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# The Cultural Significance of Selected Caviteño Dishes Dishes During Family Celebrations

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## ABSTRACT

Food is a central element of Filipino culture, serving not only as sustenance but also as an expression of heritage, identity, and social relationships. Despite the continued presence of traditional dishes in family gatherings, limited research has explored the cultural significance of specific Caviteño foods in celebratory contexts. This study examined the cultural significance of selected Caviteño dishes during family celebrations in Cavite, Philippines, and investigated their association with various family occasions. Guided by the view of food as a cultural symbol that preserves traditions and strengthens social bonds, the study employed a quantitative descriptive-correlational research design. Data were gathered through a validated survey questionnaire administered to Filipino respondents aged 18 years and above using convenience sampling. Descriptive statistics and the chi-square test of independence were used to analyze the data. Results identified kilawin, calandracas, pancit, adobo seca, and kakanin as the most preferred traditional Caviteño dishes across their respective categories. Birthdays, graduations, weddings, Christmas, and New Year were reported as the most frequently celebrated family occasions. Significant associations were found between soup dishes and birthdays, as well as between main dishes and both weddings and Christmas celebrations. However, most dish categories showed no significant relationship with specific family occasions.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Gastronomy As Doreen Fernandez (1994) famously posited, food serves as history, social bond, culture, and identity within the Philippine socio-cultural landscape. While food primarily fulfills a biological necessity for survival, in the Filipino context, it acts as an enduring symbol of communal identity and shared cultural values during celebrations. From major religious festivals and weddings to routine familial gatherings, culinary practices constitute the emotional and visual centerpiece of social events, symbolizing prosperity, longevity, familial solidarity, affection, and socio-cultural adaptability (Mangompit, 2024).

Within contemporary tourism literature, culinary offerings are increasingly recognized as critical drivers of destination attractiveness and post-visit behavior. Maraña et al. (2024) demonstrated a strong correlation between tourists' gastronomic expenditure, overall destination satisfaction, and behavioral intent to revisit. As an experiential form of travel centered on exploring local foodways, food tourism has gained substantial momentum among domestic and international travelers (Gregana & Ylagan, 2024). Consequently, regional culinary traditions and celebratory food practices have evolved into key strategic assets for local cultural preservation and economic development.

In the Philippines, food tourism serves as a vital vector for cultural preservation and local economic growth. Iconic regional festivals—such as the Pahiyas Festival in Quezon and the Kadayawan Festival in Davao—vividly demonstrate the interplay between gastronomy, agricultural production, and traditional socio-cultural practices (Luna et al., 2023). On the international stage, Filipino gastronomy is progressively earning recognition for its rich diversity and historical fusion of indigenous, Asian, and Hispanic influences, though it remains underrepresented relative to other Southeast Asian cuisines (Gutierrez et al., 2022). Domestically, however, culinary traditions carry profound symbolic weight, reinforcing family cohesion, social unity, and collective identity (Elnagar & Khalaf, 2023). This dichotomy between regional cultural depth and international visibility highlights the imperative to examine the structural and symbolic roles of Filipino dishes in celebratory contexts.

Beyond mere sustenance, celebratory foodways in the Philippines shape emotional bonds among family members, facilitate the intergenerational transmission of heritage, and preserve respect for ancestral customs through passed-down recipes and culinary rituals (Bartolome, 2024). While existing scholarship extensively addresses destination branding and tourist satisfaction within food tourism, empirical research explicitly connecting the localized symbolic meanings of celebratory dishes to broader cultural tourism practices remains scarce.

In the province of Cavite, food culture is deeply intertwined with local history, expressing heritage, community identity, and social cohesion during celebratory occasions. Institutional initiatives by local government units and provincial cultural programs actively promote Cavite's culinary heritage, recognizing that traditional dishes carry historical narratives that reinforce community pride and belonging across generations (Provincial Government of Cavite, 2021). Recent empirical inquiries into Cavite's culinary landscape further emphasize that traditional dishes possess aesthetic, social, and historical significance, serving as tangible conduits for social continuity within kinship networks (Aquino et al., 2025). These practices foster a distinct sense of place among Caviteños, transforming social gatherings into spaces of collective memory and cultural reinforcement.

Despite the recognized cultural richness of Cavite's gastronomy, there remains a critical gap in academic literature regarding the systematic identification of specific traditional Caviteño dishes served during distinct types of family celebrations, as well as the statistical or conceptual relationships between specific menu selections and event typologies.

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Understanding these social and celebratory mechanics provides essential empirical foundation for food tourism researchers, heritage managers, and destination marketers seeking to leverage intangible cultural heritage for sustainable tourism development.

