

# PROCEEDING

## INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON CHINESE DIASPORA IN SOUTHEAST ASIA STUDIES

(Socio Cultural Research of the Chinese Diaspora in Southeast Asia)

November, 25<sup>th</sup> - 27<sup>th</sup> 2022



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Universitas Kristen Maranatha  
Bandung, Indonesia



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# The Influence of Food from Chinese Culture at Culinary Noodles of Indonesia

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*Abstract: Based on history, the oldest noodles were found in China around 4000 years ago, predating noodles produced in Italy. Recorded in the Ancient Inscriptions, the existence of noodles in China grew during the Eastern Han Dynasty, known as tang bing. In accordance with the literal meaning, tang bing has the appearance of a flour cake with gravy. During the Wei, Jin, Northern and Southern Dynasties, the appearance of noodles changed to what it is today, which is flat and long. Thus, noodles became the staple food of the Chinese people. The Chinese ethnic group is thought to have entered and settled in Indonesia hundreds of years ago. The arrival of ethnic Chinese to Indonesia has had a major influence on cultural life in Indonesia, one of which is on the development of culinary culture in Indonesia, for example noodles. In this paper, the authors will explain the reasons why noodles are easily accepted by Indonesian people and how noodles are developing in Indonesia. This research was conducted using qualitative methods. With the emergence of the Chinese diaspora, noodles can eventually reach Indonesia. The taste of noodles is also acceptable and is increasingly being developed by Indonesian people. This also happened because during cooking the noodles were combined using local Indonesian ingredients and at the same time adapted to the tastes of the Indonesian people's tongue.*

*Keywords: Noodles, Culinary, China, Indonesia*

## INTRODUCTION

Until now, typical ethnic Chinese food is directly related to Indonesian cuisine (Wiratri, 2017). Chinese recipes are a clear example of the occurrence of diaspora in the world, a large population and fierce competition for life make Chinese people think more about moving outward to traveling abroad (Wijaya, 2019). This resulted in Chinese people being found everywhere. History says that the spread of ethnic Chinese to foreign countries occurred in the 18th to 20th centuries. Thailand, Indonesia, Malaysia, the United States, Singapore, Canada, Peru, Vietnam, the Philippines and Myanmar are the ten countries with the largest ethnic Chinese diaspora in the world (Goodkind, 2019). The first position is occupied by Thailand with a total of 9.3 million ethnic Chinese and the second position is occupied by Indonesia with a total of 7.6 million ethnic Chinese (Hanggarini, 2010).

Based on historical records, the Chinese are thought to have come to Indonesia during the Han Dynasty (206 BC-220 BC). At that time, it was known that China had opened trade routes to Southeast Asia, including Indonesia (Khasanah, 2018; Pandanwangi et al., 2018; Pitoyo & Triwahyudi, 2018). Until now, based on 2010 census data, it was stated that the ethnic Chinese population reached 2,832,510 people, or around 1.2% of the Indonesian population and are spread throughout Indonesia. In line with the large number of ethnic Chinese in Indonesia, Chinese culture, which includes art, language, celebrations, culinary arts, and so on, slowly entered and then acculturated with Indonesian culture.

Just like society in general, ethnic Chinese also have primary needs, clothing, food, boards. In Chinese ethnic culture, food plays a very important role. This happens because food is seen as a unified social structure that influences the economic unit. In addition, the religious life of ethnic Chinese is often expressed through food as offerings for ancestors, offerings for traditional events, even in welcoming festivals and cultural events.

Since the beginning of the migration of Chinese people to Indonesia, the influence of Chinese cuisine coupled with the entry of various new food ingredients such as spring onions, garlic to soybeans, can already be seen (Wijaya, 2019). The culinary variety brought by the Chinese ethnic, which at first was only popular in big cities or areas of the Chinese ethnic community, slowly began to spread and be accepted by the natives and ancestors, which was passed down and then processed continuously to become a special recipe, even to the point of creating new variation (Kusuma & Octastefani, 2022; Rahman, 2018; Wiratri, 2017).

Noodles, which is one of the staple foods of the Chinese population, at first were exclusively food served specifically for the nobility. Gradually, noodles developed into food that could be consumed by all Chinese people regardless of existing social class. Almost similar conditions occurred in Indonesia. When noodles first arrived in Indonesia, only ethnic Chinese consumed noodles. However, over time, noodles that have entered Indonesia are not only food consumed by ethnic Chinese but are also slowly being introduced to and got the interest of the local Indonesian community.



## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The type of research is research qualitative research, namely a method that utilizes descriptive data, in the form of written words from the observed object and emphasizes observing phenomena and researching more about the substance of the meaning of the phenomenon (Rianingrum & Pandanwangi, 2021; Taylor et al., 2016; Yusuf, 2017). Through qualitative methods, a phenomenon can be explained in depth by means of collecting data as deeply as possible (F Hamid, 2015; Farid Hamid, 2018). The strategy used in this study was that researchers collected data from literature studies, journals, and websites that were studied and selected appropriately and in accordance with the research title (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018).

## DISCUSSION

### The History of Noodle

Professor Houyuan Lu, a researcher from the Institute of Geology and Geophysics, Chinese Academy of Sciences, said that the oldest noodles found in Qinghai, China, are estimated to be 4,000 years old (Tiong, 2013; Wiratri, 2017). This is based on the discovery of a notebook in the Eastern Han Dynasty, which wrote about the earliest ways of making noodles. The Eastern Han dynasty, which triumphed from 206 BC to 220 AD, made noodles the main dish at various events at the palace. At that time, noodle was referred as Tang Bing (汤饼), which is a soupy flour cake.

During the Han Dynasty, dough-making techniques came from the Middle East combined with fermentation techniques. At that time, there was a food called Bing (饼) which refers to a round, flat and thin food or cake. In Mandarin, the biscuit is called Binggan (饼干) which literally means dry cake. The character Bing (饼) in Chinese characters consists of the radicals shi (食) meaning 'food' and bing (并) meaning 'to combine'. The manufacturing process is called he bing (合并) which means 'to mix/mix' flour and water. In general, bing is made from wheat, but some are made from rice which can be eaten through the process of boiling, roasting or steaming. Through this explanation, noodle belongs to a food group called Bing. Tang Bing, which is made from millet flour dough and steamed, is often served at at summer events. At that time, the shape of the noodles in the form of small cubes. The steamed Tang Bing is then put into chicken soup, added with chopped vegetables to enhance the taste.

During the Wei Dynasty to the today, noodles were called Shuiyin Bing (水引饼) which meant boiled noodles and were similar to the, namely long, flat and thin. They use wheat flour as the main dough, which is soaked in water, then formed into long rolls, and cooked in hot water. For this discovery, the noodle-making process was enshrined in the Qimin Yaoshu (齐民要术), which is a history book of Chinese agriculture. During the Southern and Northern Dynasties up to the Tang Dynasty, noodle varieties became more numerous. It was during this period that the custom of eating Longevity Noodles (寿面) was formed. This Longevity Noodle (寿面) is eaten on birthdays and has the meaning that the person gets the blessing of longevity. During the Yuan Dynasty, the manufacture of dry noodles started and flourished.

During the Song dynasty, noodle varieties developed more rapidly, with as many as 30 to 40 varieties of noodles recorded. Noodles began to be known among the people at that time and became staple food that was liked by the Chinese people. Because of this, shops and restaurants began to appear selling noodle soup as the main menu. The basic ingredients for noodles vary, such as flour, rice, and mung bean flour. At that time, it was agreed that the formal designation for noodles in China would be mian (面). During the Yuan Dynasty, the Mian Cave (挂面) appeared which could be preserved and stored for a long time. During the Ming Dynasty, appeared Chen Mian (抻面) who was created with extraordinary skills. The emergence of noodle manufacturing techniques has contributed significantly to the development of noodles. During the Qing Dynasty, more meaningful varieties of noodle appeared, one of which was Ifumie (伊府面). Along with its development, noodle spread to Asian countries such as Japan, Korea, Laos, Vietnam, Indonesia and other Asian regions.

The entry of the Chinese Ethnicity into Indonesia began when Java and Sumatera were still in the form of a Hindu-Buddhist kingdoms, the Chinese Ethnic had established trade relations with the kingdoms in Indonesia (Kusuma & Octastefani, 2022; Suryadinata, 2020). In the mid-19th century, most of the Hokkien ethnic Chinese lived on the island of Java and introduced their special food, namely "noodles". The word "noodle" in Indonesia is said to have come from the word in Mandarin, namely "Mian (面)" which indicates the basic ingredient for making it is flour. Chinese ethnic who migrated to countries in Southeast Asia, including Indonesia, also brought noodle recipes with them and introduced them to the local community (Khasanah, 2018; Pitoyo & Triwahyudi, 2018).

