

Exploring the Food and Cultural Significance of Native Chicken in Ilocos Sur

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Abstract: *Native chicken has inspired contributions to culture, art, cuisine, and religion over the millennia. This study was conducted to explore the food and cultural significance of native chicken in Ilocos Sur. It employed a quantitative type- descriptive research design and qualitative methods of research utilizing an interview schedule supported to dig deeper into the food and cultural practices in the use of native chicken. There were 108 respondents composed of chicken growers and native chicken consumers. Based on the findings of the study, it is concluded that the majority of the native chicken respondents are male, with age ranges from 41-50 years old, married, with 4-6 family members, self-employed, and have a monthly income below 5,000.00. Native chicken is originally grown, unique taste, low-fat content, leanness, and pigmentation characteristics of the meat are considered the buying preferences of consumers while tinola and adobo are still the consumers' food preferences. The consumption of native chicken is an important source of high-quality protein food and its utilization largely depends upon the occasion it serves. Native chicken has socio-cultural, religious, and medicinal significance among rural communities and also occupies a very special place in the ancient culture and traditions of the Ilocano. Dressed native chicken either fresh or frozen is recommended for commercialization. A need for dissemination of the importance of native chicken in terms of food and buying preferences. Native chicken has a brilliant contribution to culture, art, cuisine, science, and religion. Therefore, it necessitates being preserved. New cooking or value-added native chicken products to be developed as additional income or for commercialization.*

Keywords -Cultural beliefs, folklores, food preferences, native chicken, practices, quantitative method

INTRODUCTION

Consumer confidence, product quality and safety, and types of products are the major challenges to the current situation and the strategic

Chicken meat is well-acknowledged as a healthy animal food when compared to other meats because of its low fat and cholesterol content [1]; thus, chicken consumption is increasing among people who take into account nutrition and a healthy lifestyle. Despite native chickens' good flavor and unique meat properties, many consumers still limit the buying behavior of native chickens [2]. However, an increasing preference for quality livestock products and reforming of national sentiment has led to slowly increasing interest in native chicken. Notwithstanding, its huge potential, the native chicken industry has two major

future of the native chicken industry in the county. The consumer desire for high-quality poultry products will robustly affect production and food practices.

challenges which need to be addressed the unstable supply of slaughtered native chickens and the high mortality rate of 40% [3].

The production of native chicken as the main source of meat and egg under minimal management, intervention, and inputs adds to its popularity thus proving a large population. Thus, many Filipino consumers' preference terms for meat are highly acceptable in terms of its taste, leanness, and pigmentation. The total chicken population in the country constitutes 46% (76 million heads). This gives rise to local farmers in creating livelihood as additional income, intensifies

food security, and a chance to convert farm wastes into high-value products. Aside from this, it offers socio-cultural services to rural communities.[4]

Aside from unique flavor and texture, the consumer's desire and willingness to buy and pay at a premium price. Ultimately, [5] stated native chicken remains an important source of high-protein quality, and the consumer preference for native chicken as organically grown, the leaner and distinctive taste is always preferred over the foreign breed. [6]

Native chicken is usually perceived as being free ranged, free from antibiotics and other synthetic chemical residues. This is the reason why consumer preferences for this product shifted to undergo organic and naturally produced giving a higher price than that of the commercial hybrid chicken. This trend was observed in the Philippines wherein the volume of supply of 500 kg to 2 tons per month required by institutional buyers has significantly increased [3].

Furthermore, native chicken is not only consumed but also use extensively in rituals performed to appease God, the spirits of ancestors, and natives, ward off demons and evil spirits and get rid of bad luck, particularly in the rural areas. Chickens are sacrificed to mark the start of agricultural activities or a new business; at weddings; as part of birth and death ceremonies, festivals, games, and sporting events, and in traditional medicine, witchcraft, and black magic. Henceforth, indigenous communities prefer specific breeds for specific purposes [7].

Understanding the consumer's cultural differences aside from personal, social, and economic characteristics is a great factor. Healthy food choices have not only affects the physical aspect but also mental health benefits and might be a long-term investment in future well-being [8].

Many native traditional lifestyles continue to exist in regenerating the ecological systems that people depend on as a means to enhance happiness and spirit. The indigenous communities consider native chickens as sacred animals aside from knowing how to grow, nurture, harvest, process, and cook native chicken foods as a way to sustain both the ecosystem and society. Nonetheless, the chicken has inspired contributions to culture, art, cuisine, science, and religion over the millennia [9].

