

Innovation of Sombu Corn as a Modernized Traditional Cuisine of Manggarai Regency

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Abstract

Purpose: This research aims to innovate the processing of local foods, addressing the decline of traditional foods due to the rise of foreign fast foods. The study emphasizes the importance of preserving traditional foods, such as Sombu, a corn-based dish from Manggarai Regency, and demonstrates how modernization can help these foods compete in today's market.

Method: The research employed a combination of Brainstorming sessions, business management strategies, and techniques for making, processing, and marketing traditional foods. The study involved selecting specific locations and subjects for service to ensure targeted and effective interventions.

Practical Applications: The findings highlight the potential for local food innovations to rejuvenate traditional culinary practices, making them competitive with foreign alternatives. This research opens opportunities for young people, especially students, to engage in creative and profitable culinary innovations, thereby sustaining cultural heritage and stimulating economic growth.

Conclusion: The study successfully showcased new innovations in local food processing, resulting in modernized traditional foods that can compete with international products. These innovations not only preserve cultural heritage but also motivate the younger generation to contribute to creative and profitable culinary practices.



Introduction

The prevalence of foreign products, such as fast food, has caused traditional foods to be sidelined, abandoned, and even threatened with extinction (Kamim and Altamaha, 2019). Today's society prefers buying and consuming fast food, considered more modern and upscale. Preserving traditional foods amidst the influx of foreign foods is crucial. Traditional foods are now rarely seen in the Indonesian market, and many are at risk of disappearing from the cultural heritage. Traditional food is consumed by specific ethnic groups and regions (Hadisantoso, 1993). According to KRT Sosrodiningrat (1991), traditional foods have the following characteristics:

1. Recipes passed down through generations;
2. Use of specific traditional tools in preparation, such as clay pots;
3. Traditional cooking techniques to achieve distinctive taste and appearance.

Sombu is a traditional food from Ruteng made primarily from corn. Local food development can compete with foreign products if it uses appropriate technological innovations, focusing on three elements (Hermansyah, 2017):

1. Policies and programs related to Strategic Food Security;
2. Enhancement of the local food industry;
3. Improvement of food technology and empowerment.

Making Sombu starts with selecting mature corn, soaking it in warm water to ease milling, turning it into corn flour. This flour is mixed with sugar, eggs, butter, and powdered milk, then steamed in bamboo. Sombu corn is beneficial for health, combating diseases like cancer and anemia, and providing nutrients such as linoleic acid, potassium, folic acid, beta-carotene, fiber, minerals, protein, and phenolic flavonoids (Usma et al., 2020). This venture has excellent market potential, particularly with innovative improvements.

Kotler and Keller (2009) define innovation as introducing something new, whether a product, service, idea, or perception, which consumers view as new. They add that innovation encompasses new business concepts and processes, enabling companies to adapt to dynamic environments. Agricultural product innovation, especially in food processing, requires creativity and experience to optimize agricultural yields like corn for economic growth (Yulianingsih et al., 2020). Innovation adds economic and moral value for innovators.

Setiadi (2010) outlines five characteristics of innovation:

1. Relative Advantage: Does the new product offer significantly greater benefits than what it replaces?
2. Compatibility: Is the product consistent with existing values and past experiences of potential adopters?
3. Complexity: The simpler the product is to understand and use, the more likely it will be accepted.
4. Trialability: Can the innovation be tried before full adoption? Products with trial opportunities are more likely to succeed.
5. Observability: Can the results of using the innovation be easily seen by others? Visibility helps drive adoption.
6. Choosing corn as the primary raw material for developing and modernizing local food introduces innovative corn-based products. The PKM team chose the theme "Innovation of Sombu Corn as Modernized Traditional Cuisine of Manggarai Regency" to stimulate business sustainability and market competitiveness as a new product.

Based on the above, the issues in Manggarai Regency, particularly in Ruteng City, include:

1. Foreign products like fast food sidelining traditional foods and a lack of innovation to attract consumers.
2. Young people's disinterest in developing traditional food businesses.
- 3.

This student creativity program aims to educate and empower the community and students to preserve and develop local food products, increasing sales and economic empowerment. The goals are:

1. Innovate traditional foods to compete with foreign products, attracting consumers and spawning modernized traditional products from Ruteng.
2. Motivate and create opportunities for young people, especially students, to produce creative, innovative, and profitable local food products, specifically modernized Sombu Corn.
3. Serve as a reference for enhancing culinary businesses based on regional potential, recognizing that Manggarai's regional culinary potential has been underdeveloped.

