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PRESERVING MALAYSIA'S CULINARY HERITAGE: A BILINGUAL E-BOOK OF FESTIVE DISHES

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ABSTRACT

Preserving Malaysia's Culinary Heritage: A Bilingual eBook of Festive Dishes aims to preserve Malaysia's diverse culinary and cultural heritage by compiling festive dish recipes into a comprehensive e-book titled Festive Flavours of Malaysia. This e-book features recipes for festive dishes from celebrations such as Hari Raya Aidilfitri, Chinese New Year, Deepavali, and Gawai Dayak. These festivals are a testament to Malaysia's diversity and highlight the significance of food in bringing families and communities together during festive periods. To ensure accessibility and ease of understanding for a wider audience, this e-book is presented bilingually in English and Malay, enabling readers from diverse backgrounds to learn and appreciate these recipes with confidence. The e-book also features authentic recipes with clear instructions that make them accessible to a larger audience, including beginners. Along with the recipes, the e-book offers insights into the cultural and historical significance of each celebration, enhancing readers' understanding of Malaysia's traditions. In short, it serves to preserve Malaysia's culinary traditions and encourage their continued appreciation in kitchens today.

Keywords: Cultural heritage, Traditional cuisine, Malaysia, Recipe

INTRODUCTION

Traditional food has always been one of the key features of cultural festivals and serves as a bridge between tradition and society. Dishes served during festivals hold special significance in Malaysian hearts because they represent not only the country's diverse cultural backgrounds and rich heritage but also their unique flavours. Every dish has a story rooted in tradition and passed down through generations, symbolising unity and joy. These recipes connect families to their heritage, preserving cultural identity and creating shared memories.

However, this rich food culture of Malaysia is confronted with new challenges in today's fast-paced living and globalisation. The rising popularity of convenience foods and the change in modern lifestyle have been creating a gap between the young generation and traditional cooking practices. Globalisation introduces people to foreign influences that may overtake local traditions, while most have either no access to authentic recipes or will never find the time to learn them. As stated by Mohd Fisol et al. (2024), the eating habits of Malaysians are changing towards more convenient and fast food patterns because of globalisation and modernisation, which influence their lifestyle decisions. According to Kamaruzaman et al. (2022), these traditions and their origins are less understood; hence, it is becoming less of a concern even in Malaysia. Therefore, these culinary treasures and deeper meanings and traditions with them may be lost.

The goal of Preserving Malaysia's Culinary Heritage: A Bilingual E-Book of Festive Dishes is to preserve the culinary heritage of Malaysia by compiling a collection of festive dish recipes from cultural festivals like Hari Raya Aidilfitri, Chinese New Year, Deepavali, and Gawai Dayak in its e-book titled Festive Flavours of Malaysia. To promote inclusivity, reflecting Malaysia's multicultural society, they are written with instructions in English and Malay, step by step. This bilingual approach allows local communities such as Malay, Chinese, Indian, and Iban and global readers to appreciate Malaysia's rich traditions. This is because bilingual recipe books featuring Malay and English are not widely available, making this e-book a valuable resource for those who want to explore authentic Malaysian cuisine. The e-book also offers a journey through the cultural and historical significance behind each festival, giving you a better appreciation of Malaysia's rich heritage.

OBJECTIVES

Key Objectives:

- To compile and present 16 recipes that represent Malaysia's diverse culinary heritage.
- To provide a concise explanation of the cultural and historical importance of each festival in Malaysia.
- To make Malaysian food traditions accessible to a wider audience by presenting the recipes in Malay and English.

ENTREPRENEURIAL OPPORTUNITIES

The Festive Flavours of Malaysia recipe e-book offers several business opportunities. The first opportunity is to sell the e-book on various online platforms or via a personal website, thus allowing access to both local and international readers. According to Nurhayati and Abdurrahman (2019), websites can serve as a platform for everyone to be connected globally, anywhere, and anytime. This would enable the project to reach audiences who are interested in learning about Malaysian cuisine.