Finally, culture should not be interpreted merely as a return to the customs of the past but also embodies the attitude of a people to the future of their traditional values faced with the demands of modern technology, which is an essential factor of development and progress [10].

With the aforementioned scenario, it is the belief that exploring the food and cultural implication is one way to examine the existing practices in the use of native chicken showing the socio-cultural significance to rural communities.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This research study intended to explore the food and cultural significance of native chicken. Specifically, it sought to gather information on the demographic characteristics of native chicken respondents, preferences, cultural beliefs, and utilization of native chicken as food and rituals. It also sought to gather recommendations on the future development and problems encountered in the utilization of native chicken.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Research Design

The study employed the quantitative and qualitative methods of research using an interview schedule to gather primary data from the respondents.

Population and Sampling

Purposive sampling was used in identifying the respondents consisting of 108 native chicken grower and consumer participants of various ages from the four municipalities of the 2nd District of Ilocos Sur namely: Narvacan, Sta. Maria, Santiago and Burgos, Ilocos Sur.

Data Gathering Procedure

To facilitate the floating of the questionnaire, a request letter was forwarded to local government units through the Municipal Agrarian Office. Participants were invited to one site particularly on the barangay level for ease of traveling. The purpose of the research was thoroughly explained to the respondents before the start of the interview. Floating and retrieval of the questionnaire were immediately after all the information was gathered from the respondents.

Data Gathering Instrument

The questionnaire consisted of five sections; demographic characteristics of the respondents, post-harvest practices of native chicken, cultural beliefs and utilization of native chicken, and problems encountered in the utilization of native chicken. To substantiate the answer given in the quantitative part, further interviews were applied to dig deeper into the food cultural practices and beliefs on the use of native chicken. The questionnaires were evaluated by experts in the college, particularly the animal husbandry majors. Reliability indexes were also determined using the Cronbach Alpha Test and pre-tested at Sta. Catalina, Ilocos Sur. The results were considered before the final survey.

Statistical Treatment of Data

The data gathered were statistically treated with frequencies, percentages, and rank orders.

Ethical considerations

Both the institution and the researchers also ensure the safety of all those associated with the research and consider relevant ethical guidelines in designing and conducting the study. The principles of confidentiality of information gathered from the respondents, prevention of risk or harm, voluntary participation, and other humane treatments were considered in the conduct of the research.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 presents the demographic Characteristics of Native Chicken Respondents in Ilocos Sur. Most of the respondents are female (63 or 58.33%). This may be because the males are busy in their farming since most of them are farmers. Female respondents from the 2nd District of Ilocos are out-of-school youth and the rest are members of the 4P's beneficiaries. Female respondents on the other hand are mostly prefer foods for the family and practiced some cultural practices in the use of native chicken. As to age level, most of the respondents belong to the age bracket of 41-50 years (33 or 30.56%) followed by the age bracket of 31-40 (25 or 23.15%).

Table 1. Demographic Characteristics of Native Chicken Respondents in Ilocos Sur

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Sex		
Male	45	41.67
Female	63	58.33
Age		
60 - above	14	12.96
51-60	21	21.30
41-50	33	30.56
31-40	25	23.15
21-30	15	13.89
Civil Status		
Married	69	63.89
Widow/Widower	15	13.89
Single	24	22.22
Number of Family Members		
10- Above	12	11.11
7-9	17	15.74
4-6	51	47.22
1-3	28	25.93
Source of Income		
Employed	33	30.56
Self-employed	75	69.44
Monthly Income		
25,001 – above	11	10.19
15,001-25,000	11	10.19
5,001- 15,000	29	26.85
Below 5,000	57	52.77

This means that this group is mature enough to do the work, particularly in the preparation of foods and some rituals. In terms of status, the majority of respondents are married (69 or 63.89%). Married individuals tend to be concerned about how to prepare food and provide the basic health needs of the family. As regards the number of family members, most of the respondents belong to the ranged of 4-6 members (51 or 47.22%) followed by 1-3 (28 or 25.93%) family members. This indicates that the native chicken respondents belong to an average number where most of the families can afford to maintain a living either in economic or social well-being. Meanwhile, most of them are self-employed indicating that the respondents are capable of earning a living by generating income through their initiatives and perseverance.

Lastly, most of the respondents are earning a monthly income with an average of lower than 5,000.00. According to them, the amount they earned is just enough for the family. Aside from this, they are raising animals and planting vegetables in addition to the earnings derived from other forms of farming activities.