Denys Lombard in his book titled *Nusa Jawa Silang Budaya* has been quoted by National Geographic Indonesia, that noodles as food have existed since the time of the Majapahit Empire (Lombard, 1996). The existence of noodles is recorded in the Biluluk Inscription which was written in 1391 as "laksa" from Sanskrit. Prof. Dr. Ir Murdijati Gardjito Professor of Food Science and Technology UGM said that the noodles are processed with local spices by the people of the Archipelago. As time goes by, the types of noodles in Indonesia are increasingly diverse and have become a substitute for rice that is popular with the public.

The Chinese ethnic group has succeeded in acculturating their special food with several traditional spices that are adapted to the tongue of the Indonesian people. The addition of these traditional spices makes the food acceptable to the people of Indonesia. Like meatballs which are typical Indonesian food, it turns out to be the dish of ethnic Chinese culture. In Indonesia, noodles received positive reactions from various groups in each region and were developed with a mixture of various kinds of spices (Rahman, 2018; Setiawan, 2017). The noodles that are often found are Javanese noodles, Acehnese noodles, titi noodles, Bangka Belitung noodles and noodles from various other regions. Noodles are preferred because they are practical, easy to obtain, and suitable as a side dish or main dish. The people's passion for consuming noodles is increasing. Nowadays, the use of noodles in daily food is easy to find, whether using wet noodles, dry noodles, or instant noodles. This shows that noodles have become part of Indonesian culinary culture.

### Ingredients in Noodle Making Process

The main ingredients used for making noodles are as follows;

#### 1. Wheat Flour

Indonesia's high dependence on rice and imported food products such as flour makes national food security very fragile. From the aspect of macro-development policy, this condition contains risks (vulnerable), which are also related to economic, social and political stability. One of the food development policies in achieving food security is through food diversification, which is intended to provide alternative food ingredients so as to reduce dependence on rice and wheat. One of the food products that is highly dependent on wheat flour is noodle products. The development of noodle consumption is quite rapid and noodles are a type of food that suits the needs or preferences of consumers in Indonesia. Noodles that are commonly found in the market are usually made from milling wheat flour (which is obtained from wheat seeds milled) so that they are elastic and do not break easily during the molding and cooking processes because they contain gluten (Abidin et al., 2013). In addition to the gluten formed, the proportion of amylose and amylopectin, as well as the composition and process of the dough will affect the elasticity of the noodles that are formed (Hong et al., 2020).

President Director of PT. Sriboga Raturaya Alwin Arifin stated that the productivity of wheat in Indonesia is still very low, so that imported wheat is still needed as the main ingredient for making wheat flour. According to data obtained from the Central Statistics Agency (BPS), in 2021, Indonesia will import more than 11 million tons of wheat from Australia, Ukraine, Canada, Argentina, the United States, India, Bulgaria, Moldova, Russia and others. The minimum supply of wheat that can be produced in Indonesia occurs because wheat plants usually grow in fields only with a subtropical climate with temperatures ranging from 10-25 °C. While Indonesia itself has a tropical climate and Indonesia's hilly geographical conditions are not suitable for planting wheat. Because the production of wheat flour was considered unreliable, noodle producers began to use substitution in the form of using tuber flour, soria, and MOCAP (Modified Cassava Flour) made from cassava as a basic ingredient for making noodles.

#### 2. Water

Water plays a role in dissolving salt, as a reaction medium between carbohydrates and gluten, as well as forming gluten's chewy properties. Because of the presence of water, starch and gluten will expand. In the process of making noodles, water with a pH between 6-9 is needed to increase water absorption. The high water content will make the noodles stronger and not break easily.

#### 3. Salt

Apart from acting as a flavor enhancer, adding salt to the dough will strengthen the texture of the noodles, increase the elasticity of the noodles, strengthen the noodles, and also bind water. Salt is also added to prevent the noodles from sticking and swelling excessively because salt can inhibit the activity of amylase and protease enzymes.

#### 4. Eggs

Eggs have two parts, namely egg white and yolk. In the process of making noodles, egg whites will produce a thin and strong layer on the surface of the noodles which can prevent the absorption of oil when the noodles go through the frying process. Egg yolk has a role as a good emulsifier due to the presence of lecithin which can accelerate the hydration of water in flour. In addition, egg yolks also play a role as a dough developer.

### Types of Noodles

Based on processing techniques and water content, noodles can be divided into four groups as follows;

#### 1. Raw or fresh noodles

Raw or fresh noodles are noodles that after going through the cutting or molding process do not go through the heating process. The water content of these noodles is quite high, around 35%. The combination of high water content and raw conditions causes the noodles to spoil quickly. Refrigerator storage keeps noodles fresh for up to 50-60 hours. After exceeding this time limit, the color of the noodles will turn dark (Abidin et al., 2013).