When Malaysia's cuisine is successfully introduced in other countries, it provides a chance to promote the culture and the country through its food (Abdullah et al., 2021). As people from other countries express interest in trying Malaysia's traditional dishes, local entrepreneurs have opportunities to grow their businesses by exporting Malaysian dishes and ingredients globally. Moreover, the e-book can be converted into a printed format, catering to those who prefer a physical recipe book.

In terms of partnerships, collaboration with local food bloggers or cultural organisations, such as Tourism Malaysia or Tourism Melaka, could help boost the promotion of the e-book. The e-book could also be marketed to international audiences through tourism or cultural exchange programs like YES (Youth Exchange and Study) or SUSI (Study of the U.S. Institutes) to further enhance its global reach. These entrepreneurial opportunities would not only help grow the project but also promote Malaysia's rich culinary traditions to a wider audience.

METHODOLOGY

Phase One: Planning and Concept Development

This project began by identifying the core issue, which was the gap in available resources, specifically the lack of bilingual recipe books featuring Malaysia's traditional dishes for cultural celebrations. The initial plan was to include four festivals celebrated in Malaysia: Hari Raya Aidilfitri, Chinese New Year, Deepavali, and *Pesta Kaamatan*, but due to certain limitations, *Pesta Kaamatan* was replaced with Gawai Dayak. A needs analysis survey was distributed to potential readers, gathering insight into their preferences and expectations.

Phase Two: Content Creation and Design

A variety of traditional dishes were chosen to represent the four festivals. To help readers understand the festivals better, explanations for each celebration were included, as well as recipes and dish descriptions. The recipes were sourced from family members. Drafting and translating the recipes into English took up to 4 weeks. To enhance the design and layout of the ebook, Canva Pro was subscribed to access more features. The e-book's layout was carefully designed to ensure an appealing and user-friendly experience. During this stage, the project's name was decided, and features like step-by-step photos, tips, ingredient substitution, and a glossary were added to improve the content. Initially, step-by-step pictures were not part of the plan, but after most respondents voted for them, it was decided to include them. The necessary ingredients were purchased to cook the dishes and to capture the step-by-step pictures.

Phase Three: Editing and Finalisation

Each section of the book was proofread for accuracy and consistency of language and formatting. Visual elements were reviewed to ensure they complemented the recipes. The layout was adjusted to ensure clarity and appeal. Sections like the glossary and ingredient substitutions were finalised, thus assuring the e-book was polished and ready for publication.

Phase Four: Publication and Promotion

After completing the e-book, an application for an e-ISBN was submitted. A social media account was set up to promote the e-book and interact with potential readers. This platform serves as an effective way to create awareness, advertise, and promote products or services (Mohaidin et al., 2022). Additionally, a website was developed to provide more insight into the book, showcase the book's preview, and offer an accessible platform for purchasing the e-book.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

An analysis survey was conducted to gather feedback from potential readers. Questions were asked to collect their thoughts and expectations regarding a bilingual recipe e-book featuring recipes in both English and Malay. The respondents are male and female, ranging in age from 18 to over 55. The insights gained from their responses will help shape the e-book to better align with their preferences and needs.

