

BALINESE CUISINE AS AN INSTRUMENT IN DRIVING GASTRODIPLOMACY IN AUSTRALIA

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the potential of Balinese cuisine—specifically *Ayam Betutu* and *Sate Lilit Ikan*—as instruments for advancing Indonesia’s gastrodiplomacy efforts in Australia, particularly within the framework of the "Indonesia Spice Up the World" initiative. Recognizing Bali’s global tourism appeal and the dishes’ alignment with priority Indonesian spices, the research aims to identify how traditional foods can be culturally adapted without losing authenticity. A qualitative descriptive method was employed, involving interviews, observations, organoleptic (sensory) tests, and documentation to assess these dishes’ acceptability and market fit in Australia. The findings reveal that the modified versions of both dishes maintain their traditional texture, appearance, and aromatic identity while successfully reducing spiciness to suit Australian preferences. These culinary adjustments, when paired with beer—a common element in Australian dining culture—enhance the dishes’ acceptance as gastro-diplomatic tools. Additionally, the growing presence of Indonesian restaurants, support from diaspora communities, and government initiatives provide strong platforms for culinary diplomacy. The research implies that food modification and localized marketing strategies can significantly enhance the global impact of Indonesian cuisine, offering insights for future gastrodiplomacy policies and food export strategies.

Keywords: Gastrodiplomacy, Balinese Cuisine, Food Modification, Indonesian Cuisine

INTRODUCTION

Gastrodiplomacy is a part of public diplomacy commonly used by countries to build diplomacy with other countries or citizens. The use of culinary as an agent of public diplomacy is a new way to conduct enjoyable diplomacy (Nair 2021). The application of gastrodiplomacy efforts in the tourism sector is very relevant, considering the term culinary tourism. Gastrodiplomacy is able to articulate between culinary and tourism (Suntikul 2019). Gastrodiplomacy efforts have been implemented by various countries to support tourism growth and create a positive national brand for a country (Rockower 2012). Conducted research (Kihlgren Grandi 2023) that Asian countries are more involved in carrying out gastrodiplomacy practices than countries from Europe or America. Indonesia is exploring the potential of gastrodiplomacy to enhance its soft power, leveraging its rich culinary heritage as an effective tool for public and cultural diplomacy (Trihartono et al. 2020). Indonesia possesses a diverse array of traditional foods that can be transformed into a strong tool for international cultural diplomacy.

Indonesia has launched a gastrodiplomacy program with culinary icons of as many as 30 regional foods (Yayusman and Mulyasari 2024). Despite Indonesia’s initiative to represent its traditional culinary diversity through 30 icons for gastro diplomacy, only fried rice emerged prominently based on its popularity and accessibility. The selection of the 30 culinary icons turned out to cause a polemic because it was considered inappropriate to describe the origin of the culinary area. The selection of culinary icons should be based on taste, and appearance and must be a regional superior product (Pujayanti, 2017). Based on the circumstance above, selecting appropriate food as a successful instrument of Gastrodiplomacy is crucial. The government does not recommend randomly pick any traditional food to initiate and foster a gastrodiplomacy program. In addition to promoting

traditional cuisine overseas, gastrodiploamacy enables governments to use their national cuisine as a soft power tool to boost the attractiveness and desirability of their people, culture, values, and ideals. It also strengthens the association of certain foods with that nation and yields economic benefits like increased tourism or food exports. A process of standardising national eating habits, known as gastrationalism or culinary nationalism is necessary for a nation to showcase its culinary prowess, sometimes even through external recognition (Farina 2018).

