

Semiotics and Experiences on Food in the Philippines

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.47175/rielsj.v5i3.1022>

| Rowanne Marie M. Mangompit |

Cebu Technological University
Philippines

rowannemarie.maxilom.mangompit@gmail.com



This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International License.

ABSTRACT

This paper aimed to determine and analyze the experiences on food in conversations specifically on food that they associate with family bonding (get-together) and festivities (town fiesta), and categorize the themes of associations on food choices. Ferdinand de Saussure's (Dewanti, 2023) signifier and signified concepts were used in analyzing the association on food while the experiences of food during family bonding and festivities were categorized by theme using the thematic analysis template of Brooks, McCluskey, Turley & King (2015). This study used the descriptive research method in analyzing food experiences in conversations through one-on-one interviews and group interviews. Conversation analysis was used as the approach in gathering the data. Results of this study revealed the predominance of meat (chicken and pork especially lechon) pancit, and staple food represented by puto and bibingka. In addition, the food choices are signifiers of the following signified: namely, strengthening the family ties, longevity, prosperity, love, joy/happiness, and simplicity and adaptability. Finally, the family tradition is manifested in passing the recipe from the older generation to the younger generation, offering food for the dead, expressing gratitude before eating around the table, looking beyond the taste of food during family bonding. The Filipino food culture has been preserved through passing the kind of food prepared during family bonding as food symbolizes longevity, love, togetherness, strengthening family ties, and simplicity. The choice of food could be attributed to religious beliefs, financial status, and nostalgia.

KEYWORDS

conversation; culture; experiences; food; heritage

INTRODUCTION

Language and food are interconnected. "Food does not only accompany talk, it is in itself also a prominent discursive topic which contributes to establishing (eating) communities and creating a sense of identity." (Rudiger, 2021: 112). Recently, this phenomenon on food and language has been the area of interest of culinary linguistics. In fact, culinary linguistics, which refers to the investigation of food and talk phenomena, has currently united linguistics of different areas of specializations in their endeavors of exploring this interrelationship (Rudiger, 2021). In fact, Sta. Maria-Abalos (2021) pointed out that food and eating are existential conduct which determines cultural identity.

This study is anchored on the two theories, namely, theory on mood in food based on the themes discovered by (Lee, 2023) and Ferdinand de Saussure's (Dewanti, 2023) signifier and signified in analyzing the food associations and symbolisms. Lee (2023) categorized the food and mood relationship such as social context (i.e. familial and cultural influences of food and mood), social economics (i.e. time, finance, and food security, and food nostalgia (i.e. memories that impact mood). However, these categories are only bases

in the thematic analysis of the experiences on food. Other newly-discovered categories would be added based on the experiences on food related to culture and family traditions. In addition, de Saussure (cited in Dewanti, 2023) developed the semiotic approach in differentiating signifiers and signified. He discussed that the signifier refers to the physical appearance of the sign, namely, word, image or sound while the signified refers to the concept or meaning associated with the signifier. In connection with the present study, these concepts would be used in analyzing the associations of food from the perspectives of the Filipino interviewees.

There have been studies abroad on food, language and culture (e.g. Lee, 2023 & Rudiger, 2021). Lee (2023) investigated the food and mood relationship using the qualitative research method with 50 Australian participants. Lee (2023) used the thematic template analysis of Brooks, McCluskey, Turley, & King (2015) in identifying the themes on food and mood. The results manifested that the social contexts including who, with and where food was eaten; time, finances and access to health fresh food and memories of food shared with loved ones affected their mood. Lee (2023) then recommended further studies on nutritional factors, cultural, social, economic and identity on food and diet. On the contrary, this study put emphasis on food and mood whereas the current study focused on the connection between food and family traditions.

Further, Rudiger (2021) conducted studies using the Youtube channel as research data on food. She aimed to investigate the model of the eating shows in YouTube based on the language of immediacy and distance framework of Koch and Oesterreicher's (2012 in Rudiger, 2021) and the role of the comments on the interaction between the performers and audience. The corpus consists of 100 eating shows from the ten Youtube performers who were engaged in 10 eating shows each. Findings revealed that instead of manifesting language of immediacy, this study demonstrates language of distance which could be attributed to the nature of the YouTube channel. On the contrary, the mentioned framework is still relevant in computer-mediated communication using the social media used. In relation to the present study, eating shows from Youtube was the focus of Rudiger (2021) unlike in the present study where face-to-face interaction and/or online food was used as a corpus.

Another study focused on conversations among mothers in agriculture was conducted by Rockers, Settle & Cartmell (2020) who described the nine mothers' engagement on food in Oklahoma. They used the phenomenological approach and semi-structured interviews in describing the mothers' ways in receiving information, sharing information, and purchasing decisions, the results showed that the mothers usually received information online (e.g. Facebook) and face-to-face interaction when there is an opportunity, especially forum. They only chose only those who are interested in the information about food. Lastly, their purchasing decisions were based on their children's health. Although this reviewed study dealt with food and conversations, the focus is on the influence of the information received and shared on food and its effect on their buying decisions, not on the context of family traditions in food.