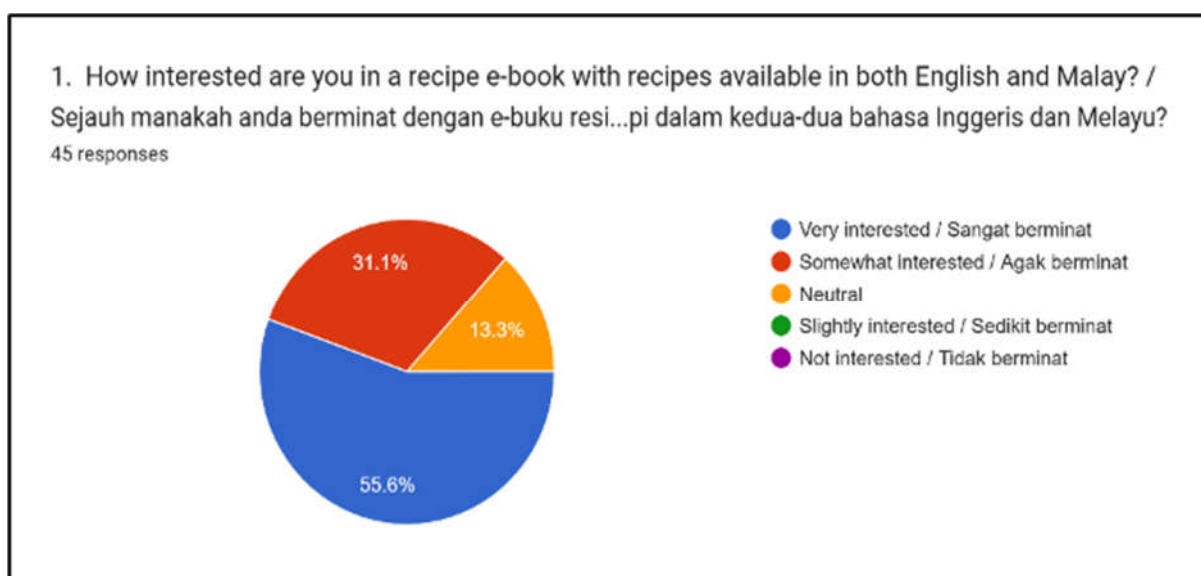


Figure 1.: Interest in Bilingual Recipes E-book (English and Malay)

According to the survey, there is strong interest in a bilingual recipe e-book, with 55.6% of respondents saying they are very interested and somewhat interested (31.1%) in recipe e-books in English and Malay. This indicates a promising market opportunity, as bilingual content can appeal to a diverse audience. Furthermore, the overall positive response suggests that providing recipes in both English and Malay may increase accessibility and appeal to a diverse range of readers.

When asked how useful the bilingual recipe e-book was for learning new cooking techniques and cultural dishes, 66.7% said it was very helpful, while 28.9% said it was moderately helpful. With the majority finding it either very or moderately helpful, it's clear that the idea is well-received by a wide audience. This suggests that offering recipes in both English and Malay could be a great way to help

people expand their cooking skills and knowledge.



Figure 2.: Preferred Feature in a Recipe E-book with Translations

The most requested feature from the respondents was step-by-step photos, with 84.4% of respondents highlighting their importance for visual guidance. Cooking tips were followed closely by 55.6%, which offer practical advice to improve results, while 42.2% valued ingredient substitutions for flexibility when certain items are unavailable. Additionally, 26.7% appreciated the idea of including a glossary to clarify unfamiliar terms. These findings highlight the need for both visual and practical guidance, emphasising the importance of making the recipes more accessible and adaptable. Incorporating these features into the e-book would enhance the user experience.

According to the survey, 85% of respondents agreed that a recipe e-book focusing on Malaysian festival dishes could play a crucial role in preserving and promoting the country’s rich food culture. This finding emphasises that the festive dishes e-books are more than just providing recipes, as they can help preserve culinary practices and share them with future generations.

Moreover, 86.7% of respondents expressed interest in including explanations about the festivals behind the dishes. This shows that readers are not just interested in learning how to cook traditional dishes but also in the cultural stories behind them. Including this information would make the e-book more engaging, providing readers with a deeper understanding and an engaging experience.

CONCLUSION

More than just a collection of recipes, this e-book reflects Malaysia’s diverse culinary traditions and cultural legacy. To make it accessible and encourage appreciation among local and global readers, the

recipes are presented in both English and Malay. The goal is to present traditional festive dishes while helping readers understand the profound cultural significance of these celebrations. The author anticipates that this e-book will spark interest in preserving and valuing Malaysia's unique food and language both locally and globally. In the future, she hopes to expand the project to feature more festive dishes from various cultural celebrations in Malaysia, collaborate with cultural organisations, and include engaging elements to allow Malaysia's unique food traditions to connect with a wider international audience.

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