Gastrodiploamacy by carrying out a new program, namely Spice Up The World, should culinary icons need to be adjusted and linear with the slogan. The main goal of the Spice Up The World program is to encourage Indonesian cuisine to foreign countries to increase the export value of spices and spices. Besides the pilot project, namely rendang which is carried out in Bulgaria, several other spices will be promoted, including Nasi Goreng seasoning, Sate, Soto, and Gado-gado, followed by other supporting spices. Gastrodiploamacy by carrying out a new program, namely Spice Up The World, should culinary icons need to be adjusted and linear with the slogan. The main goal of the Spice Up The World program is to encourage Indonesian cuisine to foreign countries to increase the export value of spices and spices (Septyana and Saragih 2024). In addition to the pilot project, namely, rendang carried out in Bulgaria, the Indonesian Government also mentioned several other spices that will be promoted, including nasi goreng seasoning, sate, soto, and gado-gado, then followed by other supporting spices. Such as sweet soy sauce and peanuts. The main spices that are the export priorities of the Spice Up The World gastrodiploamacy program are pepper, nutmeg, cloves, turmeric, ginger, turmeric, cinnamon, and vanilla. Based on the explanation above, it is important to determine culinary icons that are by the Spice Up The World gastrodiploamacy program. In many ways of gastrodiploamacy program will help the country to increase its food exports (Zhen 2019).

Balinese food has been chosen to represent Indonesia Cuisine as a tool of gastrodiploamacy due to Bali is widely recognized as one of the most famous tourism destinations in Indonesia, attracting both domestic and international tourists (Ketut Satriawan, Gde Pujaastawan, and Made Sarjana 2016). Balinese cuisine heavily utilizes a blend of traditional spices known as "Base Genep," which includes a variety of herbs and spices that create a rich and complex flavor. This spice blend is integral to many traditional dishes and is a key factor in the unique taste of Balinese food (Trisdayanti, Dalem, and Atmaja 2022). The reason for choosing Ayam Betutu and Sate Lilit Ikan as experimental research objects is because, first, the ingredients used use spices that are the priority of Spice (Tambahjan referensi popularitas ayam betutu dan sate lilit) Up The World, namely, turmeric, ginger, pepper, cloves and peanuts. Second, Ayam Betutu and Sate Lilit Ikan also have a philosophy that is closely related to Balinese culture (Aesthetica 2023). In addition to being an edible aspect of each destination's culture, traditional, authentic cuisines serve as an excellent means of interaction to foster familiarity, empathy, and affinity. This familiarity is frequently crucial in dispelling any misconceptions about that country that may exist among foreigners (Hussin 2018).

Third, there are restaurants that sell Balinese cuisine in Victoria and New South Wales such as Warung Agus, Nova Balinese Kitchen, Kenangan and Bonsai Bali. The existence of the restaurant can be a business in selling Balinese food, especially Ayam Betutu and Sate Lilit Ikan. An important component of Indonesian gastrodiploamacy is the promotion of cultural meals, which is highlighted by the examination of Indonesian eateries in Australia. These restaurants promote cultural interchange and enhance Indonesia's reputation outside by serving authentic Indonesian food. They educate the public about Indonesia's culinary diversity in addition to satisfying the tastes of Australians. Food is a powerful tool for cultural diplomacy because of this project, which fosters both diplomatic relations and culinary enjoyment (Yayusman and Mulyasari 2024). The term "gastrodiploamacy" describes coordinated and ongoing public relations and infrastructure investment campaigns by governments and states, frequently in cooperation with non-state actors, to raise the value and standing of their nation brand through food. It is becoming a more and more common tactic for public diplomacy and nation branding (Rockower 2012).

Departing from the findings of previous research and the theme of gastrodiploamacy, spice up the world, researchers are interested in conducting a deeper study on sate lilit and ayam betutu in making them culinary icons in carrying Spice Up The World, and not only that, researchers will conduct experiments in modifying the taste and processing of Ayam Betutu and Sate Lilit but without significantly changing the authenticity or uniqueness of the food. This study also uses the concept of

multi-track diplomacy to provide references for the components that support a country's diplomacy in general (Dudouet et al. 2018).

This study contributes a novel dimension to the existing gastrodiplomacy literature by combining experimental food modification with qualitative field analysis to assess the cultural adaptability and economic viability of Balinese dishes—*Ayam Betutu* and *Sate Lilit Ikan*—within the Australian market. While previous studies (e.g., Trihartono et al. 2020; Yayusman & Mulyasari 2024) explored Indonesia's gastrodiplomacy efforts and their alignment with programs like *Indonesia Spice Up the World*, they did not focus on specific food items' sensory adaptations or test their compatibility with local eating and drinking habits abroad. This research fills that gap by conducting organoleptic tests, engaging diaspora networks, and evaluating consumer alignment in a targeted destination. Furthermore, it integrates the sociological and commercial contexts of Australia—particularly beer pairing culture—with culinary diplomacy, which has been largely underexplored in prior research (cf. Rockower 2012; Farina 2018; Hussin 2018). Therefore, this study adds methodological and contextual novelty by connecting culinary authenticity preservation with local consumer preference and gastrodiplomatic strategy execution.