Native Chicken Preferences

Most of the respondents claimed, they are buying native chicken (65 or 60.19%), and the rest, are raising native chicken (43 or 39.81%). This denotes that there is a need to introduce the raising of native chickens in the different municipalities. The introduction of native chicken on free-range is self-sufficient and healthier where they are free to look for their food.

When asked about their food preferences, they claimed that all the family members eat native chicken (88 or 81.48%) and the rest of the respondents reacted that they are not eating native chicken (20 or 18.52%). There are several reasons why the respondents are buying or eating native chicken. According to them, they buy or eat native chicken because it is organically grown, has a unique taste, has low-fat content, leanness, and pigmentation/color characteristics of the meat. They also prefer to buy or eat either the rooster or the hen and usually prefer to cook native chicken depending on its availability.

Food Preferences of Native Chicken

The native chicken was prepared and cooked locally for family occasions or ordinary meals served daily. Dishes prepared using native chicken were tinola followed by adobo, "sapsapuriket" and "fried" and the least prepared were "binakol" and "sarabasab". These native dishes were common as family food, particularly served during the meal.

Food Cultural Beliefs & Utilization of Native Chicken

In terms of food, cultural beliefs and how native chicken was utilized were also known during the interview. The respondents also stated that native chicken is being consumed as a dish for mothers during the postnatal period as rank no. 1.

Table 2. Dishes prepared for native Chicken

Name of the Recipe	Frequency	Rank
Pinaupo so Asin (Broiled)	7	10
Tinola	69	1
Adobo	65	2
Sapsapuriket	47	3.5
Linambong (Boiled)	8	8.5
Pinikpikan	6	11
Sinampalokan	12	6
Ginataa	11	7
Binakol	1	13.5
Kalderata	8	8.5
Sarabasab	1	13.5
Inihaw (30	5
Kilawen (Fresh)	4	12
Prito (Fried)	47	3.5

This indicates that eating native chicken during the postnatal period "*tanggad*" particularly serving native chicken soup to mothers is believed to help promote lactation. [11]. In addition, the meat of the hen is also served to women who underwent labor recently and it was believed that the meat is not only easy to digest but also helps lactating mothers recover quickly [12].

Aside from this, the native chicken was also prepared, cooked, and served after planting rice "*lamusa*" and this is rank no. 2, it can also be consumed as food to restore strength after sickness and a sign of hospitality was rank no.3.5 respectively. The native chicken was also served as meals to visitors during special occasions like fiesta, weddings, birthdays, etc. This indicates that as part of Filipino culture and Filipino traditions particularly in the celebration of different colorful festivities, food served is one of our cultural practices to show our love, admiration, closeness, and hospitality to visitors. Locals also believe that consuming native chicken at a wedding ceremony will remove any bad luck for the couple [13]. This also coincides with the findings of [7], which stated that chickens are also sacrificed as part of the *Nandi panduga* (hill broom festival) used before harvesting hill broom

Table 3. Food Cultural Beliefs and Utilization of Native Chicken

Event	Iloko term used to name the activity	Frequency	Rank
Prenatal	Sultop (egg)	17	11
Postnatal	Tanggad	49	1
Wedding	Inlamao wenno kinilnat	20	9
Restoring strength after sickness	Pagpapiaksa ti masakit	35	3.5
Birthday	Kasangay	33	5
Sending off	Panagparubuat	13	10
Hospitality	Panagsangaili	35	3.5
Fiesta	Panagfiesta	30	7
Thanksgiving	Panagyaman	28	8
Before planting	Kuskusip	32	6
After planting	Lamusa/Agpakpak/Agmayo	37	2

Cultural Beliefs and Practices in the use of Live Native Chicken

Native chicken breeds have significant socio-cultural values and religious significance [14]-[16] among rural communities, and a few religious taboos associated with consuming chicken meat and eggs to improve breeds' lack. The use of native chicken breeds is highly valued locally for local rituals and festivals. Due to its usefulness, the price of desi- chicken (a native breed to India) is double the price at local markets during festivals. Depending on the native chicken breeds as per the situation and context of local rituals/festivals [7].

Table 4.

