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Tinuom as Culinary Heritage and Healing Food: A Cultural and Ethnobotanical Study from Cabatuan, Iloilo, Philippines**Armando M. Hisuan Jr., Noemi G. Caballero-Lujan, Gilbert “Bombette” Marin**DDM; Central Philippine University.
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Keywords*Tinuom, Qualitative, Ethnobotanical, Healing Dish, Cabatuan, Iloilo, gastronomic tourism***ABSTRACT**

The purpose of this study is to document different Tinuom dishes that the Municipality of Cabatuan can have. Participants were identified by the Sangguniang Bayan Member for Tourism whose family's generation had been cooking Tinuom dishes for at least five decades. Each participants has a unique way of incorporating indigenous flora such as herbs, vines, mushrooms and fungus to deliver a unique sumptuous Tinuom dishes. Data procedures and analysis in accordance with the National Commission for Culture and the Arts Cultural Mapping Tool Kit and in the presence of Municipal and Provincial Tourism Officer. One of the intriguing results of the study is that upon tasting the dish once of the research suddenly tears were rolling out of his eyes and later he realized he was crying.

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INTRODUCTION:

Some best years in life are spent in the province, fresh air, warmth smile and natural food. This pandemic gives us a chance to reckon and back to the basic. At the busiest time in our daily life, it was stopped and fragmented in awhile by this pandemic with the unseen view of what the future might will hold (Colbin, 1996).

As first world nation race to combat with unclear drug to battle these dread disease, on the other hand most of the third world nation like the Philippines relay only on making itself fit and healthy. Philippines as an archipelagic nation tend to rely on natural remedies in order to get well if ever they have ailments or encounter diseases. In far-flung areas, they tend to seek the help of albularyo or quack doctors. Traditional healing is a part of the

Filipino culture that has been passed down through many generations, and is continuously being practiced, especially in far-flung barrios and barangays in the country. From the old name babaylan, the traditional healers now operate under various names, such as albularyo, manghihilot, mangluluop, mangtatawas, and faith healers (Rebuya et al., 2020).

Aside from going to traditional healers, Filipinos also refer to food as a healing concoction. Especially in the Iloilo Province in the town of Cabatuan wherein there is a unique way of healing by eating this kind of dish. According to one of the participants who had been in generations preparing this dish, the tinuom helped them recover fast if they have flu like disease. Tinuom is the town's history and its popularly craved soup delicacy made of native chicken souped with spices – tomatoes, onions, garlic, ginger, and lemon grass and wrapped in banana leaves.

The purpose of this study was to document the different types of tinuom preparations.

Specifically, this study tends to;
identify participants who have been preparing tinuom for decades;
identify indigenous herbs, vines and ingredients in preparing tinuom

The tinuom runs a week long presentation, documentation and aligned in the Municipality's Annual Festival and Fiesta Celebrations, the researcher were able to note various tinuom delicacies with different viands that will sure help sick people get well. Due to the guidelines limitations, the researcher will just present only the one out of 20 viands of tinuom dishes that are unique and have powerful characteristic that the participants share.

In the Philippines, traditional healing practices are deeply embedded in the cultural fabric, especially in rural communities where access to modern healthcare may be limited. These practices often rely on indigenous knowledge systems that utilize locally available plants and natural materials for therapeutic purposes. One such example is the use of **banana leaves**, which are not only employed in food preparation but also revered for their medicinal properties.

The literature highlights that banana leaves are rich in **polyphenols** Kumar et al (2012), Sharad, A. (2022) and Patil et al (2025), a type of antioxidant known to combat free radicals—unstable molecules that contribute to cellular damage and inflammation. This aligns with the traditional belief that natural remedies can prevent or alleviate symptoms of degenerative diseases such as Alzheimer's, cancer, and cardiovascular conditions. The use of banana leaf tea or decoctions to treat **sore throats, fevers**, and to **boost the immune system** reflects a holistic approach to health, where food and nature are intertwined with healing.

This practice exemplifies the Filipino concept of “**pagpapagaling sa pagkain**” (healing through food), where meals are not only sources of nourishment but also vehicles for recovery and wellness Ochel et al (2018). Dishes like *tinuom*, which incorporate medicinal herbs such as ginger, roselle, and bamboo shoots, are prepared not just for their flavor but for their healing properties. These culinary traditions serve as both cultural expressions and functional remedies, bridging the gap between ancestral wisdom and contemporary health science.

In essence, Filipino traditional healing is not merely about treating illness—it is about maintaining balance and harmony within the body using nature's bounty. The continued use of banana leaves and other indigenous ingredients in both medicine and cuisine underscores the enduring relevance of these practices in modern times.

Methods

The purpose of this study is to document different

Tinuom dishes that the Municipality of Cabatuan can have. A qualitative research design using an ethnobotanical research methods (Alexiades, 1996). According to Alexiades, 1996, an ethnobotanical research method is a study where the focus is on the relationship between people and plants, especially how local cultures use plants for food, medicine, clothing, shelter, and spiritual practices. It is a multidisciplinary field that combines botany (the study of plants) with anthropology (the study of human societies) to understand traditional plant knowledge and its application in various aspects of life. Participants were identified by the Sangguniang Bayan Member for Tourism whose family's generation had been cooking Tinuom dishes for at least five decades. Each participants has a unique way of incorporating indigenous flora such as herbs, vines, mushrooms and fungus to deliver a unique sumptuous Tinuom dishes. Data procedures and analysis in accordance with the National Commission for Culture and the Arts Cultural Mapping Tool Kit (2019) and in the presence of Municipal and Provincial Tourism Officer.