Furthermore, Carceller-Sauras & Theesfeld (2021) focused on the discourse development on food-as-a-commons and its successful influence on policy-making in Germany. The case studies and policy documents were used as data in exploring the four discourses: namely, open source inputs in agriculture, joint responsibility for food products, reducing food waste and safeguarding food culture and knowledge. Findings show reducing food waste is the most successful discourse due to ideas relying on the core values involving beliefs of human nature, responsibility, justice, solidarity or charity. Hence, this study is relevant to the present study because of the relevance of food to the people's values and belief system in preserving food.

In addition, Kapelari et al. (2020) conducted a study on food choices and the corresponding influencing factors using the mixed method with the 1189 respondents. The results emphasized the essence of food choices on sustainability. However, cultural heritage is the main parameter to be considered in food security and policy in the European context and the world in general. In connection with the present study, food being influenced by traditions and culture was also tackled. Thus, food is an indicator of heritage which is geared towards sustainability and preservation of food culture.

Finally, Reddy & Dam (2020) pointed out the importance of food and food practices in creating and maintaining social identities in Singapore wherein multicultural contexts are evident. They used the questionnaires and 18 focus group discussions with Malay, Indian and Chinese women as instruments in gathering the data with the participants. Reddy & Dam (2020) found that choosing food is attributed to the following factors: namely, health, variety, taste, and convenience and the participants from varied races maintain their food practices based on their own cultural, ethnic, or racial backgrounds. The Singaporean women also considered cultural food practices of other ethnic groups and found the importance of cultural food as medicine. This study suggests that even though the participants are exposed to cultural diversity on food and practices, they still preserve their food practices while welcoming others' food practices. In this study, however, two eating events were categorized into two: namely, cultural events (e.g. Ramadan) and social gathering (e.g. monthly meet ups) unlike in the present study where family bonding was used and men were not included.

In the Philippines, Filipinos are fond of food culturally. As they celebrate birthdays, anniversaries, fiesta (festivity), they always prepare sumptuous food to be shared with their family and invited guests to celebrate the memorable occasions. Alix (2018) stressed that Filipinos gather around food. Filipinos celebrate with food and show their affection with food. Food can be a springboard in conversations. Food can strengthen the bond among the family members and strengthen their relationships. Hence, it is noteworthy to conduct this study on food experiences in conversations to deepen the understanding of food, culture and language and find ways on how to document these experiences to the preservation of Filipino culture.

First, Sta Maria-Abalos (2021) investigated the outcomes of the spatial shift from rural to urban and biodiversity loss presently re-shaping the food culture and food system of the barangays such as Barangay Caowayan, Burgos, La Union, Barangay Sawat, Tagudin, Ilocos Sur, and Barangay Elizabeth, Dingras, Ilocos Norte. This study used qualitative research on food culture and space and participatory tools involving community maps and meta-cards. Results demonstrate that the change in the foodscape of these rural communities result in food insecurity. However, the current research did not focus on foodscape but on conversations on food experiences.

Second, Florendo (2019) demonstrated the Habermasian philosophical discourse in his analysis on the colonization of Filipino food as a factor undermining Filipino culture and pointed out that the preservation of the Filipino lifeworld is significant to individual Filipinos. Third, Giray, Cerillo & Cruz (2021) compiled the insights on food culture in Malolos, Bulacan and Mexico, Pampanga and used the factors influencing food culture through interviews and primary insights of the researchers. The findings manifest that food cultures of the said places had similarities and differences in the preparation, origin, and symbols. In addition, the contributing factors influencing food culture involve colonization, food insecurity, availability of resources, religious beliefs, and people's ability to adapt in the present context as well as innovation. They concluded that food culture that passes on the recipes to the succeeding generations could strengthen the cultural identity of Filipinos under study. This study then is very relevant to the present

study on examining food culture and culture preservation. As observed, most of the documentations on food culture were done through essays (e.g. Fernandez,), travelogs (e.g. Alegre), and recipe books (e.g. Alix, 2018). Few scholarly journals were available. Hence, there have been few researches in the Philippines who investigated food culture. Furthermore, food has always been a significant part of Philippine culture. As a matter of fact, Food Filipino Month has been celebrated in April. This celebration's purpose is to promote and preserve local cuisine and the traditions that go with food (Taculao, 2021). Food helps in defining a particular culture and heritage from a certain point in the country and connects people and bridges their differences. In addition, Reddy & Dam (2020) argued that food as being an important aspect of cultural and ethnic identity. Kirshenblatt-Gimblett (2003) also reported Doreen Fernandez' realization that food was a key to the whole cultural package. In fact, Fernandez (2003) reported Naomichi Ishige, a Japanese anthropologist's perspective on eating as the act of ingesting the environment, ingesting culture food that is one of the traces left by the colonizers. As a result, such influences are integrated now in the Filipino ways of preparing various cuisines. In Cebu, Alix (2018) even emphasized that the family can still have at least one prepared meal in the evening and engage in conversations about their affairs during the day. Thus, only few prominent names and advocates of food culture like Fernandez (2003) who created a glossary of food terms and Alix (2018) who wrote a book on "Hikay" were found in the literature. There have been few studies that dealt with food and conversations. In this regard, this study attempted to fill in the research gap. This study attempted to contribute to the sustainable development goals on zero hunger and food security (SDG 2). This study aimed to determine and analyze the experiences on food in conversations specifically on food that they associate with family bonding (get-together) and festivities (town fiesta), and categorize the themes of associations on food choices.