RESEARCH METHOD

In this study, the author uses qualitative field research (Field Research) with an analytical descriptive approach (Kemperaj and Chavan 2013). Qualitative research is the study of a process, event, or development where the materials or data collected are in the form of qualitative information whose research results are not to be used as generalizations like quantitative research (Whitley 2008). The research methods used were in the form of interviews, observations, organoleptic tests and documentation studies. The determination of resource persons in the interview method depends on the determination of the components used to assess the potential of *Ayam Betutu* and *Sate Lilit Ikan*, so that the resource persons are selected according to the purposive principle. Purposive sampling is a non-probability sampling strategy in which the researcher chooses participants according to particular traits or attributes that support the goals of the study (Campbell et al. 2020). Organoleptic test is used in this research to gather some data of food modification of *Ayam Betutu* and *Sate Lilit Ikan* in order to determine the quality and level of consumer approval of food products, sensory evaluation is essential. *Ayam Betutu* and *Sate Lilit Ikan* can be compared to the study on seasoned fish meat floss, which employed sensory characteristics to assess quality and consumer acceptance (Kasmiati et al. 2023). This entails techniques like reflexivity, audit trail maintenance, and triangulation to reduce researcher bias and guarantee that participant preferences, not researcher prejudice, determine the findings (Forero et al. 2018). The activities in data analysis are data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Modificiation of Traditional Food Ayam Betutu & Sate Lilit Ikan as an instrument of Indonesian Gastrodiplomacy

The sensory assessment of the food of *Ayam Betutu* and *Sate Lilit Ikan* was carried out by several expert panelists (Chefs) who have strong experience in western food and traditional Balinese food which include indicators of color, aroma, texture and taste. This Modification were needed to meet the Physiology conditions of Australian who are less tolerant to strong spices compare to South East Asean Community.

There is no significant difference in the color of the *Ayam Betutu*, where in the modified *Ayam Betutu* recipe and the process that relies more on commercial cooking equipment, there is already a burnt color even though it is not as thick as the traditional processing process. Similar to the modification of *Ayam Betutu*, the color of the results of the modified cooking process on fish *sate lilit* is not significantly different compared to the traditional fish *sate lilit* food even though the cooking process is different, especially in the tools used. The burnt color on fish *sate lilit* is a characteristic of a grill cooking method. In terms of color, it is not a problem if the food is *Ayam Betutu* and fish *sate lilit*, although there are grill marks on fish *sate lilit* and burnt color on *Ayam Betutu*, but this is a characteristic of the grill cooking method. It is not uncommon for food sold in Australia to serve a menu

that uses the grill method (Thompson et al. 2008), such as beef steak, kangaroo steak, roasted lamb shoulder, grilled chicken, kebab and others, the majority of which are popular in Australia (Duarte Alonso and Krajsic 2016). In terms of color, it can be concluded that the modified chicken betutu and Sate Lilit Ikan lilit foods in this study have the potential to be marketed to the Australian public without significantly reducing the authenticity of the food.

In the modification of Ayam Betutu and Sate Lilit Ikan in this study, it still has a spice aroma. The spice aroma is obtained from the use of fresh spices such as turmeric, ginger, coriander, galangal and others. The aroma of spices in the food modification in this study is quite low compared to the traditional recipe. Of course, this is due to the use of a smaller ratio of fresh spices compared to the traditional recipe and some use dry spices which do not produce as strong an aroma as fresh spices. The researcher's consideration in modifying the ingredients used is because of the consideration of expensive and seasonal raw materials and to minimize the aroma of spices that are too strong for the Australian people. The aroma of the modified Ayam Betutu and Sate Lilit Ikan still emphasizes the characteristics of the use of spices, although the aroma of the spices produced is not as strong as in traditional Ayam Betutu and Sate Lilit. The aroma of spices in the modified Ayam Betutu and Sate Lilit Ikan has been able to adjust to the characteristics of foods that have similarities in aroma sharpness, such as chicken curry, chicken tika masala, and others. In terms of aroma, modified Ayam Betutu and Sate Lilit Ikan have the potential to become foods that can be enjoyed by the Australian people and at the same time maintain the use of raw materials, although with a small ratio compared to traditional recipes.

