



# Serabi Kalibeluk: Forgotten Delicacy or Culinary Icon of Batang Regency?

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**Abstract:** This article explores the cultural significance and potential of Serabi Kalibeluk, a traditional Indonesian food, as a culinary icon in Batang Regency. The study highlights the diverse culinary traditions in Indonesia and the influence of various cultures on Indonesian cuisine. Serabi Kalibeluk, a pancake-like dessert made from rice flour, is examined in terms of its variations, production methods, and cultural meaning. The research employs a qualitative descriptive approach, using primary and secondary data sources, interviews to stakeholders, and the SWOT matrix for analysis. The findings reveal that Serabi Kalibeluk is unique and exclusively produced in Kalibeluk Village, Batang Regency. It has historical roots dating back centuries and is primarily consumed by the local community. However, there are challenges in terms of production uncertainty and limited awareness among tourists. The study recommends marketing strategies, collaboration with stakeholders, and improved accessibility to promote Serabi Kalibeluk as a culinary tourism attraction. Future research should explore its historical and cultural aspects, develop tourism potential, and enhance its management and marketing efforts. This study contributes to the understanding and development of culinary tourism in Batang Regency, benefiting the local community and the broader tourism industry.

**Keywords:** Batang Regency, Culinary Tourism, *Serabi Kalibeluk*.

## 1. Introduction

Indonesia, as the world's largest archipelagic country, boasts a diverse cultural heritage. The cultural diversity of ethnic groups and languages influences the unique culinary traditions found in each region (Wijaya, 2019). These foods and beverages not only serve as sustenance but also play a role in representing the cultural identity of various ethnic groups and contribute to the attractiveness of culinary tourism (Levitt et al., 2017; Hernández-Rojas & Alcocer, 2021). Many Indonesian foods and beverages have a rich history and noble values, representing shared Indonesian values such as solidarity, mutual cooperation, and tolerance (Setiawan, 2016; Djono et al., 2023). Indonesian culinary culture has been influenced by various cultures that have interacted with the indigenous Indonesian culture. These include Indian culture during the Hindu and Buddhist kingdoms, European influences during the colonial era, as well as Arab and Chinese cultures through trade in the past (Wiratri, 2017; Handoyo et al., 2018; Wijaya, 2019). Culinary cultural assimilation and exchange have also occurred in the opposite direction, with Indonesian cuisine influencing other countries, particularly the Netherlands and Southeast Asian nations (Ng & Karim, 2016; Van Schaik, 2023).

This cultural assimilation takes place at various levels, including cooking techniques, ingredients used, the form of food and beverages, and the utensils employed (Wijaya, 2019; Rustini&Muliani, 2021). One example of a traditional Indonesian food that has undergone acculturation is serabi. Serabi, or surabi, is a traditional pancake-like dessert made from rice flour that shares similarities with India's Appam (Parthasarathi et al., 2022; Basak et al., 2023). Like other traditional Indonesian foods, serabi has several variations depending on the region (Fadiati et al., 2019). Typically, serabi is served with *kinca*, a thick sauce made from palm sugar. However, there are also variations of serabi served without sauce or with savory flavors, such as Notosumanserabi in Surakarta or serabi in Cirebon (Wahyuni et al., 2017; Risqienna et al., 2023). On the island of Bali, a similar food known as laklak can be found (Sukerti&Marsiti, 2020).

The uniqueness of traditional foods can motivate tourists to visit specific regions and enhance their travel experiences (Sthapit et al., 2020; Zmić et al., 2021). Serabi itself has entered the phase of contemporary cuisine by adding modern ingredients (Wijaya, 2019), such as chocolate or cheese. One unique variation is Serabi Kalibeluk, known for its distinct size and presentation. Serabi Kalibeluk originates from Batang Regency in Central Java. Batang Regency is situated on the northern coast of Central Java, Indonesia. It shares borders with the city and regency of Pekalongan to the west and east. In contrast, its northern border meets the Java Sea, and its southern border connects with Wonosobo and Banjarnegara regencies. The tourism industry in Batang is rapidly growing due to its diverse geographical conditions, ranging from coastal areas to hills (Darun & Karsinah, 2018). Batang is also home to an international integrated industrial complex, which directly contributes to visitor arrivals in the region (Widodo et al., 2021; Jumadi, 2022).