This research was conducted in Cavite, Philippines—a province characterized by its historic contribution to Philippine independence, geographical proximity to the national capital region, and diverse culinary topography. Ranging from coastal seafood traditions to Hispanic-infused heritage recipes, Cavite presents an ideal empirical setting to investigate the intersections of family celebratory traditions, local gastronomy, and cultural heritage tourism.

This study evaluated the cultural significance and structural role of selected traditional Caviteño dishes in family celebrations. Specifically, the study sought to answer the following research questions:

a. What traditional Caviteño dishes are prepared during family gatherings in terms of:
    - 1.1. Appetizers;
    - 1.2. Soups;
    - 1.3. Main dishes;
    - 1.4. Desserts; and
    - 1.5. Beverages?
b. What types of family gatherings are celebrated by Caviteño families in terms of:
    - 2.1. Personal/Social occasions (e.g., birthdays, anniversaries, reunions); and
    - 2.2. Cultural/Traditional events (e.g., town *fiestas*, religious holidays)?
c. Is there a significant relationship between the preparation of selected traditional Caviteño dishes and the specific type of family celebration being conducted?

This study contributes to the literature on culinary heritage, cultural anthropology, and sustainable tourism in several ways: Academic and Theoretical Contributions: It expands existing scholarship on Southeast Asian foodways by establishing an empirical link between specific dish classifications and socio-cultural event typologies. Heritage Preservation: It documents traditional Caviteño recipes and food preparation customs, supporting the preservation of intangible cultural heritage against urban modernization and culinary homogenization. Tourism Policy and Industry Stakeholders: It provides evidence-based insights for local government units (LGUs), tourism boards, and community-based hospitality enterprises in Cavite to develop authentic culinary tourism experiences grounded in local social practices.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Gastronomy Food extends far beyond basic physiological nourishment (Francis, 2025); it functions as an essential structural element of human celebrations across cultures. Across ancestral culinary traditions and modern family meals, foodways systematically embody cultural heritage, social stratification, and individual identity (Caruso, 2023). Beyond fostering communal cohesion, food served during special occasions acts as a tangible expression of hospitality, cultural continuity, and shared values (Elwan, 2025).

International literature highlights how specific culinary items become institutionalized within national celebratory narratives through historical, symbolic, and practical mechanisms. For instance, the central role of roasted turkey in American Thanksgiving illustrates how food choices evolve into cultural imperatives (Wallendorf & Arnould, 1991). Seventeenth-century harvest logs document wild fowl consumption among Pilgrims and the Wampanoag people (Silverman, 2025), a practice later popularized in nineteenth-century literary works and cookbooks by figures like Sarah Josepha Hale (Siskind, 1992). The yield capacity of the bird provided a practical solution for large family assemblies, while its native

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abundance in North America reinforced its national symbolic value (Handwerk, 2015). Over time, the consumption of turkey transformed from a pragmatic meal into a institutionalized ritual symbolizing communal gratitude, reinforcing social cohesion, and codifying national identity (Wallendorf & Arnould, 1991). Similar ritualized practices demonstrate that celebratory dishes carry semiotic meanings that transform biological nourishment into shared cultural memory (Caruso, 2023).

While extensive research emphasizes the role of Filipino gastronomy in private, family-centric assemblies such as birthdays, town fiestas, and weddings (Mangompit, 2022), public and civic spheres utilize food for distinct ideological purposes. For example, civic events organized by local government units—such as the Provincial Government of Cavite showcasing regional specialties like Pansit Pusit, Pansit Puso, Imus Longganisa, and traditional kakanin during Filipino Food Month—reframe culinary heritage as an instrument of public policy, civic pride, and regional tourism development (Abrina, 2022).

This aligns with global research on gastrodiplomacy and soft power, where state actors strategically deploy local food traditions to communicate institutional legitimacy, inclusivity, and regional distinction (Springer, 2023). Contrasting private family celebrations with public civic events reveals a critical socio-cultural duality: whereas familial foodways emphasize emotional continuity and interpersonal bonding, political and civic spaces deploy culinary heritage as an asset for governance, identity construction, and cultural preservation. Placing Filipino foodways within both private-communal and public-civic frameworks underscores its broader socio-political scope.