RESEARCH METHODS

Research Design

This study used the descriptive research method in analyzing food experiences in conversations through one-on-one interviews and group interviews. Conversation analysis was used as the approach in gathering the data. In addition, Ferdinand de Saussure's (cited Dewanti, 2023) concepts on signifiers and signified are used in looking into the meanings of food. This can also be an exploratory study that intertwines language and food to preserve food heritage and identity among Filipinos and strengthens their relationship to their families.

Research Participants

The research participants were selected with heterogeneous samples. The participants included ages ranging 15-24 years old, 25-54 years old, 55-64 years old and 65 above.

Research Instruments

In this study, conversations occurred through interviews conducted online either one-on-one or by group depending on the convenience of the participants. Informal interviews were also conducted with the research assistants to validate the truthfulness of the data collection.

Research Procedure

Gathering of Data. These are the steps in gathering the data. First, the four classes in the researcher's English Discourse classes were grouped and gathered data for fieldwork. Second, a transmittal letter was given to the research assistants who are the Second Year

Bachelor of Arts in English Language Studies students who collected the corpus from their assigned age group of participants with the guidelines in gathering the data. Third, they interviewed the participants either online or face-to-face on the preferred food during their family bonding.

Treatment of Data. After collecting the recorded conversations on food and experiences, these data were transcribed and coded. Interrater-reliability was established through discussion with the research assistants. The data were then tabulated, interpreted, and analyzed. Another senior Bachelor of Arts in English Language Studies student volunteered to be the research assistant to help the researcher collect studies that support the data and select the best extracts that represent the tabulated data.

Ethical Considerations

The ethical standards were followed through seeking the consent of the participants before the conversations and recording. The participants were also oriented on the aim and confidentiality. The participants were then informed that they could voluntarily participate and decline the invitation if they did not want to participate. Lastly, the participants’ names were assigned to codes to make them anonymous in the data and presentation of results.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the identified food in conversations, semiotics: signifiers and signified concepts on food, and manifestations of Filipino culture through the experiences on food among the Filipino participants of this study.

Table 1. Identified Food in Conversations

Classification of Food	f	Examples
Meat	18	lumpia (6), adobong manok/pork (4), lechon (manok/baboy (4), humba (4) kaldereta (3), fried chicken (2), halang-halang na manok (2), ginagmay (2), crispy pata (2), nilat-ang baboy (2), bola-bola (1), egg (1), hamonada (1), menudo (1), hotdog with marshmallows (1), barbecue (1), siomai (1), afritada (1)
Dessert	8	salad (3), mango float (2), maja blanca (2), ice cream (1), buko pandan (1), spaghetti (1), leche flan (1), cake (1)
Staple	7	puto/suman (3), valenciana (1), biko (1), bibingka (1), pizza (1), tuna carbonara (1)
Noodles	4	spaghetti (8), pancit (8), bihon (3), b`am-i (2)
Seafoods/Dried Fish, Fish	3	seafood, dried fish (2), <i>eskabeche</i> (2)
Vegetables	2	chopsuey (2), utan bisaya (2)

Table 1 demonstrates the food prepared during family bonding whether the occasions are fiesta, birthdays, New Year, All Souls’ Day, Christmas, and small get-together. The choice of meat predominated by *lumpia*, *adobo*, *lechon*, and *humba* manifests the Filipino food culture where lechon is always present during special occasions. Cultural influences on food is evident in the choice of food to be prepared during family bonding. Fernandez (1988 in Florendo, 2019) shared her views that Filipino food expresses the relationship of Filipinos to the world which is manifested in the ability to accommodate the foreign food without compromising the Filipinos’ identity. These Filipino food characteristics implies that Filipinos love order and harmony that is demonstrated in being known as being hospitable worldwide.

Together with the viands that are usually meat, Filipinos are also fond of desserts such as salad, mango float, and maja blanca. These choices of food could be attributed to the

availability of mangoes and coconut in the Philippines. Foreign culinary influences could also be factors in preparing desserts. Sucor (2019) reported Doreen Fernandez’s claim that Filipinos accommodated and adapted Spanish food over time through using the available ingredients and resources in the Philippines. Lastly, Filipinos are also known for the various staple food such as *puto*, *biko* and *bibingka* implies that the Filipino food culture on *kakanin* is still sustained. These are brands of Filipino food. These *kakanin* can be traced back to pre-colonial period where the sticky rice snacks were prepared by the Filipino ancestors and offered to the gods (Kakanin, 2023). However, food such as *valenciana*, *carbonara*, and *pizza* are reflections of colonization where food introduced to the Filipinos have been adopted and indigenized. According to Friedman (1999 cited in Florendo, 2019), the presence of foreign food products could simply be an inevitable outcome of globalization.

