

Ombus-Ombus: Traditional Food From Batak

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ABSTRACT: Batak is a tribe that is on the North Sumatera, Indonesia. Batak is divided into six tribes, namely: Batak Mandailing, Angkola, Toba, Pakpak, Simalungun, and Karo. One of the traditional Batak food is ombus-ombus. Ombus-ombus can be found in the North Tapanuli, North Sumatera, precisely in the Siborongborong city. The origin of this food became the identity of Siborongborong city is when the economic movement began in 1940 ago. Ombus-ombus made from rice flour, grated coconut with brown sugar stuffed wrapped in banana leaves, conical and served while still hot. Ombus-ombus served in a large Batak traditional ceremony or used in thanksgiving. Ombus-ombus has a philosophy that it must be satisfying, healthy and certainly warm.

Keywords: Batak, Ombus-ombus, Siborongborong, Traditional.

I. INTRODUCTION

Indonesia is one of the countries that rich of culture. One of Indonesia's diversity is shown through the variety of foods that characterize every tribe from Sabang (the westernmost part) to Merauke (the easternmost part). Batak is one of the names of tribes inhabiting the area of North Sumatra, but there are also inhabit in the border region of Aceh and West Sumatra. The majority of Batak people inhabit in many regions, such as: Karo Highlands, Langkat Hulu, Deli Hulu, Serdang Hulu, Simalungun, Dairi, Toba, Humbang, Silindung, Angkola, Mandailing and Tapanuli district.



Fig. 1. Ethnic group in North Sumatera.

Source: Hibatak.com

One of the typical Batak food that is commonly used in traditional events or used in thanksgiving is Ombus-ombus. This food is based on rice flour or itak, brown sugar, and grated coconut [1].

II. HISTORY

The history of ombus-ombus began in 1940 where at that time the community's economic movement in District Siborongborong, North Tapanuli regency is increasing with trade activity. Trading activities include trading of agricultural produce, staple goods, and one of them is the emergence of new foods in the form of lepat which has its own characteristics. The first ombus-ombus made by a Batak-blooded man, named Musik Sihombing. Musik Sihombing triggered a rice-flavored "lepat" with melted brown sugar, cone-shaped, banana leaf lined on it as "Lappet Bulung Tetap Panas". Musik Sihombing continues its business by trading "Lappet Bulung Tetap Panas". The business of "Lappet Bulung Tetap Panas" is very profitable because at that time many enthusiasts who buy "Lappet Bulung Tetap Panas" products. After the death of Musik Sihombing, this lappet effort is forwarded by a Batak-blooded man, named Anggiat Siahaan. Anggiat runs his business by going around using a bicycle, because he feels confused with the name "Lappet Bulung Tetap Panas", finally Anggiat trigger the name of the lappet becomes "Ombus-ombus No. 1".

Ombus-ombus itself in Batak language has a meaning of inflatable (Indonesian = tiup tiup). The reason for the lappet is called ombus-ombus because it is more delicious to eat while hot. Due to the change of name, there arose a dispute between Anggiat with the family of lappet maker "Lappet Bulung Tetap Panas". The name change also did not run smoothly, the surrounding community was reintroduced with the same lappet but in different names. Walben Siahaan, successor of "Ombus-ombus No. 1", explains that it's impossible for lappet will remain in hot condition while sold around using a bicycle for 12 hours. As a step of peace from the dispute that occurs, the selling process of ombus-ombus is done alternately or every market week in Siborongborong^[1] (Walben Siahaan, October 25th 2017, personal communication).

In time, ombus-ombus traded near to the terminal Siborong-borong. The stall was more permanent, until now the stall which was originally a trading place for "Ombus-ombus No. 1" has been transformed into a big building that is still used as a trading house "Ombus-ombus No. 1". His business is now forwarded by his son, named Walben Siahaan and until now ombus-ombus into a peculiar food Batak society. This stall was established in the 70s and still stands firmly until now. Sales activities in this stall run smoothly because customers always come for drinking coffee and eat ombus-ombus every day (Walben Siahaan, October 25th 2017, personal communication). Behind the success of ombus-ombus, there are stories that continue to inspire the Batak people in working hard. In fact, an ombus-ombus merchant monument was built in Simpang Tiga, sub-districts of Siborongborong as proof of authentic identity of traditional Batak food and the birthmark of ombus-ombus in Siborong-Borong sub-district.