Traditional Filipino food remains central to family life, functioning as a medium for intergenerational heritage, unity, and social obligation (Dalistan, 2025). In the province of Cavite, local cuisine reflects a complex historical trajectory shaped by Hispanic colonial influences, maritime coastal environments, and localized family recipes: Appetizers: Delicacies such as kilawin, tahong chips, and quesillo highlight Cavite's marine resources and traditional dairy preparation techniques (Eats Cavite, 2022; Vista Land International, 2023). Soups: Comfort dishes including almondigas and calandracas demonstrate the historical synthesis of Spanish culinary techniques and local agricultural inputs (Quirino, 2020; Veneracion, 2021). Main Dishes: Festive centerpieces—such as adobo seca, Imus longganisa, malabanos, specialized noodle dishes (pancit pusit, pancit luglog, pancit puso), pipian, tinapang Salinas, and Valenciana—reflect the province's agricultural diversity, seafood preservation traditions, and communal celebratory rice dishes (Golangco, 2021; Lutong Cavite, 2025; Rappler, 2023; Yummy.ph, 2020). Desserts: Traditional confections including bibingkoy, bibingka samala, chin chao, Digman halo-halo, and varied kakanin instill a sense of cultural nostalgia and festivity (Manalo, 2023). Beverages: Regional beverages such as kapeng barako complete the dining ritual, signaling Southern Luzon hospitality and local agricultural identity (Wow Batangas, 2025).

Collectively, these specialized dishes illustrate how Caviteño culinary traditions function as lived expressions of community identity and historical continuity.

In the Philippines, life-cycle milestones and family gatherings are inherently socio-centric, transforming personal transitions into broad communal events: Baptisms / Christenings: While celebrating a child's spiritual initiation, baptisms operate as social assemblies that integrate godparents (ninangs/ninongs) and extended kin into the child's support network (Aracelli, 2021). Birthdays: Individual birth anniversaries expand into neighborhood-wide celebrations through shared meals (handaan), communal games, and gift exchanges, strengthening interpersonal solidarity (Bellrose, 2023; Denilla, 2023). Graduations: Academic achievements trigger collective celebratory feasts that express family pride and social

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mobility, despite the financial demands often associated with hosting such events (Carlos, 2023). Weddings and Anniversaries: Matrimonial ceremonies unite extended families, godparents, and community members, reaffirming inter-family alliances and long-term socio-marital stability (Barong Tagalog, 2020; Nowack, 2025). Family Reunions: Structured reunions serve as deliberate mechanisms to maintain extended kinship networks across geographically dispersed family units (Delmonte & Cabaguing, 2024). Memorial Services and Death Anniversaries: Post-mortem rituals—such as novenas and memorial meals—demonstrate how grief is collectively processed, providing spiritual and emotional support through shared dining (Barbadillo, 2024).

Regional gastronomy remains central to these social gatherings, operating as both physical sustenance and a semiotic vehicle for cultural heritage (Mercado & Andalecio, 2020). Filipino dining traditions—such as communal kamayan feasts—reify family bonds and transform meals into social institutions (Augustin, 2024; Inquiro, 2025; Poras, 2024).

Although existing scholarship establishes that food is essential to social life (Caruso, 2023), empirical literature explicitly measuring the relationship between specific dish typologies (appetizers, soups, main courses, desserts, beverages) and specific family event categories (personal/social vs. cultural/traditional) remains limited. This review provides the theoretical framework to empirically evaluate whether traditional Caviteño dishes exhibit statistically significant relationships with specific types of family celebrations.

### 2.1. Conceptual Framework

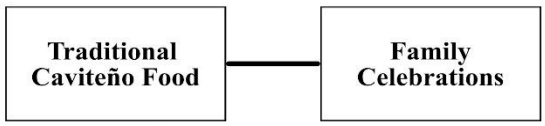



**Figure 1.** Conceptual Framework Showing the Relationship Between Traditional Caviteño Food and Familyebrations

This study empirically investigated the relationship between traditional Caviteño gastronomy and family celebratory practices, this study employed a quantitative, descriptive-correlational research design. This framework was suited for systematically measuring, operationalizing, and statistically analyzing the association between regional dish typologies and specific family event categories using numerical data derived from respondent evaluations. By adopting a correlational design, the research objectively tests for statistically significant relationships between these two key variables without manipulating the research environment, thereby providing an empirical basis to evaluate the socio-cultural function of Caviteño culinary heritage during family assemblies.

## 3. METHODS

This study utilized a quantitative, descriptive-correlational research design. This framework was adopted to systematically measure, quantify, and evaluate the statistical relationship between traditional Caviteño gastronomic practices (independent construct) and family celebratory typologies (dependent construct) using numerical data derived from structured respondent evaluations.

The target population comprised the residents of the province of Cavite, Philippines, recorded at 4,344,829 individuals based on the 2020 Census of Population and Housing (Philippine Statistics Authority, 2020). Using the Raosoft sample size calculator with a 95% confidence level and a 5% margin of error, a minimum recommended sample size of 385

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participants was established.

Participants were recruited using a non-probability convenience sampling technique, selecting individuals based on their geographic availability, direct involvement in Caviteño family celebrations, and willingness to participate. Because non-probability sampling does not afford every individual an equal probability of selection, the calculated sample size served as a methodological target to enhance statistical power rather than an absolute guarantee of population representativeness. To mitigate inherent sampling bias, data collection was strategically diversified across multiple municipal jurisdictions and demographic segments within the province.