For the food choices, the data suggest that during family bonding, most of the interviewed participants choose meat containing cholesterol and desserts containing sugar. This shows the possible health risk of the family during family bonding if they are not cautious of the food intake. This choice of unhealthy food during family bonding could be a deviation of food security. Kapelari et al. (2020) reported the Food and Agriculture Organization’s argument that food security is evident when a person always has physical, social and economic access to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food to meet his/her dietary needs and food preferences which would result in an active and healthy life.

These are the extracts on food choices during family bonding.

(1) Meat and Noodles

U:hh, we usually [u:h] my (00:01:00) family usually prepares u:m **lumpia** and **pancit**.
soun- (I1-WG1I1)

In extract 1, interviewee 1 usually prepares lumpia with pork meat as one of the ingredients and pancit, a variety of noodles during family bonding.

(2) Dessert

“Like the usual, we usually eat **halo-halo** or **ice cream**” (I2-TThG2I3)

Interviewee 2 commonly prepares halo-halo and ice cream during festival (i.e. fiesta).

(3) Staple

“Okay so you ask me earlier that what is the food the we our family bonding, so the food that we eat when have, when we have a family bonding it's like my mom and dad will cook a **suman** or we make a suman because we all know that suman is a very popular in our (um) (.) society or especially here in Cebu right?” (I3-MG4I3)

Interviewee 3 narrates that her mother and father cook suman during their family bonding.

In sum, foods that are usually prepared by Filipino families during family bonding are meat, desserts, and staple food originally made by Filipinos.

Semiotics of Food: Signifiers and Signified

Table 2. Signifiers and Signified

Signifiers	Signified
<i>valenciana, kadyos baboy langka, ice cream</i>	strengthening of Family Ties
<i>pancit, bihon, bam-i</i>	longevity
<i>spaghetti, fried chicken</i>	prosperity
<i>egg</i>	simplicity and adaptability
<i>lechon</i>	love
<i>adobo, seafood</i>	joy

Table 2 shows the signifiers and signified on food. Various foods signify values, virtues, and family traditions.

Strengthening of Family Ties

The first signifier is **strengthening of family ties** when the family gathers around the table with signifiers that are varied depending on the conversations between the interviewees and interviewers. The food like *Valenciana*, Filipino version of paella specifically from Negros Occidental (e.g. Bacolod City) makes the relationship of the family members become stronger as they believe in the stickiness of the glutinous rice and the varied ingredients. Second, the *kadyos baboy langka*, which is known in Iloilo and is the recipe of the Western Visayas islands, is also a signifier of strengthening the family ties. *Kadyos* refers to the pigeon beans while *baboy langka* refers to the pork meat cubes and jackfruit. Based on the interviews, the family members stick together through eating food introduced by their parents and grandparents whose geographical location is not originally in Cebu. This result implies that even though the parents who moved to Cebu for various factors such as studies, marriage or work, families continue their ties from their other Visaya home province like Negros Occidental and Iloilo through the food they shared during family bonding. Bustamante, Denolang & Sabalo (2017) argued that Jessica Avila, the owner of *Chikaan* Filipino Restaurant in 1979 from Bantayan Island, believed that the Filipino heritage cuisine is not only Cebuano but also the other regions of the Philippines. They reported the claim of Avila that Filipinos inherited the recipes from their mothers and grandmothers.

The ice cream as signifier of the signified concept, strengthening the family ties came from the Americans who introduced ice cream in the Philippines in 1920s through education and refrigerators (Talamayan, 2019). The effect of sugar as one of the ingredients of ice cream could be a possible way of strengthening the bond with the happy feeling after eating ice cream for sweet tooth families.

(4) (0.3) uhm we have this belief especially during new year that whenever we have this dish so again like I said earlier it is a **sticky dish I uhm. made of sticky ri:ce ri↑(h)se** so it is really **sticky so we believe that whenever we have this food during new year it binds us together through↑out the whole year** (I4-TThG1P1)

In extract 4, sticky dishes like biko and puto consisting of sticky rice (glutinous rice) are prepared and associated with togetherness. Hence, the stickiness are believed by the Filipinos to strengthen their family ties through their sense of togetherness in gathering around the table for food.

Longevity

Influenced by the Chinese traders who brought these cuisines, namely, bihon, pancit, and bambi (to name a few), the signified of these mentioned signifiers is longevity. Most of the interviewees symbolizes these kinds of noodles influenced by Chinese as long life, especially during birthdays. For centuries, pancit (or other varieties) has been integrated into the Filipino cuisine and has become a Filipino dish like China (Orbase, 2018). It has been the belief of the Filipinos that pancit, the general term for noodles, as the symbol of long life. Hence, this dish is usually served during birthdays and other special occasions during family bonding.

(5) The FOOD that I usually eat during fa:::mily bondings is it's either **bihon or pancit** because my MOM really believes that when we eat **bihon or pancit it prolongs our life it symbolize long life** right [0.5] (I5-MG5P2)

In extract 5, *bihon* or *pancit* which is usually eaten during family bonding especially birthdays to symbolize long life.