## 2. Wet noodles

Wet noodles are fresh noodles that have been cooked and usually a little oil is added to prevent the noodles from sticking together. The water content of these noodles reaches 52%, so their shelf life is relatively short, around 40 hours at room temperature (Nurhayati et al., 2022). Wet noodles do not need to be boiled before use, but simply rinsed using hot water to remove any remaining flour or oil.

## 3. Dry noodles

Dry noodles are noodles that after going through the steaming process are then dried until the remaining water content is only around 8-10%. The drying technique used is to dry the noodles in the sun or by using an oven (Hasanah et al., 2021). The lower water content makes the noodles can be stored for a longer period of time.

## 4. Instant noodles

Instant noodles are dry noodles that are ready to serve after being cooked or boiled in boiling water for 3-4 minutes. The process of making this noodle goes through the stages of making fresh noodles followed by steaming, forming and drying. Instant noodles only have a water content of around 5-8%, so they have a long shelf life. One way to dry noodles is by frying in oil or using hot dry air (Hasanah et al., 2021). Instant noodles sold in the market are usually packaged per portion, complete with vegetable oil, seasonings, dried chilies, with or without dried vegetables.

## Noodle Making Process

The process of making noodles consists of six stages as follows;

### 1. The first stage: mixing

The mixing stage aims to make the water evenly hydrate the flour and attract the gluten fibers. In order to produce a good dough, the amount of water added is 28-38%, stirred for 15-25 minutes, with the dough temperature ranging from 24-40°C.

### 2. The second stage: roll press

The roll press stage is the process of forming the dough into sheets with a thickness of 1.2-2 mm which is achieved by smoothing the gluten fibers. The pressed dough should not be less than 25°C. This will cause the noodle dough sheets to become cracked and rough. The quality of these noodle dough sheets is considered to be poor because they are brittle and break easily.

### 3. The third stage: the formation of noodles

The flat noodle dough will then be cut lengthwise 1-2 mm wide with a noodle cutter, then cut crosswise with a certain length so that later in dry conditions the noodles are obtained according to the desired weight.

### 4. The fourth stage: steaming

Before the noodles are steamed, the bonds in the noodles are soft and flexible, but after steaming, the noodles become hard and strong. This happens because during the steaming stage, water dehydrates from gluten through the process of starch gelatinization and gluten coagulation which makes the noodles chewy. Chemically, this is caused by the breaking of hydrogen bonds, so that the bond chains of the starch and gluten complexes become tighter.

### 5. Fifth stage: frying

The purpose of the frying stage is to dehydrate the water content in the noodles to 3-5%. Noodles should be fried in hot oil at 140-150 °C for one to two minutes. The high oil temperature causes the water to evaporate quickly and creates fine pores on the surface of the noodles, so that the rehydration time becomes shorter. This frying stage is usually done in the instant noodle production process.

### 6. Sixth stage: cooling

After frying, the noodles are drained using a fan at 40 °C with the aim of making the oil stick to the surface of the noodles and also to make the noodle structure hard. This cooling technique must be done to perfection in order to prevent mold growth as a result of moisture condensation. The stages of frying and cooling the noodles can be replaced by using an oven with a temperature of 60 °C.

## Types of Authentic Noodles in Indonesia

At present, noodles have become a food that is loved by Indonesian people. In some areas, noodle dishes are dishes that are characteristic of that area. Some examples include

### 1. Mi Celor Palembang

Mi celor is a noodle dish originating from the city of Palembang, South Sumatra, Indonesia. Celor noodles are served with a thick and tasty mixture of coconut milk and shrimp broth and served with accompaniments such as boiled eggs, bean sprouts, green onions, fried onions and chives. The size of the noodles used is larger than the noodles in general.



Figure 1. Mie Celor

Source: Photo Repra

Mi celor is a fusion of Malay and Chinese dishes. The word celor in the Malay dialect of Palembang means to dip. This refers to the way the noodles are dipped in hot water before serving. Generally, Palembang people consume Mi Celor in the morning for breakfast.