The primary data collection tool was a structured, self-administered questionnaire specifically developed to capture objective, quantifiable data aligned with the study's core research objectives. The instrument intentionally restricted demographic items to contextual variables relevant to the analytical framework: city/municipal residence, annual frequency of family gathering attendance, and direct exposure to traditional Caviteño cuisine.

The questionnaire was organized into three distinct sections: Part I: Contextual Information: Captured essential geographic and socio-cultural participation variables. Part II: Traditional Caviteño Dish Frequency Checklist: Evaluated the preparation and consumption frequency of regional dishes across five culinary categories (Appetizers, Soups, Main Dishes, Desserts, and Beverages) using a Likert-type frequency scale. Part III: Family Gathering Typologies: Assessed the frequency and engagement in family celebrations categorized into Personal/Social events (e.g., birthdays, weddings, anniversaries) and Cultural/Traditional occasions (e.g., town fiestas, religious holidays).

Instrument development followed multi-stage protocol guidelines suitable for both descriptive summary metrics and inferential bivariate testing (Klockmann et al., 2023).

To establish content validity, the initial draft underwent expert evaluation by three subject-matter experts in tourism, culinary heritage, and quantitative research methods. The experts assessed item clarity, domain relevance, and cultural appropriateness, aligning with established content validation procedures (Fernández-Gómez et al., 2020; Pérez-Rivas et al., 2023).

Following expert refinement, a pilot test was conducted with 10 eligible respondents drawn from the target population to evaluate item readability and logistics. Internal consistency of the Likert-scale items was measured using Cronbach's alpha (α), ensuring that the sub-scales demonstrated acceptable construct reliability prior to full field administration.

Ethical safeguards were strictly enforced throughout all phases of the investigation: Informed Consent & Voluntary Participation: Participants—comprising adult Filipinos aged 18 years and above—were provided an explicit informed consent form detailing the study's objectives, voluntary nature, and their unconditional right to withdraw at any time without penalty (Chali et al., 2022). Data Privacy Compliance: In strict adherence to Republic Act No. 10173, otherwise known as the Data Privacy Act of 2012, all personal data were anonymized (National Privacy Commission, 2012). Data Storage and Confidentiality: Survey responses were collected solely for academic evaluation, stripped of personal identifiers, and stored on encrypted, password-protected systems accessible only to the primary research team.

Data collection was executed using a dual-mode survey administration strategy to maximize participant reach while minimizing interviewer bias: Electronic Administration: An electronic version of the validated questionnaire was deployed via Google Forms and distributed across digital channels, including Facebook, Instagram, and Messenger, consistent with post-pandemic survey practices in tourism research (Hong et al., 2022; Wu et al., 2022). Paper-Based Administration: Printed, self-administered survey forms were deployed in local

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communities to accommodate respondents with limited internet connectivity.

Prior to field deployment, the final operational setup was reviewed and approved by a consulting statistician. Data gathering was conducted over a structured timeframe, allowing respondents sufficient time for completion. The researchers directly monitored submission rates, audited completed forms for data integrity, and encoded raw responses into a standardized database for computational processing.

Data analysis was conducted using statistical tools matched to the operational level of measurement of each variable: Descriptive Statistics: Frequency distributions, percentages, and modes were computed to summarize categorical background data and identify central tendencies across the ordinal Likert-scale items evaluating dish preparation and event attendance. Inferential Statistics: To test statistically significant relationships between the categorical/ordinal dish preparation types and the family gathering typologies (Objective 3), the Chi-Square Test of Independence ($\chi^2$) was applied. Statistical significance was established at the standard threshold of $\alpha=0.05$.

## 4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The first part presented the traditional Caviteño dishes served during family gatherings in terms of appetizer, soup, main dish, and dessert.

Table 1. Traditional Caviteño Dishes Served During Family Gatherings

| Appetizer | Frequency | Persentage |
|---|---|---|
| Kilawin | 164 | 39.05% |
| Tahong Chips | 72 | 17.14% |
| Quesilio | 89 | 21.19% |
| Others | 95 | 22.62% |
| Total | 420 | 100% |
| Soup | Frequency | Persentage |
| Almondigas | 94 | 21.56% |
| Calandracas | 279 | 63.99% |
| Others | 63 | 14.45% |
| Total | 436 | 100% |
| Main Dish | Frequency | Persentage |
| Adobo Seca | 222 | 27.14% |
| Imus Longganisa | 73 | 8.92% |
| Malabanos | 9 | 1.10% |
| Pancit | 229 | 27.99% |
| Pipian | 66 | 8.07% |
| Tinapang Salinar | 42 | 5.13% |
| Valenciana | 114 | 13.94% |
| Others | 63 | 7.70% |
| Total | 818 | 100% |
| Dessert | Frequency | Persentage |
| Bibingkoy | 86 | 12.39% |
| Bibingka Samala | 163 | 23.49% |
| Chin Chao | 32 | 4.61% |
| Digman Halo Halo | 117 | 16.86% |
| Kakanin | 239 | 34.44% |
| Others | 57 | 8.21% |
| Total | 694 | 100% |