Given their proximity, Batang shares some culinary similarities with its neighboring regions, particularly Pekalongan. *Megono*, one of Pekalongan's signature dishes, is also commonly found in Batang, as well as *Lontong*

*Ayam* and *Tauto*, a type of chicken soup enriched with fermented soybean paste. Moreover, Batang is renowned for its tea plantations in Pagilaran, coffee in Bawang District, as well as durian and jackfruit plantations. However, Serabi Kalibeluk is exclusively produced in the village of Kalibeluk, which falls under the jurisdiction of Warungasem District, and is typically sold by local makers in the morning. Serabi Kalibeluk vendors can also be found at the Jatinan Sunday Market, a halal tourism activity initiated by the Batang Regency government (EkrafBatang, 2022). This serabi is special because it is larger than conventional serabi, measuring 10 cm in diameter, and is typically sold in pairs or sets. Serabi Kalibeluk is still made using traditional methods without machinery and cooked over wood-fired stoves. It comes in two flavor variations: sweet, with the addition of palm sugar, and savory, without added flavorings. Serabi Kalibeluk is well-known among the local community in Batang and has been recognized as a culinary icon by the Batang Regency Tourism, Youth, and Sports Office, as indicated on the official department website. However, it remains unclear whether Serabi Kalibeluk is widely known throughout Indonesia and has the potential to attract tourists for culinary tourism in Batang (Su et al., 2018).

Based on the aforementioned discussions, the researcher has decided to conduct a study entitled "Serabi Kalibeluk: Forgotten Delicacy or Culinary Icon of Batang Regency?" This research aims to identify the potential of Serabi Kalibeluk as a culinary icon of Batang Regency and explore effective strategies based on SWOT analysis that can enhance culinary tourism in Batang. No previous research has specifically examined the culinary tourism potential of Serabi Kalibeluk (Hidayatullah et al., 2019; Widowati, 2019), making this study valuable for stakeholders in promoting Serabi Kalibeluk as a culinary tourism attraction and the culinary icon of Batang.

## 2. Methodology

This study is qualitative descriptive research with a case study approach, where the researcher examines the activities and a group of individuals to gain a deep understanding of a particular event (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The data used in this research are qualitative data from primary and secondary sources. Primary data was collected through unstructured interviews with Serabi Kalibeluk makers in Kalibeluk Village, Batang, and in-depth interviews with representatives from the Batang Regency’s Dinas Pariwisata, Pemuda, dan Olahraga.

Secondary data was collected from scientific articles, news articles, data from the tourism office, and publications. The sampling method employed in this research is snowball sampling. Data analysis will be conducted using the four dimensions of traditional food developed by Rocillo-Aquino et al. (2021): place, time, skills, and cultural meaning, along with the SWOT matrix. Relevant strategies will be formulated based on the SWOT analysis results within the matrix. Figure 1 illustrates the conceptual framework for this research.

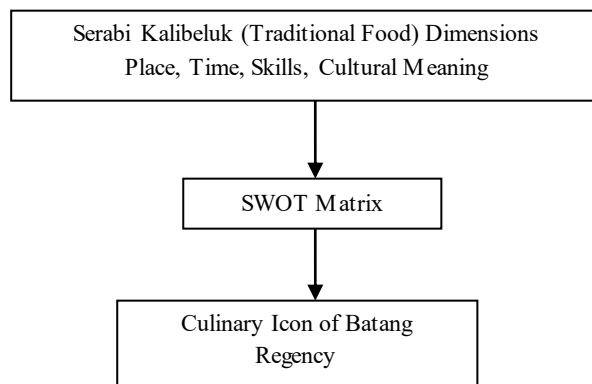


Fig. 1. Conceptual framework.  
Source: Researcher (2023)

## 3. Results and Discussion

### Place

Serabi Kalibeluk is exclusively produced in Batang Regency, specifically in Kalibeluk Village, Warungasem District. This serabi is sold at the homes of the makers, and any remaining stock is brought and sold at the WarungasemMarket, approximately 1 km from the village. Serabi Kalibeluk orders come from several Java cities, such as Semarang and Surabaya. However, Serabi Kalibeluk is mainly consumed by the locals of Batang, except during culinary festivals in other areas. Access to Kalibeluk Village is relatively good and is located approximately

3 km from the Batang-Pekalongan toll gate. Unfortunately, there are no road signs indicating the way to Kalibeluk Village as the center of Serabi Kalibeluk production. The village roads can be confusing and somewhat narrow for vehicles to pass through. Tourists heading to the Warungasem Market often struggle to find Serabi Kalibeluk sellers at the right time.

### Time

Based on interviews, it was found that the history of Serabi Kalibeluk dates back to the 17th century during the reign of Sultan Agung of the Mataram Islamic Kingdom. Like many traditional Indonesian foods, the history of Serabi Kalibeluk is also influenced by legends or myths (Susanto, 2017). There are several versions of folklore about Endang Wuranti, Nyai Randinem, or Putri Nitisari being the first to create Serabi Kalibeluk after being expelled from the Mataram Kingdom. If the information from these folktales is valid and reliable, Serabi Kalibeluk is over 400 years old. The makers of Serabi Kalibeluk and representatives from the Batang Regency Tourism Office also claim that all families selling Serabi Kalibeluk are descendants of the original creators. The production process of Serabi Kalibeluk follows traditional methods, with rice being pounded using a wooden pestle and the serabi cooked on a wood-fired stove. The production of Serabi Kalibeluk takes place from dawn until morning.