Method

This community service activity was conducted in Tenda Village, Langke Rembong District, Manggarai Regency, using the Brainstorming Method. The Brainstorming Method is a technique for solving problems by gathering ideas from participants to find the most suitable solution (Ningrum et al., 2020; Apriyanto et al., 2020). The steps of the Brainstorming Method are Setting goals, Group discussion, and Joint decision-making.

The brainstorming session was conducted before the field practice (Ningrum et al., 2020). During the group discussions, participants were accompanied by a team and supervising lecturers, who encouraged them to propose ideas on how to preserve Manggarai's traditional foods amidst the influx of foreign foods. This process aimed to find solutions that could provide additional income for family food security. The Brainstorming Method effectively motivated participants to realize the ideas collectively decided upon.

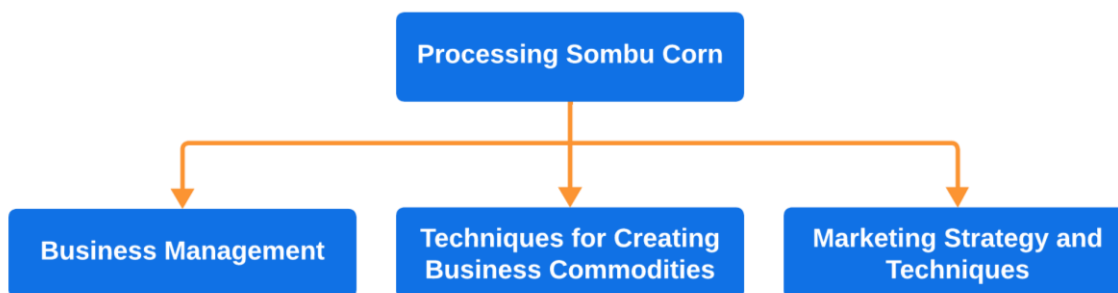
During the field activity, participants practiced making sombu corn, guided by experts and supported by the team. This practice aimed to teach how to modernize sombu corn as a traditional food of Manggarai. The subjects of this community service were students and people outside the campus to familiarize and enhance efforts to preserve the culinary arts of Ruteng, Manggarai Regency. This initiative is part of the effort to process traditional foods from Ruteng using corn as the main ingredient.

Initially, a management team for the sombu corn product was formed, consisting of four members: the chief executive, finance division, production and purchasing division, and marketing division. Production costs will determine the selling price and projected profit of the business. The roles of each member are as follows:

1. Chief Executive:
 - Coordinate the PKM team members to discuss the proposal topics to be submitted;
 - Prepare the PKM proposal plan;
 - Set the schedule for PKM activities;
 - Oversee and be fully responsible for all PKM activities.
2. Member 1:
 - Prepare tools and materials to be used with the team;
 - Execute PKM activities with the team.
3. Member 2: market the product both online and offline.
4. Member 3: manage the inflow and outflow of funds and their administration.

The sombu corn processing activities were carried out according to a predetermined activity flowchart.

Figure 1. Activity flowchart



The first step is to prepare all the necessary tools and materials. These include a steamer pot, stainless basin, digital scale, mixer, corn, firewood, brown sugar, butter, eggs, powdered milk, cheddar cheese, sprinkles, fruit jam, Nutella, styrofoam/plastic containers, and stickers. After preparing the tools and materials, the production process is as follows:

1. **Selecting and Milling Corn:** Choose mature or shelled corn and mill it into corn flour, which is the main ingredient. Gather complementary ingredients like sugar, butter, eggs, and powdered milk.
2. **Mixing Ingredients:** Pour the corn flour into the stainless basin, mix with melted butter, let it cool for a few minutes, then add eggs and powdered milk, and mix thoroughly.
3. **Steaming:** Once the mixture is well-blended, place it into bamboo molds and steam them using a steamer pot over a moderate fire.
4. **Cooling:** After 20 minutes of steaming, remove the mold and let them cool for about 7 to 10 minutes.
5. **Shaping and Weighing:** Remove the sombu corn from the bamboo molds, cut them into round shapes, and use a digital scale to ensure uniform weight.
6. **Adding Toppings:** Add toppings based on customer preferences, such as sprinkles, grated cheddar cheese, fruit jam, or Nutella.
7. **Packaging:** Place three pieces of sombu corn in a styrofoam or plastic container, and label it with a sticker.
8. **Production Schedule:** Repeat the production process every two days.