The texture of the modified processing of Ayam Betutu and Sate Lilit Ikan is no different from the texture of chicken betutu and Sate Lilit Ikan that are processed traditionally. The soft texture of chicken betutu characterizes the cooking process of modified chicken betutu that can be adjusted to the availability of commercial cooking utensils, as well as the modified satay lilit has a dense texture that is very close to the traditionally processed satay lilit. There is one thing that is of special concern in the processing of modified chicken betutu, namely chicken skin. In traditional chicken betutu, the cooking process generally leaves the chicken skin attached to the meat. In Australia, chicken skin is something that is not common to cook, Australian people remove chicken skin when cooking chicken. However, chicken betutu can be cooked by removing the skin for commercial needs. Most importantly, the texture of chicken betutu must be soft, this is a characteristic of the cooking process of chicken betutu which has a soft texture and tastes of Indonesian spices, especially Bali.

Taste is the most important factor in this study, related to the physiological and sociological factors of the Australian society which is less spicy intolerant and beer-drinking culture. Modifications to chicken betutu and Sate Lilit Ikan are based on these physiological and sociological factors, so modifications need to be made to suit these needs. Traditional chicken betutu and Sate Lilit Ikan tend to use a lot of spices and also use chili to add a spicy taste to the food, of course this is contrary to the physiological and psychological conditions of the Australian people. Modifications to chicken betutu and Sate Lilit Ikan involve a reduction in the use of chili, so that the level of spiciness can still be tolerated by the Australian people.

Based on the results of the organoleptic test conducted by expert panelists, the taste of chicken betutu and Sate Lilit Ikan has a mild spicy taste so that the taste of chicken betutu has the potential as food for the gastrodiplomacy program in Australia. The use of spices is also adjusted to the ability of the Australian people to accept the sharpness of the spices in the food used. The spices used in the modification of chicken betutu and Sate Lilit Ikan are quite mild. It can be concluded that the modification of chicken betutu and Sate Lilit Ikan has the potential as an icon in supporting gastrodiplomacy efforts in Australia, as well as being able to show the characteristics of Balinese - Indonesian regional food to the Australian people.

Australia-Indonesia Bilateral

The condition of economic cooperation has been anticipated and responded to by the Indonesian government through Indonesian diplomats at the Consulate General of the Republic of Indonesia by implementing a diplomacy strategy through culinary as one of them. The Indonesian government has designated gastrodiplomacy efforts as a priority strategy that needs to be implemented in reviving Indonesia-Australia economic cooperation. The Indonesian Consulate General in Sydney encouraged the formation of an association that supports Indonesian gastrodiplomacy efforts in Australia, namely the Indonesian Restaurant Association. The Indonesian Consulate General in Sydney collaborated

pentahelicly to launch gastrodiplomacy efforts, especially in the working areas of Queensland, South Australia, and New South Wales. There are 70 Indonesian restaurants that have been invited to collaborate to carry out promotions so that they are expected to be able to drive an increase in exports of Indonesian food and beverage products and other supporting goods.

Sociological of Australian Society

Australians have a culture of drinking alcohol after work on the weekend with friends or family. Australians have a pub culture, where Australians usually gather in a pub not only to enjoy alcohol but also just to hang out with friends and family while enjoying the food served. The most popular alcoholic beverages in Australia are beer and wine. Both types of alcoholic beverages must be available in a pub, bar, cafe and restaurant.

