

Food Tourism in the Province of Isabela

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Ms. Katherine Aggabao Alejandro is a dedicated educator and academic leader with over two decades of continuous service at Isabela State University. She holds a Bachelor of Science in Tourism (Centro Escolar University, 1997), a Bachelor of Science in Education (Isabela Colleges Foundation, 1998), a Master of Arts in Education (University of La Salette, 2004), finished academic requirements in Master of Science in Hotel Management major in Tourism Management (Centro Escolar University, 2016), and is currently pursuing a Ph.D. in Southeast Asian Studies (Centro Escolar University). Ms. Alejandro began her career at Isabela State University in 1998 and has progressed through academic ranks from Instructor I to Assistant Professor III, a position she currently holds. Her work includes curriculum development, teaching, student mentoring, and participation in institutional planning and accreditation activities. She passed the Licensure Examination for Teachers (RA 1080) in 1998. An active lifelong learner, Katherine has completed numerous professional development programs, including international and regional conferences and technical trainings in agri-ecotourism, travel

management, online learning systems, and hospitality trends. She is a member of the Isabela State University Faculty Association and contributes to academic and community initiatives in Echague, Isabela. Fluent in English and rooted in her Ibanag heritage, she balances academic life with family commitments and is mother to three children: Bianka Katrina, Bea Karina, and Kevin Benedict. Katherine remains committed to excellence in teaching, research, and community service.

Introduction

Food tourism in Isabela is a great way to experience the province's one-of-a-kind food culture. Food tourism, which involves traveling to different places to try and enjoy local foods and drinks, lets people experience Isabela's diverse tastes and cooking styles. This Philippine state is known for its many crops, which support its lively food scene. Isabela is famous for making rice and for serving special meals that blend old and new cooking methods.

The different tastes and ingredients of Isabela's local food make it possible to enjoy its rich farming history. The province's cooks are creative, and dishes like empanada, longganisa, and pinakbet show off the province's farming wealth. Also, food is often a central theme at local events, which

attracts food lovers who want to taste and make traditional dishes.

As food tourism becomes more popular, Isabela's unique food gives people a chance to celebrate local customs and bring tourists to the area. (Subadra, 2024). Knowing why culinary heritage matters in this case will help you understand and value the cultural stories that come with each dish. Isabela's food history shows the links between food, history, and community. This sets the stage for a closer look at how the province honors and preserves these traditions.

Isabela's Food History

Isabela's food history is a mix of the area's history and local customs that make the food there so special. Different cultures, such as indigenous customs and items left behind by colonizers, have shaped the province. This means that there are many different kinds of traditional foods in the area. Rice and fish are staples in the local diet, and the Cagayan River makes fresh ingredients available for often-honored community meals.

Isabela's agriculture is well known for traditional foods like "empanada," which has a tasty filling inside a flaky crust. This dish uses many locally sourced products, such as meat and vegetables, which is how farming is done in the area. "Tinola" is another loved food. It is made with chicken, ginger, and leafy greens, and families come together to enjoy this filling meal, which shows how important it is to eat with others.

Isabela's food is more than just something to eat; it reflects the province's past and who they are. Every dish has a story that brings people together and makes them feel like they belong. One straightforward way to show this link is at local festivals, where food traditions are shared and honored. These events celebrate Isabela's rich food culture and bring in tourists who want to taste and learn about the province's traditional meals. As events unfold, they encourage people to learn about and enjoy the food traditions that are still very much alive in Isabela (Brako, 2024).



Local Food Festivals

Isabela has many local festivals that celebrate food. These events are bright and colorful expressions of the province's culinary history and community spirit. People from all over come to these events, like the Isabela Food Festival, which features traditional foods made with local products. They want to taste the rich flavors that make Isabela special. Food tastings, cooking contests, and cultural performances are standard at festivals. These activities create a lively atmosphere that makes people from the area, and visitors, feel comfortable participating in the local food culture.

The "Pattong Festival" is an important event that honors Isabela's agricultural roots and celebrates the rice harvest. This event features rice dishes and celebrates the importance of farming to the local economy. People who visit the food stalls, workshops, and hands-on events can better understand the hard work that goes into making their meals, helping them connect more with the area.

These events have a significant impact on local tourism because they encourage people to visit Isabela and try the different kinds of food there. By showcasing regional food, events make Isabela better known as a destination for food tourism, which benefits the businesses and artists who participate. The fun people have at these events makes them want to come back, which makes guests feel loyal (Carvache-Franco et al., 2023).