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The empirical findings revealed clear culinary preferences across the evaluated menu categories during Caviteño family assemblies: Appetizers: Kilawin emerged as the most frequently prepared appetizer among respondents. Soups: Calandracas was identified as the dominant soup selection. Main Dishes: Pancit (various regional variations) and Adobo Seca recorded the highest preparation frequencies. Desserts: Traditional kakanin (glutinous rice cakes) constituted the primary dessert choice.

These results indicate that traditional Caviteño dishes maintain a dominant position in contemporary family gatherings, reflecting sustained household adoption and established culinary familiarity within the province.

The pronounced preference for kilawin underscores the influence of geographic proximity and local resource availability on regional foodways. As Cavite is a coastal province, fresh seafood is readily accessible, directly driving the frequent integration of marine-based appetizers into familial celebratory menus.

Similarly, the prevalence of calandracas demonstrates the continuous preservation of heritage recipes across local households. The widespread acceptance of this traditional, Hispanic-influenced soup indicates that regional food traditions are actively reinforced through repeated preparation during social assemblies, functioning as a mechanism for intangible cultural heritage retention.

The selection of pancit and adobo seca as top main dishes highlights the dual interplay of pragmatic utility and cultural symbolism in celebratory menu planning: Pancit: Represents both symbolic significance—traditionally associated with longevity, good health, and shared fortune—and practical utility, as its high-yield nature is uniquely suited for large, extended-family gatherings. Adobo Seca: Demonstrates regional culinary adaptation, serving as a localized Caviteño variation of a national dish that reinforces regional identity through specific preparation techniques.

Furthermore, the high preparation frequency of kakanin illustrates the enduring relevance of traditional rice-based confections in Filipino celebrations. These desserts remain highly accessible, cost-effective, and deeply tied to festivity. This finding aligns with Ocampo (as cited in De Villa et al., 2022), who emphasized that kakanin serves as a critical vector for preserving Filipino culinary heritage and national identity through indigenous agricultural ingredients and ancestral cooking methods.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that food selection during Caviteño family celebrations is governed by an integrated matrix of cultural tradition, geographic accessibility, socio-economic practicality, and symbolic meaning. These results corroborate the observations of Mangompit (2024), who posited that celebratory foodways reflect shared socio-cultural identity and values, as well as Vista Land International (2023), which highlighted local delicacies as tangible manifestations of regional heritage within communal gatherings.

Table 2. Frequency of Family Gatherings

Personal Variables

| Variable | Mean | Std. Deviation | Interpretation |
|---|---|---|---|
| Birthday | 4.483 | 0.784 | Often |
| Reunion | 3.317 | 1.124 | Sometimes |
| Graduation | 3.706 | 1.134 | Often |
| Wedding | 3.501 | 1.231 | Often |
| Death Anniversaries | 3.343 | 1.240 | Sometimes |
| Overall | 3.67 | 1.058 | Often |

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Social Variables

| Variable | Mean | Std. Deviation | Interpretation |
|---|---|---|---|
| Christmas | 4.738 | 0.726 | Always |
| Baptism | 3.590 | 1.217 | Often |
| Holy Week | 3.665 | 1.212 | Often |
| New Year | 4.725 | 0.723 | Always |
| Undas | 3.886 | 1.191 | Often |
| Overall | 4.121 | 0.985 | Often |

The empirical assessment of family gathering typologies revealed distinct patterns of observance across personal life-cycle milestones and socio-cultural celebrations: Personal Gatherings: Individual life-cycle events—specifically birthdays and academic graduations—recorded the highest occurrence rates (often celebrated). Conversely, extended kinship events, such as family reunions and post-mortem memorial rituals (death anniversaries), demonstrated lower, intermittent observance (sometimes observed). Social/Cultural Gatherings: Major socio-religious holidays—specifically Christmas and New Year—demonstrated universal, institutionalized participation (always celebrated). Secondary cultural and religious events, including baptisms, Holy Week observances, and All Saints'/Souls' Day (Undas), were maintained with high regularity (often observed).

The overall composite means indicated that while both personal and social event categories are regularly practiced among Caviteño households, social and cultural celebrations exhibit a higher, more uniform level of behavioral consistency.