Spaghetti and fried chicken are considered the signifiers of prosperity in some families. First, **spaghetti** which was introduced by Jollibee Company in the Philippines in 19709 (Ramos, 2020). In addition, Ramos (2020) mentioned that decolonization was evident in the Filipino sweet spaghetti. Filipinos had their sweet version of spaghetti compared to Italians who are popular in making pasta although the pasta was originally made by Chinese. Jollibee's iconic spaghetti is rarely recognizable from the American and much less from Italian's version (Almendral, 2012). Prosperity as the signified concept to symbolize how Filipinos were able to adapt and create their own versions of foreign influenced-spaghetti. In relation to Filipino culture and traditions nowadays, Filipino families include spaghetti during special occasions like birthdays, Christmas and New Years. The food ordered from Jollibee has a great impact on the Filipino palate, especially children as they patronize the Jollibee spaghetti during their children's parties.

Second, fried chicken is also one of the food products offered by Jollibee company and this choice of food symbolizes prosperity. Chicken in general can be very meaningful to the Filipino families, especially during birthdays. It is usually served during birthdays for families who have available chicken in the backyard or farm. Families back then bless the celebrants and put chicken blood from the dressed chicken before cooking to the forehead and drive away bad luck. Demoiselle (2023) pointed out that anointing with blood on birthdays is traditionally related to a sacrificial offering for a prosperous life and good health of the one celebrating the birthdays of Filipinos. However, the influence of foreign influences which are adapted and innovated by Filipinos could now include fried chicken during birthdays.

(6) uh we enjoy this food (referring to spaghetti and fried chicken) with uhm love and **prosperity** and we also (.) uhm we are happy taking food whenever we are getting to bond with each other or like (.) gathering together (0.5) (I6-WG2P3)

Interviewee 6 considers spaghetti and fried chicken as signifiers of love and prosperity.

Simplicity and Adaptability

Eggs are signifiers of simplicity and adaptability in the Philippine context. Due to the simple process in preparing and availability in the Filipino backyard, this makes eggs very symbolic. These could be attributed to the simplicity of Filipino families who are practical enough to prepare the available eggs in their homes. Tracing back to history, eggs, especially egg whites, were used as emulsifiers for concrete in building churches in the 1800s ("From biscuits", 2022, June 3). Eggs made the concrete durable and effective when the churches withstood calamities such as typhoons, earthquakes and fires. Hence, the usefulness of eggs indicates the Filipinos' adaptability and resilience to catastrophes.

(7) (Hmm) **Eggs** have become a part of our family tradition because they symbolize **simplicity and adaptability**. We've been making different, (uhh) different egg dishes for generations, and it's a way for us to connect with our culinary heritage while creating new memories. I7-MG4P3)

For Interviewee 7, eggs are symbols of simplicity and adaptability since the said food is their family's way to connect with their culinary heritage.

Love and Joy

Lechon is a signifier of love for the gathering of families and friends during celebrations and *lechon* can be the star of the food preparation since it gathers people together. According to Mildred (2023), *lechon* was not only food. She argued that *lechon*

symbolizes Filipinos' hospitality which is considered as the warm invitation to join in the joy of life. Lechon is the star of the celebration and is usually placed at the center of the table. This signifies the spirit of sharing, community and joyous celebration (Mildred (2023). However, the Spaniards politically gathered the Filipinos to observe the guests and investigated whether there were Moors or Muslims among the guests which indicates spotting which ones are not Christians. Thus, *lechon* could be used as a disguise to detect outsiders in the gathering. "Replicating their earlier success, the Spaniards used pork to control the clout of non-Catholic religions (Uy, 2023).

(8) Yeah, right ↓. I strongly agree with Miss Jay↓. Those foods ((referring to lechon)) provided during <fiesta> would actually↑ give us a sense of >security< and it can build us a **strong foundation of relationship**↓ with our loved ones. () With meals that we are eating right↑ in our table and it would actually >nurture<us yes especially↓ **love** (,),that would↑actually the best thing hhh that can be >associated<with those foods↓that we have mentioned that are prepared in our table↓, I Think That's It.↓(I8-TTHG2P1)

For Interviewee 8, lechon signifies love and strength of family relationships due to the fact that members of the family ate gathered together.

Being the national dish of the Filipinos, adobo is the well-loved comfort food (Severino, 2023). However, *adobo* has many varieties across the regions. Families have a joyful feeling with the presence of *adobo* whether it is pork or chicken. Moreover, Mactan Island and Cebu have been known for the *sutukil* coined by sugba (grilled), tuwa (broiled) and kilaw (raw seafood bathed with vinegar) due to their geographical location at the Central Visayas and availability of seafoods in these islands. Cortes (2020) mentioned the abundance and popularity of seafoods in Cebu in his blog on one of the well-known restaurants offering seafoods named STK ta bai in Cebu City.

(9) ... this special DISH which is **ADOBO** symbolizes celebration, **joy** and coming together of loved ones enhancing the overall experience of family bonding during these events.

Interviewee 3: (0.2) I BELIEVE that it () more than JUST festivity? ((buzzing sound)) i:::t also depicts solidarit:::y and closeness because if we have **seafood** on our table we ((buzzing sound)) appear very **joy**(hh) ful and close to one another. (MG1P2P3)

To sum up, food signifies strengthening of family ties, longevity, prosperity, simplicity and adaptability, love, and joy which are influenced by the Filipino culture and values.