III. CULTURE AND PHILOSOPHY

Traditional events often have a tradition or culture that serves as a distinctive feature of the custom. These characteristics such as: dance, clothing, and also food that is served. Each region has its own customs. No exception to the community in North Tapanuli regency, North Sumatra. Tapanuli people usually provide traditional cakes as a dish served with coffee or tea in entertaining guests or in various events. One of that traditional cakes are ombus-ombus. Ombus-ombus given by the Batak community however, ombus-ombus has another name if it is in a different area. In Makassar, this is named kue cangkir while in North Sulawesi it is named koyabu. People of Tapanuli's own perception of ombus-ombus is also different. There are those who believe that ombus-ombus made with banana leaf wrapped and pyramid formed, while others argue that ombus-ombus not wrapped with banana leaves and only clenched. Different societal perceptions not only on the use of banana leaf and its shape but also about the ingredients used in making ombus-ombus. There are people who argue wearing sticky rice flour and some who argue wearing rice flour. This is because the habits of different communities and have one other type of traditional food that resembles ombus-ombus, namely lappet. Despite many different perceptions, ombus-ombus that trusted by various societies is wrapped in banana leaves, pyramid formed, and use rice flour as a raw material ombus-ombus maker.

Ombus-ombus has a philosophy that it must be satisfying, healthy and certainly warm. Geographically, the origin of the ombus-ombus comes from high-altitude with low temperature. This being the reason why ombus-ombus is served only when heat and the spread of ombus-ombus is narrower than pohul-pohul. Ombus-ombus in condition that are no longer hot is not defined as ombus-ombus. Ombus-ombus must be made from rice flour, with grated coconut and brown sugar, and wrapped in banana leaves (Rytha Tambunan, October 27th 2017, personal communication).

The people of Batak Tanapuli say in the past ombus-ombus always made after the harvest of rice, ombus-ombus made as people's thanksgiving about the rice they have got. Rice that has been harvested will be cleaned and then roasted until completely dry, then the dried rice will be mashed by pounding become rice flour. Rice flour is the basic ingredient of the ombus-ombus. Besides as a thanksgiving, ombus-ombus also served in a large Batak traditional ceremony. Ombus-ombus also sell in Siborongborong near Siborongborong Bus Station.

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Fig. 2. Traditional Food from Batak. [A] Ombus-ombus. [B] Pohul-pohul.
Source: IndonesiaMedanFood.com

In the past, Ombus-ombus was not sold but only served in traditional ceremonies Batak society. Raw materials also related to abundance of materials around them. Limited knowledge makes Batak society think to look for alternative foods other than cooked rice, which is processed snacks from rice flour (Rytha Tambunan, October 27th 2017, personal communication). Batak society has a tradition of musicalization all things that related to its culture. Records of history or local wisdom that become a tradition has been told through the song. Likewise with ombus-ombus, the society considers that ombus-ombus is the identity of Siborongborong city. With a sense of pride, the people of Siborongborong create a song that tells about ombus-ombus. The song entitled “Marombus-ombus” has the meaning that we are doing something about Ombus-ombus. Messages delivered from this song are Ombus-ombus from Humbang District, which tastes sweet, and served hot. In this song also tells the story of Sihombing family, a person who is good at making Ombus-ombus. There is also a message if you want to get a wife who can cook Ombus-ombus perfectly, Go to Siborongborong city and marry “Boru Sihombing” or women with “Sihombing” clan in Batak society (Maully Purba, October 27th 2017, personal communication).

IV. METHODS OF COOKING OMBUS-OMBUS

The making of Ombus-ombus traditionally and modern has not changed significantly, where ombus-ombus production is done only by one way of cooking, that is by steaming. Traditionally, ombus-ombus is made with basic ingredients of rice flour, brown sugar, and grated coconut, while modern ombus-ombus made with glutinous flour, brown sugar, and grated coconut. The first step of making ombus-ombus is to mix 100 grams of rice flour or sticky rice with 100 grams of grated coconut, add half a teaspoon of salt and stir until mixed well. Cut banana leaves into rectangular shape with the size of approximately 5 x 10 cm. Fold banana leaf becomes cone shaped and put the mixture of flour and coconut more or less half of cone shape, insert refined brown sugar half to one teaspoon, then cover back with mixture of flour and coconut. Glue the banana leaves until the whole section is tightly closed and steamed for 30 to 45 minutes.