The habit of Australian people to consume beer is influenced by several geographical and physiological factors. Australia is a continent that is mostly a barren desert, so producing water is a valuable commodity and the Australian people believe that beer has many health benefits. Beer has always played an important role in the lives of Australians, and they believe that people who drink in moderation have better verbal skills, memory, and speed of thought. Of course, the habit of drinking – these alcoholic drinks must also be adjusted to the type of food served. Matching food characteristics with beer characteristics is a consideration to get a good combination that is usually called beer and food pairing. Beer and food pairing are also factors that a chef needs to consider when creating a food menu at a pub, restaurant and bar considering that Australian society has a beer-drinking culture. Based on the findings through food modification, Ayam Betutu and sate lilit have great potential to be combined with these cultures.

Indonesian Food & Beverage Business in Australia

The existence of Indonesian restaurants in Australia has begun to be seen, especially in the states of Victoria and New South Wales. The existence of these restaurants is able to become an initial platform in introducing Indonesian food. Gastrodiplomacy efforts have begun to be intensively carried out by the Indonesian government to introduce culture, tourism, and food exports. Gastrodiplomacy efforts involve Indonesian restaurants in Australia, so that the existence of culinary businesses established in Australia, especially Victoria and NSW, is able to become a platform for the Spice up the world gastrodiplomasi campaign, especially in Balinese cuisine, namely Ayam Betutu and Sate Lilit Ikan. Currently, there are 70 Indonesian restaurants operating and registered in the state of New South Wales and there are 52 Indonesian restaurants operating and registered in the state of Victoria.

The findings of this study are not only limited to the availability of business for selling and introducing chicken betutu and Sate Lilit Ikan, but the existence of the diaspora also helps gastrodiplomacy efforts, especially for chicken betutu and Sate Lilit Ikan. The existence of the diaspora in diplomacy efforts is in accordance with the existing theory, namely Multi Track Diplomacy. Currently, there are 62 communities in the State of Victoria and more than 70 communities in the State of New South Wales which are divided into types of community focus such as religion, culture, arts & sports, youth, general communities and others.

Government Support

Gastrodiplomacy has become one of the cross-ministerial programs, one of which is supported by the Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy . The strong reason for the gastrodiplomacy program; Indonesia Spice Up the World is because of the lack of popularity of Indonesian spices which is inversely proportional to the popularity of Indonesia as a country that produces spices. The gastrodiplomacy program: Indonesia Spice the World is one of the programs in an effort to increase the marketing of processed food products and Indonesian spices. Not only to increase spice exports, but also to increase the initial interest of the Australian people to travel to Bali - Indonesia. The same thing was also expressed by the Minister of Tourism and Creative Economy/Head of the Tourism and Creative Economy Agency (Menparekraf) Sandiaga Uno. According to Sandi, the existence of the Indonesia Spice Up The World program is expected to increase opportunities for the world culinary industry.

The launch of the Gastrodiplomacy program: Indonesia Spice Up the World is a form of the government's seriousness in advancing and introducing Indonesian cuisine. As a form of seriousness, the government sent a delegation from Indonesia Spice Up The World to New York and Australia to meet with the Indonesian Consulate General and Indonesian Embassy in those countries. The

government has also begun to intensively promote the Gastrodiplomacy program: Spice Up The World in Bali, which is the main gateway for foreign tourists to Indonesia (Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy, 2022). This shows that the gastrodiplomacy program has received support from the central government which is relevant to the theory of multi-track diplomacy.

CONCLUSION

This study highlights the importance of gastrodiplomacy in promoting Indonesian cuisine, particularly Balinese dishes like *ayam betutu* and *sate lilit ikan*, to foreign audiences such as Australians. Unlike cultural diplomacy, gastrodiplomacy requires sustained platforms such as restaurants, which are increasingly present in Australia, supported by the Indonesian diaspora and government initiatives. These dishes not only represent the richness of Indonesian culinary heritage but also offer flexibility in taste adaptation for foreign palates, making them suitable for broader international appeal—*sate lilit ikan*, for instance, is gaining popularity as a snack paired with beer. However, Indonesia remains less competitive in this domain compared to regional neighbors like Thailand and Vietnam. Future research is recommended to conduct a comparative analysis of gastrodiplomacy strategies among Southeast and East Asian nations, focusing on best practices in marketing, consumer engagement, and policy support to enhance Indonesia's culinary diplomacy efforts globally.

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