consumption

The people of Tosari Village hope that the tradition of consuming *nasi aron* will continue to be preserved. Therefore, they will make various efforts to realize this goal, starting from the involvement of families living in Tosari Village. They will continue to serve *nasi aron* as part of their daily meals.

Meanwhile, the local government has also taken policies to integrate *nasi aron* into tourism activities by imposing obligations on hotel operators, homestay owners, and traders to serve or sell *nasi aron* [3].

3.7 SWOT Analysis

3.7.1 Strength

This food has a longer shelf life than ordinary rice and offers many benefits because it contains more protein than sugar. The ingredients used to make it are also easily found in the local area, as many residents are engaged in farming. This makes it a viable alternative to rice, especially since the price of rice is currently quite high.

3.7.2 Weakness

The process of making the Bromo traditional food known as *nasi aron* is relatively complex and requires a longer time than usual. This condition results in limited sales of *nasi aron* in the Bromo area, causing this food to gradually be forgotten and abandoned.

3.7.3 Opportunities

The Tengger community has significant opportunities to develop a unique and rare culinary business. They can incorporate vegetables grown around the Bromo area to attract more people. In this way, individuals who understand traditional food culture can disseminate information and knowledge about this cuisine to local youth as well as tourists.

3.7.4 Threats

The increasing use of foreign foods that attract tourists, the lack of sufficient information about this food, unpredictable weather conditions, decreasing availability of raw materials, and the complex processing methods that are not passed down to the descendants or successors of the Tengger Tribe can all lead to the loss of authenticity of the traditional Tengger food, *nasi aron* [2].

4. CONCLUSION

The habit of the people of Tosari Village in consuming *nasi aron* originates from the abundance of natural resources, particularly corn, as well as the village's location, which is far from urban areas. *Nasi aron* is used as the main staple food because of its delicious taste, its ability to maintain a feeling of fullness, and its role in preventing diabetes. In addition to being a staple food, *nasi aron* is also served at special events.

This habit is considered positive due to discussions regarding the production of *nasi aron* as a tourism souvenir, while at the same time maintaining traditions by encouraging its consumption within families.

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