Food Culture through Food Experiences

Table 3. Manifesting Food Culture through Food Experiences

Themes	Sub-Themes
1. Religious beliefs and practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Offering food for the dead during All Souls' day before eating these food for Christians b. Choosing vegetables (<i>utan bisaya</i>) than meat for Muslims during Fiesta c. Expressing gratitude before eating meals
2. Choosing food based on many factors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Choosing food based on occasions b. Choosing food based on budget c. Choosing food based on influence of cuisines abroad
3. Passing the recipe from one generation to the next generation	
4. Having a sense of security in shared experiences, laughter and/or music	

Table 3 illustrates the food culture manifested during the interactions on food experiences. There were five themes discovered. Religious beliefs and practices were subdivided into three themes. These practices were influenced by Christianity and Islam as very influential religions in the Philippines due to the colonization of the Spaniards for 300 years and influence of Moors in Mindanao. Although the offering of food is no longer encouraged by the Roman Catholic church during the time of writing, there are still families who continue this practice. Giray et al. (2021) discovered that religiosity is manifested in Kapampangan cuisine through a set of Catholic prayers in preparing food. Saying a prayer is attributed to the Spanish influence on food culture Giray et al. (2021).

(10) oa :h↑ **holyweek** kay mm::hh, anha raman mi sa(.)o sa una mag-magkuan sad mi day(.) mag-magluto sad mig. gamay karon wala na day kay kami. naman lang(.) (.)° mm::hh(.) (sauna (I10-TTHG3P2))

(11) mao na ana kay dali lang lutoon nya mas lalo og didto kas -sa bukid? ka nang permi ka kami mag **otan bisaya** ng kada fiesta og naapoy kadungang kanang buwad lami na e pares sa otan bisaya.(I12-TTHG3P1)

(12) Every day that my father had a day off, we usually ate lechon manok with cold (.) coke. We (.) gather around the table and pray, we (.) **expressing gratitude for the food we have and the blessings we receive**. We rarely eat white meat, as we typically consume vegetables and fruits. That's why, every day off that my father had, we, [yeah] we enjoy eating. ((background noise)) (I12-MG4P2)

Religious beliefs and practices are manifested in extracts 10, 11, and 12 by offering food for the dead during All Souls' day before eating these food for Christians, choosing vegetables (utan bisaya) than meat for Muslims during Fiesta, and Expressing gratitude before eating meals. Food was also chosen based on many factors. The first factor is the occasion. Food served during bonding can depend on the type of occasion. For instance, lechon is always served during fiesta while cake is served during birthdays. Giray et al. (2021) who interviewed Ms. Rheeza Hernandez and said that the evolution of Bulacan foods could be linked to colonization. The food choices and its evolution could be affected by age, gender, pattern, curiosity, and so on. However, Hernandez (Giray et al., 2021) highlighted that one could "reconstruct, deconstruct, fuse, innovate, or modernize the food but do not let it lose its soul..." (p. 15)

Second, considering the financial situation of the families, they consider the affordability of the food they select for their family bonding. In fact, a simple egg preparation could be prepared by the family. Chicken eggs are affordable to buy. With its availability in the farm and yards of the Filipinos, eggs are accessible and easy to prepare. It is evidence that Filipinos are fond of raising chickens for consumption and sustainability.

(13) **Spaghetti**, ug k-kanang kuan,**lumpia** ug ug **ginamay** ingon ana [Interviewer: ahhh kana] ouh [Interviewer: Unya ikaw gikapoy muluto ana] ouh ako gihapoy muluto ana [Interviewer: Aw kay mao lagi () ang uban kay dli ()] (hhh) ouh ana (hhh) Interviewer: so ang kanang (hhh) ang kuan ate, ang sa uban kanang anniversary unsa imoha pa maagi nga maselebrarninyu inyuhang anniversary (I13-TTHG3P3)

(14) depende sa **budget** kinsa mokaon kung unsa ilang gust↑o, mao ra dili gyud ka ingon nga magpatuyang lang sd ka diha ((audioglitchnoises))] dili gud, sa pana↑hon karon dae lisod gud ((laughter)) no ((interviewer:u:~h~oh)) naa↑ may gamay ray gasto pero lami ang

imong luto ana ba no naa man, dili kaayu gasto pero maayo nato sya nga luto ana bitaw, depende ra gyud. (TTHG3P2)

(15) So **valenciana** is basically like an ilinggo version of paella↓paella↑that is(.) made of uhm sticky rice meat and vegetables ... because I grew up eating **valenciana** ever since I was young(.) since My father has been cooking it. hh because it's his specialty (I16-TTHG3P1)

Extracts 13-15 demonstrate the choice of food based on special occasions like anniversary, budget and foreign influences.