Cultural Beliefs in the use of Live Native Chicken

Event	F	R
Wake/Burial	29	2
Cultivating the Land	19	4
Harvest	22	3
Agricultural ritual performed in the rice fields after the transplanting of rice	17	5
Offering to the dead ancestors for a bountiful harvest	3	12
Offering during masses	13	8
Folk Healing (witchcraft)	53	1
Newly acquired vehicles	15	7
Spirit living in the tree, rocks, rivers, etc	6	9.5
Protection from evil elements	2	13
Pre/newly build a structure	16	6
Doing any improvement in an area	6	9.5
Rituals during delivery	5	11

Based on the result of the interview, analysis of data reveals that live native chickens were sacrificed and used mostly for folk healing, traditional medicine for witchcraft, and black magic. Either black or red (old) is used to extricate

someone from the spell of witchcraft and black magic [12]. This is also followed by utilizing native chicken during the wake/burial. Any type of native chicken is sacrificed after three days of the demise of any family member if one member of the family gets sick. Native chickens are also cooked and served to mark the start of agriculture activities as a new business-like harvesting, cultivating the land, and performing other activities on the agricultural land. Other uses of native chicken either black or red color roosters offer a chicken to the local deity in case someone gets sick or has bad luck. In addition, the indigenous communities of the region not only consume native chicken and eggs but also use them extensively in rituals to appease Gods, the spirits of ancestors, and nature and protect against demons and evil spirits [7].

Table 5. Recommendations for native chicken products for development

Products Recommended	F	R
Dressed (Fresh or frozen)	49	1
Roasted/Barbecue	35	3
Native chicken cubes/broth	41	2
Tinola mix	32	5.5
Bottled/canned native chicken adobo	20	10
Native Chicken Tucino	26	7
Native Chicken Longganiza	32	5.5
Native Chicken Embutido	23	8
Native Chicken Ham	20	10
Native Chicken Nuggets	21	9
Sapsapuriket in Bottle	33	4
Native Chicken Etag	9	14
Pinikpikan	11	13
Chicken feet/wings	18	12

Recommendations for the Development of Native Chicken Products

When the respondents were asked about their recommendations, most of them suggested that dressed chicken either fresh or frozen be available in the market is rank no. 1, followed by the development of value-added products like native chicken cubes/. broth, native chicken barbecue/roasted, “*sapsapuriket*” in a bottle, tinola mix, and native chicken longganiza. The least is the native chicken etag.

Table 6.

Problems encountered in the use of Native Chicken

Problems	F	R
The price of native chicken is expensive	51	2
The budget is not enough to buy native chicken	18	4
A limited supply of native chicken in the market/difficult to find	59	1
No dressed native chicken meat	35	3
Difficult to cook native chicken	11	6
Small sizes compared to the usual /available in the market	12	5

Problems Encountered in the use of Native Chicken

The next table displays the problems encountered in the use of native chicken. Based on the respondent’s view, limited supply of native chicken in the market/difficult to find as rank no. 1, followed by the price is high and no dressed native chicken meat found in the market as rank no. 3. The least problem encountered is that native chicken is difficult to cook.

Many consumers are not buying native chicken because of the meat texture (dry and tough) and high price despite having a good flavor and unique meat properties [2]. This has led to a slowly increasing preference for quality livestock chickens. Aside from this, the majority of previous studies on native chickens were related to housewives’ awareness and use of native chickens [17], the consumption patterns, increased chicken consumption in Korea [18], and meat quality and sensory characteristics of native chickens [2]. With the recommendation and suggestions solicited from respondents despite its huge potential, the native chicken industry challenges everybody the need to

undertake production studies to address the above-cited problems.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATION

From the abovementioned results, the majority of the native chicken respondents are male, ages ranging from 41-50 years old, married, with 4-6 family members, self-employed, and have a monthly income below 5,000.00. Respondents’ buying preferences for native chicken are originally grown, have a unique taste, have low-fat content, leanness, and pigmentation of the meat while *tinola* and *adobo* are the consumers’ food preferences. Native chicken consumption helps individuals to obtain high-quality protein food and its utilization largely depends upon the occasion it serves. Native chicken has socio-cultural, religious, and medicinal significance among rural communities and also occupies a very special place in the ancient culture and traditions of the Ilocano. The supply of native chicken in the market is limited.

A need for dissemination of the importance of native chicken in terms of food, folk healing, and buying preferences. Native chicken has great contributions to culture, art, cuisine, science, and religion. Therefore, it necessitates being preserved. New cooking or value-added native chicken products to be developed as additional income or for commercialization. Dressed native chicken either fresh or frozen is recommended for commercialization. Raising native chicken catering to the demand of customers can be attained by proper dissemination of the importance of native chicken production. Though the research was only limited to the food and cultural significance, another study is recommended to focus on the qualitative aspects, particularly on the lived experiences of the participants.

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