According to Kotler and Keller (2016), marketing is a social and managerial process where individuals or groups obtain what they need and want by creating, offering, and exchanging valuable products. An effective marketing strategy will positively impact the sustainability of the product and business. The marketing strategies for the sombu corn culinary business, a traditional Manggarai food, are as follows:

1. **Introducing the Product:** Although the Manggarai community is familiar with this traditional food, modernizing it with various flavors is expected to attract more customers.
2. **Choosing Strategic Locations:** Selecting the right, easily accessible, and open location is crucial in targeting potential customers.
3. **Utilizing Internet Marketing:** Online marketing strategies involve using social media to market the product. By showcasing our products on social networking sites, we can understand consumer preferences and needs for our product (sombu corn). Internet marketing through platforms like WhatsApp and Facebook, with appealing photos, will help attract consumers.
4. **Building Customer Relationships:** We strive to provide excellent service to ensure customers remain interested in our products.

By following these steps and strategies, we aim to modernize and promote the traditional sombu corn, ensuring it appeals to a wider audience and sustains its market presence.

Result

The potential for the sombu jagung business as a modernized traditional food can still be further developed in Manggarai Regency because this program is the first of its kind to be developed in the Ruteng City area. As a result, competition is almost minimal, offering opportunities in the market. The production of sombu jagung started on Monday, June 20, 2022, in the Tenda neighborhood. This location is near the Indonesian Catholic University of St. Paul Ruteng.

Sombu jagung is produced every two days. The initial production phase consisted of 55 sombu jagung packaged in mika containers, with a total production of 250 packages over 12 production cycles. Toppings were directly applied to the sombu jagung during the initial production phase, but in subsequent production phases, toppings were customized according to consumer orders. Sales figures have reached the initial target and generated profit. The sales target will be gradually increased moving forward.

Meanwhile, the sticker design on the sombu jagung packaging has been made as attractive as possible while maintaining the product's distinctiveness, featuring images of the sombu product and bamboo as the molding tool. The next production phase aims to use eco-friendly packaging with a more appealing appearance.

Table 1. Profit and Loss of Sombu Production in the 4th Week

Components	Weeks			
	1	2	3	4
Sombu				
Production (mika)	55	60	60	75
Selling price per mika (Rp)	6.500	6.500	6.500	6.500
Sales value	357500	390000	390000	487500
Variable costs	120.000	120.000	120.000	120.000
Fixed costs	50.000	50.000	50.000	50.000
Investment costs	0	0	0	0
Depreciation	40.000	40.000	40.000	40.000
Marketing costs	30.000	30.000	30.000	30.000
Total costs	240.000	240.000	240.000	240.000
Profit	117.500	150.000	150.000	247.500

Discussion

The processing of sombu jagung is carried out in three stages, emphasizing each mechanism involved, ensuring that all members understand the process as it unfolds. Discussions are held at each stage of the activity, providing a new perspective that the processing of sombu jagung should continue, as it enhances the local economy. Any challenges encountered during the production of sombu jagung are evaluated through member discussions, resulting in appropriate recommendations to address any issues. The discussions also show that the economic analysis of sombu jagung processing yields significant profits as expected, demonstrating that innovations in developing traditional sombu jagung into a modernized food product have been successful.

The potential of corn, the primary ingredient used, if processed into contemporary traditional food, has a marketable value (Pradnyanitasari et al., 2019). The reality is that the availability of corn as the main raw material for making sombu can be consumed (Pradnyanitasari et al., 2019). Given this agricultural potential, many products can be processed into high-value food items. This PKM activity stimulates the community, especially

369) Innovation of Sombu Corn as a Modernized Traditional Cuisine of Manggarai Regency, Paur, Y. S., Payong, P., Firnalastri, E., Maka, A. M., Jebarut, A.

young people, to process abundant food resources. Practicing making sombu jagung as a modernized traditional food can bring profit and aid in business development.

Figure 2. Shelled corn and corn flour



Figure 3. Ingredients used in making sombu jagung



Figure 4. Sombu jagung cooking process



Figure 5. Sombu jagung slicing process



Figure 6. Adding toppings to sombu jagung



Figure 7. Sticker on sombu jagung products



Figure 8. Marketing sombu jagung



Conclusion

The abundance of international products such as fast food has led to the neglect of traditional foods from past eras and a lack of innovation applied to traditional foods to attract consumers. Here, the PKM Mampu team provides innovation to traditional foods to compete with international foods and attract consumer interest, thus paving the way for the emergence of products resulting from the innovation of traditional Ruteng specialty foods in Manggarai Regency, which have been modernized.

There's a lack of interest among young people in starting businesses related to the development of traditional foods. Here, we aim to motivate and create opportunities for young people, especially students, to produce creative, innovative, and profitable works in the form of local specialty foods from the Ruteng area in Manggarai Regency, specifically modernized Sombu Jagung with various flavor variations and toppings. These products will be marketed in the vicinity of the UNIKA St. Paulus Ruteng campus and the production area by employing appropriate marketing strategies.

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