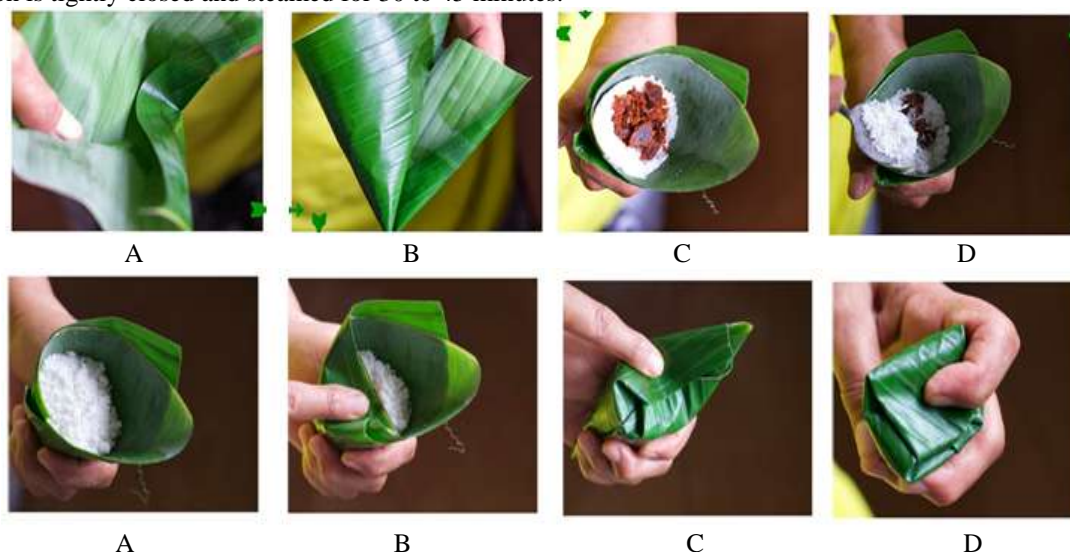


Fig. 3. Traditional Method of Cooking Ombus-ombus.

Source: IndonesiaMedanFood.com

The secret blend used in making ombus-ombus is in rice flour, grated coconut, and brown sugar used. The flour that becomes the raw material of ombus-ombus is not ready-made rice flour, but from raw materials that must be pounded first with wood because it affects the taste. Rice for the flour should be qualified. Rytha Tambunan said through a private communication that the rice used in the manufacture of ombus-ombus was a maximum of 1 week after harvest. As research conducted by Trigo-Stockli (1994), quality of milled rice will be decreased depend on the quality of the raw rice, raw rice with high moisture content causes the growth of mushrooms is influenced by his long-time storage of rice. Then, the grated coconut should be young and should not be mixed with water [2].

Therefore, in Siborongborong, if you want to use coconut to make ombus-ombus, freshly split coconut is left to its water content completely dry before grated. Otherwise, the ombus-ombus will quickly stale and sticky. The difference between ombus-ombus and lapet located in the mixture of coconut, in the lapet coconut will be mixed right into the dough and in ombus-ombus coconut will be used as a filling. Similarly, the brown sugar used is a palm sugar that has a different taste than regular brown sugar.

Siborongborong people used to use banana leaves from the Tebingtinggi area directly because the banana leaf is not easily torn even though folded. Banana leaves are also included in steaming ombus-ombus in the steamed pan. The steam temperature affects the banana leaf so that it can easily occur and can affect the taste of ombus-ombus. Banana leaves as ombus-ombus wrappers also have to be formed like cones because this is the hallmark of ombus-ombus which until now believed by Batak society, North Sumatera so that if formed other and not wrapped with banana leaf then it is not called ombus-ombus, but “pohul-pohul” or other designations.