Lastly, many foods like *valenciana*, *lechon*, *lumpia*, *pizza* and many others were adopted and indigenized from the foreign cuisines and influences who are Spanish, Italian, and Chinese and many others. Importantly, the passing of recipes from generations to the next generation is evident in the conversations. The family can even figure out the original taste of their ancestors compared to the food prepared by other persons. There is a sense of nostalgia upon remembering their grandparents or passing ancestors and some kept the secret to make the food taste that of the original cook. Boutaud, Becut, & Marinescu (2016) pointed out that the material reconstruction includes repeating food practices as well as family traditions from the past provides opportunities to the people to reconnect with familial relationships. Through food, their familial relationship will be brought to the present and passed onto future generations. In addition Giray et al. (2021) argued that the passing down of recipes would reinforce the existence of cultural identity.

(16) (0.5) this DISH is very special on our family because ITS recipe ((chicken clucks)) has been **passed down through generations creating a sense of continuity?and SHARED heritage**(.) the RECIPE hold (sic) a sentimental value the taste evolved over period of time and still the SIGNIFICANCE and love that they poured out in this dish is STILL the same (.) **ADOBO** is prepared during family gatherings to HONOR the PAST and strengthen our family [ties (I17-MG1P2)

Food was also influenced by the foreign influence as in extract 17 wherein adobo has been prepared.

Gathered around a table can also have a sense of security and togetherness coupled with memorable laughter and music through videoke nowadays, especially for Cebuanos who are known to have the inclinations to singing aside from the presence of lechon baboy served on the table. Fiestas in honor of the saints for Roman catholics were organized by Spaniards to gather the Filipino natives and convert them to Christianity.

(17) When we have lechon manok, it's not just a meal, it's an event. It's associated with family bonding and of course fun. The food itself is delicious, but the joy comes from the **shared experience**. It's about the **laughter, the stories (tss) we shared, and the memories create around the dining table**. It's, (uhm) it's, it's a reminder of our cultural and heritage and the importance of family, know togetherness of the family. Every bite is filled with love and a sense of belonging, so yeah. So, for us, lechon manok, it's kinda, it's more like more than just a food; it's (uhm) a symbol of family, love, and celebration and uniqueness that's all. (I18-MG4P2)

Families in extract 17 include music and laughter when they gather together for food.

To synthesize, the themes manifesting food culture and influences are religious beliefs and practices, choosing food based on many factors, passing the recipe from one generation to the next generation, and having a sense of security in shared experiences, laughter and/or music. These beliefs and practices are reflections of the pre-colonial and Spanish influences due to colonization and conversions of Filipinos to Christianity.

However, Filipinos preserve their food culture and heritage through their indigenized recipes and personal touch of the food prepared.

CONCLUSION

The Filipino food culture has been preserved through passing the kind of food prepared during family bonding as food symbolizes longevity, love, togetherness, strengthening family ties, and simplicity. The choice of food could be attributed to religious beliefs, financial status, and nostalgia.

Based on the conclusion, these are the following recommendations: First, find time to bond with the family through food to preserve the family traditions. Second, pass on the recipes and food culture to the next generation. Third, food such as vegetables can be healthful options for family bonding, longevity and promotion of well-being. Fourth, future studies could include food studies, language and culture, and ethnography and history on food. Fifth, the specific occasions could be focused in future studies such as food experiences on birthdays, fiesta, Christmas and New year to delimit the scope of the research. Lastly, the preservation of food culture could be embedded in the higher education curriculum especially in English Discourse and Semantics and motivate the millennials and post millennials to be the ambassadors of food culture and heritage.

Acknowledgments

This research was made possible because of the research assistants and students of the researchers, who are the 2nd Year Bachelor of Arts in English Language Studies AY2023-2024 and Merry Christ Montero, and Dr. Hope Yu, Director of the Cebuano Studies Center, who invited the researcher to present a module on food culture during the Food for Life Conference last November 16-18, 2023 at the University of San Carlos.

REFERENCES

- Alix, L. (2018). Episode 11: The Regional Cuisine of Cebu with Louella Alix: Exploring Filipino kitchens. Retrieved www.exploringfilipinokitchens.com
- Almendral, A. (2012, October 26). Jollibee: A taste of home for Filipinos. Retrieved at <https://theworld.org/stories/2012-10-26/jollibee-taste-home-filipinos>
- Brooks, J., McCluskey, S., Turley, E. & King, N. (2015). The utility of template analysis in qualitative psychology research, *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 12 (2), 202-222. <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/14780887.2014.955224?scroll=top&needAccess=true>
- Boutaud, J. Becut, A. & Marinescu, A. (2016). Food and culture: Cultural patterns and practices related to food in everyday life, *International Review of Social Research*, 6 (1): 1–3. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1515/irsr-2016-0001>
- Bustamante, A., Denolang, K. & Sabalo, W. (2017) Jessica's legacy: Heritage cuisine. Retrieved at <https://www.sunstar.com.ph/more-articles/jessicas-legacy-heritage-cuisine>
- Carceller-Sauras, E., & Theesfeld, I. (2021). The Food-as-a-Commons Discourse: Analyzing the Journey to Policy Impact. *International Journal of the Commons*, 15(1), pp. 368–380. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5334/ijc.1100>
- Cortes, E. (2020). Cebu food trip: The ultimate seafood experience part 1 (Sutukil and paluto-all-you-can). Retrieved at <https://www.zoytotheworld.com/blog/cebu-food-trip-the-ultimate-seafood-experience-parT-1-sutukil-and-paluto-all-you-can>
- Demoiselle, E. (2023). Filipino culture and tradition in my memory. Retrieved <https://read.cash/@EnkeDemoiselle/filipino-culture-and-tradition-in-my-memory-340aef23>
- De Villa, B. D. M.; Domingo, T. M .M.; Ramirez, R. J. C.; Mercado, J. M. T. Explicating