### Skills

There are eight families involved in making Serabi Kalibeluk throughout Kalibeluk Village. They are all related to each other, although the degree of relationship varies. One of the serabi makers who has a well-established business is Mr. Slamet and Mrs. Fadhillah, who have often been featured on local and national TV stations and receive visits from academics. They have a website an Instagram account and accept orders from outside the city. However, the management of their business is not yet fully optimized, as they have not ventured into online marketplaces or delivery services. According to the local community's belief, Serabi Kalibeluk can only be produced by specific individuals in Kalibeluk Village. Therefore, the transfer of knowledge and skills only occurs locally within the village. The traditional processing methods and the use of local ingredients make it difficult to replicate this Serabi by the wider population.

### Cultural Meaning

Serabi in Indonesia not only serves as a food item but also holds significance in religious rituals, such as the Sedekah Serabi tradition in South Sumatra (Yosepin, 2021) or during the Syaban ritual (Rinawati et al., 2018). Although Serabi Kalibeluk is not used in religious rituals, its history intertwines with local folklore in Batang. Serabi Kalibeluk is said to have been created when its original makers were expelled from the Mataram Kingdom. However, no specific story explains why this serabi has a larger size than others. Serabi Kalibeluk is primarily consumed daily by the residents of Batang or buyers from another city.



**Fig 2.** Freshly made Serabi Kalibeluk  
Researcher (2023)



**Fig 3.** Wood fire stove to make Serabi Kalibeluk  
Researcher (2023)

**Tabel 1.** SWOT matrix of Serabi Kalibeluk

<b>SWOT Matrix</b>	<b>Strengths</b>	<b>Weaknesses</b>
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Unique characteristics compared to other Serabi products</li> <li>2. Promoted by local government in local or national events</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Uncertainty of daily production amount</li> <li>2. There is no association for makers of Serabi Kalibeluk</li> </ol>
<b>Opportunities</b>	<b>S-O Strategy</b>	<b>W-O Strategy</b>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. New international scale Integrated Industrial Area is located in Batang</li> <li>2. There are new tourist areas in Batang which has increased tourist visits</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Promotion of Serabi Kalibeluk through social media or MSME centers that can work with the Integrated Industrial Estate</li> <li>2. Creation of culinary tourism programs that are right on target at a wider category of tourists.</li> </ol>	Assistance and counseling from the local government or academics in the management of MSMEs in order to accommodate the needs of tourists
<b>Threats</b>	<b>S-T Strategy</b>	<b>W-T Strategy</b>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Lack of attention from the local government in terms of accessibility to Desa Kalibeluk</li> <li>2. There are alternative culinary tourism activities in Batang</li> </ol>	Coordination between stakeholders in this case, agencies in the local government. Support for supporting facilities for Serabi Kalibeluk culinary tourism.	Inquiring for support from stakeholders to support Serabi Kalibeluk MSMEs and assist the management process so that they have a highly competitive level.

Source: Researcher (2023)

#### 4. Conclusion

In conclusion, this study has provided valuable insights into the cultural significance and potential of Serabi Kalibeluk as a culinary icon in Batang Regency. The findings have highlighted the rich culinary heritage of Indonesia and the unique characteristics of traditional Indonesian foods like Serabi Kalibeluk. The study revealed that Serabi Kalibeluk represents the diverse and unique culinary traditions found in Indonesia, with its exclusive production in Kalibeluk Village adding to its cultural value.

While this research has shed light on the subject, it is important to acknowledge its limitations. The study primarily relied on qualitative data, and future studies could incorporate quantitative methods for a more comprehensive analysis. Additionally, the sample size for interviews and data collection was limited, affecting the generalizability of the findings. Nevertheless, the benefits and applications of this research are evident. The findings provide valuable insights for developing culinary tourism in Batang, particularly in promoting Serabi Kalibeluk as a culinary attraction. Its cultural significance and uniqueness make it a potential draw for tourists, contributing to the local economy (Mo et al., 2022).

Moving forward, future research should delve into the historical and cultural aspects of Serabi Kalibeluk, further exploring its origins and potential tourism significance. Efforts should also be made to improve accessibility in Kalibeluk Village to facilitate tourists' visits. Collaboration between the local government, MSME

centers, and the integrated industrial estate can support the marketing and development of Serabi Kalibeluk (Hribar et al., 2021; Badurina et al., 2023).

In summary, this study has advanced our understanding of Serabi Kalibeluk as a culinary icon in Batang Regency. Strategies were developed through SWOT analysis to promote Serabi Kalibeluk further. By addressing the identified gaps and limitations, and implementing the recommended actions, the promotion and development of culinary tourism can be enhanced, benefiting the local community and the broader tourism industry in Batang.

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