V. CHEMICAL ASPECT OF OMBUS-OMBUS

The main ingredient in making ombus-ombus is rice flour, but for now the use of rice flour is substituted with glutinous rice flour. Rice flour is a flour derived from rice that is milled or pounded until smooth, rice flour has a smooth texture and soft. Glutinous flour is made of white or black sticky rice, by grinding or crushing. The texture of the glutinous rice is almost similar to rice flour, but when touched the glutinous flour feels heavier and clumped. The difference from rice flour and sticky rice flour is when mixed with water, sticky rice will turn into a thicker solution, while rice flour will become a more dilute solution. Making ombus-ombus with rice flour will produce crumbly textures, while ombus-ombus made with glutinous flour will produce sticky texture. The texture attached to the ombus-ombus produced from the glutinous starch comes from the gelatinization process, where in the gelatinization process is the swelling of starch granules due to water absorption. Broken starch granules will release water causing the texture to be attached and fused into one another [3]. Factors affecting the gelatinization process are the size of the starch granules, the type of starch, and the heating temperature used, where in the lower the temperature of gelatinization will result in a more adherent texture and not easily hardened. Glutinous rice flour contains 90% starch compound, which comprises 1 - 2% amylose and 88 - 89% amylopectin [4]. High levels of amylopectin in glutinous rice flours make it easy for gelatinization process to occur when added with water and obtain heating treatment.

Cloudy starter suspension will suddenly become clear, depending on the type of starch used. The occurrence of the starch solution translates and followed by granular swelling. Ability of water absorption will be great because the amount of hydroxyl groups in starch molecules is very large. Starch granules are swelling and increase its viscosity. The viscosity increases due to the water being mixed in the rice flour which is initially outside the granule and free to move before it is heated [5].

Gelatinized starch is easily digested by the body. The pancreas produces amylase enzyme to hydrolyze carbohydrates into disaccharides and trisaccharides. Disaccharides and trisaccharides can be absorbed in the form of glucose which can converted into energy [6]. In addition to the pancreas, the amylase enzyme is also present in the oral cavity produced by the salivary glands in saliva. Amylase in saliva begins the process of digesting carbohydrates chemically and converting most starches into sugar in the mouth causes of the sweetness of ombus-ombus when chewed [5]. In addition to the sweet taste produced from starch chewed on the mouth, palm sugar also has an important effect on the sweet taste of ombus-ombus. Palm sugar and grated coconut are added in the middle of the ombus-ombus. Palm sugar is smoothed first because the melting of the sugar will be faster and evenly distributed. Palm sugar (juice) contain 80-85% water, \pm 15% sucrose, 0.13% sugar invert, 0.13% non-sugar (organic), and 0.02% non-sugar (inorganic) [7]. Based on the theory that has been proposed by Shallenberger and Acree, condition of sweetness based on the properties of hydrogen bonding on the sweet compound. A sweet compound with electronegative atoms A' and B', with hydrogen atom binding covalently to A'. Large probability would form a hydrogen bonding pair with the same structure as receptor at the end of the taste nerve, resulting in a sweet response [5].

Dry grated coconut is commonly used as mixer, forming texture, forming aroma, and as a filling [8]. Dry grated coconut contains most of oil and protein. Commonly grated coconut will be stable at heat [9]. Banana leaves are used as ombus-ombus wrapping due to the distinctive aroma of banana leaves that will come

out when heated. Wax substances that found in banana leaves induce its own distinctive aroma, which makes anyone who sniffed them to be tasteful. Wax is a natural substance that is very effective to inhibit the occurrence of water loss in food so it can produce juicy texture and maintain the quality of ombus-ombus. Banana leaves can prevent evaporation of food products due to the influence of hot condition from the outside [10]. Banana leaves also contain the large amounts of polyphenols as in tea leaves in the form of EGCG and resulting a distinctive aroma. According to (Nuryani and Soedjono, 1991), banana leaves usually used to wrap food because it's not sticky, easy to wrap, and adds flavor to wrapped food [11].

VI. CONCLUSION

Ombus-ombus has become a part of Batak culture. In Indonesia, there are many traditional foods similar to ombus-ombus with different names. In Batak tribe was many different perception by the Batak society about ombus-ombus, it is because of cooking methods, raw material and way to serves which is diverse. Other factor is the ombus-ombus was not really known by population even Batak society itself. The differences of ombus-ombus to other similar traditional food are include the shape, material, and the way to serve it. Ombus-ombus was become the main source of livelihood for Siborongborong society because its strategic location for trading center. Ombus-ombus has a philosophy that it must be satisfying, healthy and certainly warm. Until now, Ombus-ombus become mandatory dish in every traditional events, wedding, and Batak ceremony.

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