The pronounced frequency of birthday and graduation celebrations underscores the deep cultural valuation placed on individual achievements within the Filipino family unit. These personal milestones serve as key social mechanisms for reaffirming familial support, facilitating intergenerational interaction, and strengthening intra-familial cohesion.

Simultaneously, the universal observance of Christmas and New Year highlights the dominant role of broader socio-religious traditions in shaping household activity. The higher composite mean recorded for social celebrations suggests that community-wide and religious holidays carry a higher degree of social imperative and collective obligation compared to discretionary personal gatherings.

These findings corroborate the conceptual framework of Delmonte and Cabaguing (2024), who emphasized that Filipino celebratory traditions operate as critical drivers of social capital, reinforcing kinship networks and broader community relationships. Furthermore, the central role of communal dining within these gatherings aligns with contemporary socio-cultural assessments (Manila Bulletin, 2024), which frame shared food consumption as a vital instrument for enacting hospitality, maintaining family solidarity, and preserving cultural identity across generations. Overall, the results confirm that family gatherings in Cavite fulfill dual socio-cultural functions—serving as spaces for interpersonal relationship maintenance and vehicles for intangible heritage preservation.

Table 3. Summary of Chi-Square Results

| Food Category | Occasion Variable | $\chi^2$ Value | p-value | Interpretation |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Appetizer | Birthday | 15.56 | 0.212 | Not Significant |

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| Food Category | Occasion Variable | $\chi^2$ Value | p-value | Interpretation |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Appetizer | Reunion | 9.97 | 0.619 | Not Significant |
| Appetizer | Graduation | 11.19 | 0.513 | Not Significant |
| Appetizer | Wedding | 13.56 | 0.329 | Not Significant |
| Appetizer | Death Anniversary | 16.86 | 0.155 | Not Significant |
| Soup | Birthday | 20.28 | 0.009 | Significant |
| Soup | Reunion | 3.27 | 0.916 | Not Significant |
| Soup | Graduation | 4.19 | 0.840 | Not Significant |
| Soup | Wedding | 7.87 | 0.446 | Not Significant |
| Soup | Death Anniversary | 4.38 | 0.822 | Not Significant |
| Main Dish | Birthday | 20.97 | 0.399 | Not Significant |
| Main Dish | Reunion | 19.87 | 0.466 | Not Significant |
| Main Dish | Graduation | 19.47 | 0.491 | Not Significant |
| Main Dish | Wedding | 35.34 | 0.018 | Significant |
| Main Dish | Death Anniversary | 14.84 | 0.786 | Not Significant |
| Desserts | Birthday | 20.07 | 0.066 | Not Significant |
| Desserts | Reunion | 11.99 | 0.446 | Not Significant |
| Desserts | Graduation | 7.07 | 0.853 | Not Significant |
| Desserts | Wedding | 4.74 | 0.966 | Not Significant |
| Desserts | Death Anniversary | 11.79 | 0.462 | Not Significant |
| Soup | Christmas (Noche Buena) | 12.44 | 0.133 | Not Significant |
| Soup | Baptism | 8.73 | 0.366 | Not Significant |
| Soup | Holy Week | 7.02 | 0.534 | Not Significant |
| Soup | New Year's Eve | 10.91 | 0.207 | Not Significant |
| Soup | Undas | 13.18 | 0.106 | Not Significant |
| Main Dish | Christmas (Noche Buena) | 35.77 | 0.018 | Significant |
| Main Dish | Baptism | 22.16 | 0.330 | Not Significant |
| Main Dish | Holy Week | 18.60 | 0.550 | Not Significant |
| Main Dish | New Year's Eve | 20.94 | 0.399 | Not Significant |
| Main Dish | Undas | 21.53 | 0.363 | Not Significant |

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| Food Category | Occasion Variable | $\chi^2$ Value | p-value | Interpretation |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Desserts | Christmas (Noche Buena) | 16.73 | 0.160 | Not Significant |
| Desserts | Baptism | 15.66 | 0.208 | Not Significant |
| Desserts | Holy Week | 12.61 | 0.397 | Not Significant |
| Desserts | New Year's Eve | 17.03 | 0.148 | Not Significant |
| Desserts | Undas | 13.01 | 0.368 | Not Significant |
| Appetizer | Christmas (Noche Buena) | 9.03 | 0.701 | Not Significant |
| Appetizer | Baptism | 15.30 | 0.225 | Not Significant |
| Appetizer | Holy Week | 18.06 | 0.114 | Not Significant |
| Appetizer | New Year's Eve | 15.19 | 0.231 | Not Significant |