Results:



The Traditional Tinuom

a. b. Figure 1. Shows the tinuom in a wrapped appearance (b.) and after it was open (a.).

This tinuom viand is a mixture of native chicken, onions, ginger, garlic, roselle leaves, bamboo shoots, chilli an batuan. This tinuom gives you a woody aroma, once you open the pouch, the arome fills the entire room. The taste gives you a warmth refreshing feeling coming from the mixture of ginger and chilli. Onions, garlic and roselle leaves gives a unique characteristic in this dish. According to the participants, this dish was their heirloom recipe coming for her great grandmother in which he prepared during the time when they a suffering from colds or fever. In the study of (Mahomoodally et al., 2019) ginger has the mechanisms and therapeutics effect and its bioactive compounds focused on a cancer context and these evidence are based on the (i) cytotoxic result against cancer cell lines, (ii) enzyme inhibitory action, (iii) combination therapy with chemotherapeutic and phenolic compounds, (iv) possible links to the microbiome and (v) the use of nano-

formulations of ginger bioactive compounds as a more effective drug delivery strategy in cancer therapy. In the study of Essa et al (2014) states that in traditional medicine roselle was used effectively as a diuretic, antiseptic, laxative and in lowering blood sugar, and cholesterol. This implies that, taking this tinuom soup with ginger and some herbs that have bioactive compounds and healing properties somehow help those people to recuperate from the illness that they are experiencing.

This study highlights that one of the intriguing results of the study is that upon tasting the dish once of the research suddenly tears were rolling out of his eyes and later he realized he was crying.

DISCUSSION

The culinary landscape of Iloilo is deeply rooted in its local traditions and accessible ingredients, making it a fertile ground for culinary tourism. Dishes like *Tinuom*, a native chicken soup wrapped in banana leaves, showcase the region's resourcefulness and connection to nature. The simplicity of *Tinuom*—using ingredients found in the surrounding farm fields—makes it not only a practical dish for locals but also an authentic experience for tourists seeking cultural immersion. As culinary tourism grows, highlighting dishes like *Tinuom* can attract visitors interested in heritage cuisine, farm-to-table experiences, and wellness-focused travel. The comparison with other regional dishes such as *Pastil* from Maguindanao and *Empapelado de Pescado* from Baja California illustrates how wrapping food in banana leaves is a shared cultural technique that enhances flavor and presentation, making it a compelling culinary attraction Alqurashi et al (2025).

Tinuom is more than just a dish—it is a vessel of cultural memory and identity. Its preparation method, ingredients, and even the act of wrapping in banana leaves reflect traditional cooking techniques passed down through generations. These practices are part of the Philippines' intangible cultural heritage, which includes oral traditions, performing arts, social practices, rituals, and traditional craftsmanship. Documenting and promoting *Tinuom* through festivals, culinary mapping, and educational materials helps preserve these traditions in the face of modernization Mantra (2024) and Nagina et al (2025). The study's emphasis on how different municipalities prepare their dishes—such as Bingawan's use of sugar—demonstrates regional diversity and the importance of safeguarding local variations.

Tinuom also plays a role in integrative health, blending culinary tradition with medicinal benefits. The dish often includes ingredients like ginger,

roselle leaves, bamboo shoots, and native chicken—all known for their healing properties Essa et al (2014), Sumantri et al (2020). Ginger, for instance, has anti-inflammatory and antioxidant effects, while roselle is used traditionally to lower blood pressure and cholesterol. The use of banana leaves, as highlighted in the previous image, adds another layer of health benefits due to their antioxidant content. These elements position *Tinuom* not just as food, but as a healing dish, aligning with Filipino beliefs in food as medicine. This integrative approach to health—where nourishment and healing coexist—can be a unique selling point in wellness tourism Dini, & Pencarelli, (2022).

One prominent theme is the role of gastronomy as a gateway to cultural understanding. Food is described not merely as sustenance but as a reflection of a community's history, beliefs, and way of life. *Tinuom*, a traditional dish from Cabatuan, Iloilo, exemplifies this by incorporating indigenous ingredients and cooking methods that have been passed down through generations. Its preparation—wrapping native chicken and medicinal herbs in banana leaves and slow-cooking—embodies the values of tradition, respect for nature, and communal identity.

Another merging theme is the preservation of intangible cultural heritage. The document emphasizes that food heritage includes both material and immaterial elements, such as recipes, rituals, and culinary knowledge. *Tinuom* serves as a living legacy of Iloilo's cultural heritage, offering a tangible connection to ancestral practices and local biodiversity. Promoting this dish through culinary tourism not only sustains local traditions but also educates visitors about the cultural richness of the region.

The third and final theme is the integration of health and wellness into culinary experiences. Slow cooking, as highlighted in the image, is praised for preserving flavor and offering potential health benefits, including anti-aging properties. *Tinuom* aligns with this philosophy, as its ingredients—ginger, roselle, bamboo shoots, and native chicken—are known for their therapeutic effects. This positions *Tinuom* within the realm of integrative health practices, where food serves both nutritional and medicinal purposes.

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