- the culinary heritage significance of Filipino kakanin using bibliometrics (1934–2018). (2022). *Int. J. Gastron. Food Sci.*, 28, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijgfs.2022.100522>
- Dewanti, D. (2023). Semiotic Analysis of Ferdinand De Saussure's Structuralism on "Energen Green Bean" Advertisement (June 21, 2023). Available at SSRN: <https://ssrn.com/abstract=44874500> or <http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.4487450>
- Flores, S. et al. (2016). Argao's la torta dance festival: A culture mix of colonial and indigenous elements, *Global Journal of Human-Social Science: D History, Archaeology & Anthropology*, 16 (1), 1-13, https://globaljournals.org/GJHSS_Volume16/3-Argaos-La-Torta-Dance.pdf
- Florendo, J. (2019). Colonizing the Filipino palate. Paper presented during the 12th DLSU Arts Congress at De La Salle University Manila, Philippines on February 20-22, 2019. Retrieved at "From biscuits to churches: How eggs are used for cooking and building". Retrieved at <https://www.spot.ph/things-to-do/the-latest-things-to-do/89491/video-article-how-eggs-are-part-of-philippine-history-food-a2793-20220603>
- Giray, L. G., Cerillo, L., & Cruz, B. J. (2021). Insights on the exploration of food culture of two provincial places in the philippines. *Tribute: journal of community services*, 2(1), 6–18. <https://doi.org/10.33369/tribute.v2i1.13924>
- Kapelari, S., Alexopoulos, G., Moussouri, T., Sagmeister, K. J., & Stampfer, F. (2020). Food Heritage Makes a Difference: The Importance of Cultural Knowledge for Improving Education for Sustainable Food Choices. *Sustainability*. 12(4): 1509. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su12041509>
- Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, B. (2003) Kodak Moments, Flashbulb Memories: Reflections on 9/11. *TDR/The Drama Review* 2003; 47: 1 (177), 11–48. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1162/105420403321249983>
- Lee, M. F., Angus, D., Walsh, H., & Sargeant, S. (2023). "Maybe it's Not Just the Food?" A Food and Mood Focus Group Study. *International journal of environmental research and public health*, 20(3), 2011. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph20032011>
- Mildred, C. A. (2023). Filipino Lechon, the Ultimate Roast. Experience the Heavenly Combination of Crispy anj Juicy. <https://medium.com/@charleneannmildredfbarroga/filipino-lechon-the-ultimate-roast-e3a2c3734f87>
- Reddy, G., & van Dam, R. M. (2020). Food, culture, and identity in multicultural societies: Insights from Singapore. *Appetite*, 149, 104633. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.appet.2020.104633>
- Rudiger, S. (2021). Digital food talk: Blurring immediacy and distance in YouTube Eating shows, *Anglistik: International Journal of English Studies*, 32 (2), 111-130, Retrieved at <https://doi.org/10.33675/ANGL/2021/2/9>
- Rockers, Alyssa; Settle, Quisto; and Cartmell, Dwayne (2020) "Agricultural Mothers' Conversations & Decision-Making about Food," *Journal of Applied Communications*: Vol. 104: Iss. 4. <https://doi.org/10.4148/1051-0834.2349>
- Severino, J. (2023). Adobo becomes the first Filipino food featured in Google doodle. Retrieved at <https://www.google.com/amp/s/www.philstar.com/lifestyle/food-and-leisure/2023/03/15/2251862/adobo-becomes-first-filipino-food-featured-google-doodle/amp/>
- Sta. Maria-Abalos, C. (2021). Shifting Food Culture and Space: Narrative of Communities Living in Tributary Rivers of Ilocos Sur and Ilocos Norte, Philippines, *Walailak Journal of Social Science*, 14 (5), 1-18, <https://so06.tci-thaijo.org/index.php/wjss>
- Taculao P. B. (2021, March 26). Celebrating food, culture, and the Filipino with the Filipino food month. *Manila Bulletin*. <https://mb.com.ph/2021/03/26/celebrating-food-culture-and-the-filipino-with-the-filipino-food-month/>



- Talamayan, F. (2019). Americanization of the Filipino Food and Kitchen: Promoting Refrigeration and Ice Cream in the 1920s. [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/335517106 Americanization of the Filipino Food and Kitchen Promoting Refrigeration and Ice Cream in the 1920s The Best Dishes](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/335517106_Americanization_of_the_Filipino_Food_and_Kitchen_Promoting_Refrigeration_and_Ice_Cream_in_the_1920s_The_Best_Dishes) Retrieved at <https://theculturetrip.com/asia/philippines/articles/the-21-best-dishes-in-the-philippines>
- Uy, S. (2023). Learning about lechon. Retrieved <https://foodphilippines.com/story/learning-about-lechon/>