The Chi-Square Test of Independence ($\chi^2$) demonstrated that the majority of evaluated food categories operated independently of specific celebration types, indicating a high baseline standardization of menu choices across Caviteño family gatherings. However, statistically significant associations emerged across three specific pairings: Soup Dishes and Birthdays ($\chi^2 = 20.28, p = 0.009$) Main Dishes and Weddings ($\chi^2 = 35.34, p = 0.018$) Main Dishes and Christmas Celebrations ($\chi^2 = 35.77, p = 0.018$)

The general lack of statistical significance across most pairings suggests that traditional Caviteño dishes constitute a baseline culinary standard, prepared with high regularity regardless of event type. Nevertheless, the selective significance observed in specific pairings indicates that particular milestones prompt deliberate, event-specific menu planning. The association between soup dishes and birthdays implies structured menu diversification around family milestones, whereas the reliance on specific main dishes during weddings and Christmas demonstrates deliberate culinary selection tailored to major life transitions and high-status socio-religious holidays. These observations align with Caruso (2023), who posited that celebratory scale drives menu selectivity, and Mangompit (2024), who emphasized food as a primary medium for communicating cultural value and social hierarchy.

The empirical distribution of traditional Caviteño dishes strongly corroborates the existing literature regarding the province's Hispanic influences, coastal geography, and intergenerational family customs: Appetizers: *Kilawin* recorded the highest preparation frequency (39.05%), outranking *quesillo* (21.19%) and *tahong* chips (17.14%). This preference illustrates the direct impact of coastal resource availability on regional foodways, confirming reports by Vista Land International (2023) and Eats Cavite (2022) regarding seafood reliance in Cavite's gastronomy. Soups: *Calandracas* dominated the soup category (63.99%) over *almondigas* (21.56%). As described by Quirino (2020) and Veneracion (2021), the high prevalence of *calandracas* illustrates the sustained retention of Hispanic-era comfort foods within domestic culinary practices. Main Dishes: *Pancit* variants (27.99%) and *Adobo Seca* (27.14%) recorded the highest preparation rates, followed by *Valenciana* (13.94%). In contrast, specialized items such as *malabanos* (1.10%) demonstrated marginal representation. These findings align with Golangco (2022), Yummy.ph (2020), and Rappler (2023), supporting the premise that dishes symbolizing longevity, prosperity, and high volume remain central to familial feasting, while certain historic recipes experience reduced

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p- ISSN 2774-6186 e- ISSN 2716-3970

contemporary adoption. Desserts: Traditional *kakanin* (34.44%) emerged as the primary sweet offering, followed by *bibingka samala* (23.49%) and *Digman halo-halo* (16.86%). This aligns with Manalo (2023), confirming that indigenous, rice-based confections serve as primary vectors of cultural nostalgia and festivity.

Evaluations of gathering typologies validated the dual personal-communal character of Filipino celebrations: Personal Gatherings: Personal milestones yielded a composite mean of $M = 3.67$ (*Often*), driven by birthdays ($M = 4.483$), graduations ($M = 3.706$), and weddings ($M = 3.501$). These figures corroborate Denilla (2023), Karlos (2023), and Barong Tagalog (2020), demonstrating that individual transitions are routinely transformed into communal occasions through shared feasting (*handaan*). Social/Cultural Gatherings: Social events achieved a higher composite mean of $M = 4.121$ (*Often*), anchored by universal observance of Christmas ($M = 4.738$) and New Year ($M = 4.725$) (*Always*). These findings reinforce Albela (2023), Caruso (2023), and Elwan (2025), emphasizing that major cultural holidays function as mandatory institutional expressions of unity, gratitude, and socio-religious identity. Religious and Kinship Events: Events such as *Undas* ($M = 3.886$) and baptisms ($M = 3.590$) recorded frequent observance (*Often*), supporting Aracelli (2021), Barbadillo (2024), and Corpuz (2020) regarding the integration of spiritual devotion, ancestral remembrance, and communal dining. Family reunions ($M = 3.317$) and death anniversaries ($M = 3.343$) were maintained with moderate regularity (*Sometimes*), supporting Nowack (2025) and Inquiro (2025) regarding the role of periodic assemblies in preserving kinship bonds across generations.

The significant inferential pairings further clarify the functional role of food in Caviteño social life: Soups and Birthdays: The association ($\chi^2 = 20.28, p = 0.009$) reflects the systematic inclusion of traditional comfort soups (*calandracas*, *almondigas*) to foster intimacy during family milestone meals (Denilla, 2023). Main Dishes and Weddings: The association ($\chi^2 = 35.34, p = 0.018$) reinforces claims by Barong Tagalog (2020) that marital celebrations require symbolic main courses (*pancit*, *adobo seca*, *Valenciana*) representing abundance, long life, and financial prosperity. Main Dishes and Christmas: The association ($\chi^2 = 35.77, p = 0.018$) supports assertions by Albela (2023) and Elwan (2025) that major socio-religious holidays require elaborate main courses to enact cultural identity, hospitality, and family solidarity.