### 2. Mi Aceh

Mi Aceh is one of the typical foods in Indonesia originating from the city of Aceh. Mi Aceh consists of two types, namely Aceh noodle soup and Acehnese fried noodles. In addition, the serving of Acehnese noodles is also sprinkled with fried onions and served with chips, chopped shallots, cucumber and lime. It can be seen from its historical perspective,



Figure 2. Mie Aceh

Source: Photo Repra

Acehnese noodles are inseparable from the culture of the local community and the influence of foreign cultures that entered Aceh in ancient times. The thick soup is an influence from Indian cuisine, while the noodles themselves are a Chinese influence. Serving Acehnese noodles with pieces of mutton or beef can show that Islamic values in Aceh are very strong.

### 3. Mi Kocok Bandung

Mi Kocok are legendary noodles originating from Bandung, West Java. The term shake in this culinary name refers to the cooking process, namely shaking the noodles in a perforated container with a handle, occasionally dipping the noodles into hot water.



Figure 3. Mie Kocok

Source: Photo Repra

Shake noodles use a type of flattened yellow noodles that have a soft texture. This dish consists of yellow noodles served in thick beef broth, sliced gravel, bean sprouts, meatballs, lime, and sprinkled with sliced celery, green onions, and fried onions.

#### 4. Mi Bangka

Mi Bangka or known by the people of Bangka with the name mian which originated from tin mining. The Chinese came to Indonesia because they were attracted by the tin wealth in Belitung.



Figure 4. Mie Bangka

Source: Photo Repro

Interactions between Chinese people and local residents in Belitung influence cooking methods and culinary elements from China and from Belitung. One of them is culinary noodles cooked by sautéing. Bangka noodles are a blend of Chinese, Dutch and Indonesian cultures.

#### 5. Mi Titi Makassar

Makassar has a variety of culinary delights such as Makassar coto and konro soup. But Makassar does not only have coto or konro soup. There is a savory and warm "Titi" noodle.



Figure 5. Mie Titi Makasar

Source: Photo Repro

Mi titi are dry fried noodles doused with thick gravy made from eggs and cornstarch. In the titi noodle soup there are various mixtures such as chicken, beef liver, cabbage, mustard greens, celery leaves, and shrimp. Mi titi originated from a hawker cart selling Chinese food in the city of Makassar around the 60-70s.

#### 6. Mi Tiaw Apollo Pontianak

Mi tiaw Apollo is a noodle originating from Pontianak, West Kalimantan, Indonesia. Mi tiaw Apollo is one of the legendary culinary delights since the 1968s. Mi tiaw can be said to have become a culinary icon of Pontianak which is thick with Peranakan Chinese culture.



Figure 5. Mie Tiaw

Source: Photo Repro

Mi tiaw uses a type of flat and wide noodles. Mi tiaw has a savory taste and beef flavor which tends to be thick with toppings of tripe, bean sprouts and green vegetables.

## CONCLUSION

Noodle are thought to have existed and been consumed by the Chinese for 4000 years ago. Recorded in historical notebooks during the Eastern Han Dynasty, noodles became the main dish at various events in the palace. Noodles continue to develop into many varieties and spread to Asian countries such as Japan, Korea, Laos, Vietnam, Indonesia and other Asian regions.

Based on history, noodles are believed to have existed in the archipelago since the Majapahit Kingdom. This is recorded in the Biluluk Inscription which was written in 1391 as "laksa" from Sanskrit. Chinese ethnic who migrated to countries in Southeast Asia, including Indonesia, took part in bringing noodle recipes and introducing them to the local community.

In line with the many ethnic Chinese in Indonesia, Chinese culture slowly began to enter. Among other things, such as art, language, celebration, culinary, and so on. Indirectly this diversity acculturates with Indonesian culture. One of the diversities that is most affected is the culinary field, one of which is noodle culinary. At first, the culinary variety of noodles brought by the Chinese was only popular in big cities or areas where the ethnic Chinese community lived. But then, this culinary slowly began to merge with local culinary delights and attracted the interest of the local Indonesian community.

The Chinese ethnic communities succeeded in acculturating their special food with traditional spices adapted to the tongue of the Indonesian people. In Indonesia, noodles are favored by various groups, from children to adults. With the diversity of spices in Indonesia, this has caused each region to start developing its own noodles taste with a mixture of various spices. There are various types of noodles that are well known and are characteristic of regions in Indonesia, namely, Javanese noodles, Acehnese noodles, titi noodles, and Bangka Belitung noodles, all types of noodles are often found in every region in Indonesia. The people's passion for consuming noodles is increasing. Currently, noodles are a daily food that is easy to find. Until now, the types of noodles have been innovated into wet noodles, dry noodles, or instant noodles. This shows that noodles have become part of the diversity of culinary culture in Indonesia.

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