Isabela's food traditions are honored by festivals. These naturally encourage visitors to visit the province's most famous food spots, so the trip from the festival to the dining experience is a smooth transition into the next section.

Well-Known Places to Get Food

Isabela is proud of the many famous restaurants that show off the island's excellent food scene. The province's farming strengths are showcased by local restaurants and eateries, which offer tourists the chance to enjoy fresh, farm-to-table experiences. Restaurants like The Don's and Babi's

Lechon are known for serving classic meals made with ingredients from around Isabela so that people can enjoy local flavors.

Food markets also boost the province's food tourism attraction. Isabela Public Market is an excellent example of a lively market where people can look at and buy a wide range of items, such as fresh fruits and vegetables, fish, and local dishes. Here, visitors can learn about the special foods that make Isabela's cooking unique by talking to sellers. The lively setting makes the experience better because the sounds and smells make you feel like you are really there.

While visiting these food spots, people may encounter issues that affect their enjoyment of their meals. If people do not know about Isabela's local food or if the quality is not always good, they might not enjoy everything the island has to offer. It is important to address these issues so that food tourism continues to grow in the area and Isabela remains a popular place to eat as it is now. As the local community and partners work to improve the food tourism experience, they should consider how to address and resolve these issues in the future.

Problems with Isabela Food Tourism

Isabela's food tourism faces several problems that could hinder its growth. A significant problem is the lack of infrastructure and mobility. It can be hard for tourists to try local food in many rural areas because they are hard to reach. Visitors have a hard time trying all the different foods available in the province because the roads are in poor condition and public transit options are limited.

In Isabela, food tourism is also greatly affected by worries about sustainability. As the demand for locally grown food increases, resources may be used excessively, especially in farming and fishing communities. Ensuring that these methods remain usable in the long term is important for protecting Isabela's food history and the environment.

These problems are made worse by having to compete with other areas. Other provinces might have better food tourism plans and marketing,

which could draw attention away from what Isabela has to offer. Isabela needs to work on its infrastructure and sustainability problems, and then promote its unique food experiences and build a clear character.

Dealing with these food tourism problems is not just a matter of overcoming difficulties; it also makes it possible for food tourism to grow and try new things. By focusing on solutions, stakeholders can make Isabela a major food destination in the Philippines. This will open up possibilities for future changes that will improve the province's total food tourism experience.

The Future of Food Tourism

Isabela's food tourism will likely do very well in the future because the province is proud of its food heritage and seeks new ways to grow. By leveraging Isabela's unique flavors and farming strengths, local producers and companies can create more engaging food experiences that draw locals and tourists from around the world. Working closely with people in the province will be very important to this project, as it will ensure that food tourism is grounded in the province's authentic culture and customs.

If farmers, restaurants, and tourism businesses work together more, Isabela's food culture can be better experienced through farm-to-table programs, guided food tours, and hands-on cooking classes. For example, creating food trails that connect farms to restaurants might make visitors more likely to explore new areas of the province while eating seasonal meals made with fresh, local products. Isabela's food is a good place to try something new. It has unique tastes and cooking styles that come from the island's history (Handayani et al., 2022).

As Isabela's food tourism changes, it will be important to create a space where people can work together. This method not only enhances the guest experience; it also boosts the local economy and gives communities the power to take ownership of their food identity. In the end, as partners come together around a common goal for food tourism, Isabela can become a unique travel destination, which will lead to long-term growth

and enrich the province's history. The final thoughts on the possible effects and benefits of food tourism in Isabela will be based on this collaborative work (Noguer-Juncà & Fusté-forné, 2023).

Conclusion

In the end, food tourism in Isabela is a great way to honor and share the province's food history. This article has examined how Isabela's special foods and old-fashioned cooking can attract tourists and help people learn more about the local culture. Key results show that these food traditions should be protected and shared because they are more than just recipes—they are an important part of the community's identity.

As Isabela moves on, it is important to make fundamental changes to improve its food tourism. This means investing in infrastructure that makes it easier to access rural food adventures and helping local producers showcase their goods. Also, involving the community in tourism projects can give people a sense of power and make them feel they own their food history (Wijaya et al., 2023).

The province is full of promise that has not been fully realized yet. Isabela can make fun experiences that will make people want to come back by supporting local restaurants, fairs, and other food-related events. Everyone, from local governments and companies to community members, should support Isabela's culinary identity.

In the end, the only way to boost food tourism in Isabela is to protect the area's rich food history so that these customs stay alive for many years to come. With hard work, Isabela can become a place where tourists enjoy tasty food and the special stories and culture that make it unique. (Jamaluddin et al., 2024).

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