The empirical results demonstrate that while Caviteño food selection maintains a stable, standardized baseline across general family assemblies, major life transitions and primary cultural holidays exert a selective influence on specific main and soup dish preparations, reinforcing gastronomy as a vector of intangible cultural heritage and social cohesion.

## 5. CONCLUSION

This study empirically examined the socio-cultural significance of selected Caviteño dishes in family celebrations by identifying traditional menu preferences across culinary categories, determining the frequency of personal and socio-cultural gatherings, and testing for statistically significant relationships between dish types and specific celebratory typologies: Preferred Culinary Offerings: Traditional Caviteño dishes maintained a dominant presence in family assemblies. Kilawin emerged as the primary appetizer, calandracas dominated the soup category, pancit variants and adobo seca constituted the top main dishes, and kakanin served as the leading dessert choice. Frequency of Family Gatherings: Both personal milestones and socio-cultural celebrations demonstrated regular household observance. Personal events—specifically birthdays, graduations, and weddings—were frequently celebrated, whereas major socio-religious holidays—most notably Christmas and New Year—recorded universal,

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p- ISSN 2774-6186 e- ISSN 2716-3970

highly consistent participation. Inferential Relationships: While the majority of culinary categories functioned independently across general gathering types—reflecting a standardized baseline menu—the Chi-Square Test of Independence ($\chi^2$) revealed statistically significant associations between: Soup dishes and birthdays ($\chi^2=20.28$, $p=0.009$), Main dishes and weddings ($\chi^2=35.34$, $p=0.018$), Main dishes and Christmas celebrations ($\chi^2=35.77$, $p=0.018$).

The empirical findings affirm that traditional Caviteño dishes function as vital vectors of intangible cultural heritage, social cohesion, and identity preservation rather than mere physical sustenance. The sustained preference for heritage dishes across Caviteño households illustrates the active retention of ancestral recipes, Hispanic-influenced culinary techniques, and localized coastal foodways.

Although baseline culinary standardization exists across routine family assemblies, major life-cycle transitions (weddings, birthdays) and primary socio-religious holidays (Christmas) prompt selective, deliberate menu preparations. Ultimately, family celebrations serve as social spaces where culinary traditions are continuously enacted, reinforcing kinship solidarity, intergenerational continuity, and a distinct regional sense of place.

This study contributes to the literature on culinary anthropology and cultural tourism in Southeast Asia by providing an empirical framework linking specific dish typologies to socio-cultural event categories. The findings validate existing theories on symbolic food consumption, proving that heritage dishes act as physical repositories of collective memory, ancestral respect, and social values within domestic spheres.

Understanding the socio-cultural meanings embedded in Caviteño gastronomy offers valuable insights for regional destination management organizations (DMOs), Local Government Units (LGUs), and tourism boards: Gastrodiplomacy & Destination Marketing: Local tourism offices can leverage these celebratory foodways to develop authentic, community-based culinary tourism itineraries that highlight intangible cultural heritage beyond commercial dining. Heritage Preservation: Documenting these dishes supports local cultural mapping programs, safeguarding traditional culinary practices against urban modernization, commercial homogenization, and loss of intergenerational knowledge.

Several methodological parameters must be considered when interpreting the generalizability of these results: Sampling Constraints: The use of non-probability convenience sampling restricts the statistical generalizability of the findings to the broader Cavite population, as respondent participation depended on individual availability and accessibility. Scope of Variables: The empirical scope was restricted to pre-selected traditional dishes and specific categories of family gatherings, which may not capture the full culinary diversity or specialized municipal recipes present across Cavite's coastal and upland zones. Measurement Bias: Relying on self-reported survey data introduces potential recall bias or subjective interpretations regarding dish preparation frequency and family celebratory practices.

To extend the theoretical and empirical reach of this scholarship, future inquiries should consider the following directions: Methodological Expansion: Future studies should employ probability sampling designs (e.g., stratified random sampling across municipal clusters) to establish population-wide generalizability. Expanded Culinary and Event Contexts: Research scope can be broadened to encompass civic festivals (fiestas), public street events, and emerging fusion cuisines to capture contemporary evolutions in Cavite's gastronomic landscape. Qualitative and Mixed-Methods Inquiries: Employing qualitative approaches—such as oral history documentation, ethnographic observation, and intergenerational narrative analysis—will yield deeper insights into how recipe transmission sustains cultural identity over time. Comparative Regional Analysis: Comparative cross-provincial studies

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p- ISSN 2774-6186 e- ISSN 2716-3970

involving adjacent regions could illuminate broader macro-level patterns within Southern Luzon foodways.

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