

## SUSTAINABLE CULINARY TOURISM IN UBUD, BALI: PRESERVING TRADITIONAL BALINESE FOOD HERITAGE WHILE SUPPORTING TOURISM GROWTH

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### Abstract:

Sustainable tourism has increasingly emphasized the importance of balancing economic development with cultural preservation. Within this framework, culinary tourism has emerged as a strategic tool for enhancing destination attractiveness while maintaining local identity. This study aims to examine the role of sustainable culinary tourism in preserving traditional Balinese food heritage while supporting tourism growth in Ubud, Bali. A qualitative case study approach was employed, involving in-depth interviews with restaurant owners, local chefs, cooking class instructors, and tourism practitioners, complemented by observations and document analysis. The findings reveal that sustainable culinary tourism contributes significantly to the preservation of traditional recipes, cooking techniques, and the use of local ingredients. Culinary tourism activities, particularly traditional restaurants and cooking classes, function as mechanisms for transmitting culinary knowledge and strengthening cultural authenticity. Furthermore, culinary tourism enhances destination competitiveness, increases tourist attraction, and supports local economic development. Local community involvement was identified as a critical factor in ensuring sustainability, as community members serve as custodians of traditional culinary knowledge. However, challenges related to commercialization and adaptation to tourist preferences may threaten authenticity if not properly managed. This study concludes that sustainable culinary tourism provides an integrated model for balancing cultural preservation and tourism growth. The findings contribute to sustainable tourism and culinary tourism literature by demonstrating the dual role of culinary tourism in cultural sustainability and economic development. Practical implications are provided for policymakers, tourism practitioners, and local communities to strengthen sustainable culinary tourism strategies in cultural destinations.

**Keywords:** Sustainable Culinary Tourism, Culinary Heritage Preservation, Traditional Balinese Cuisine, Cultural Sustainability, Tourism Growth

## INTRODUCTION

Tourism has become one of the most significant global industries, contributing substantially to economic development, employment generation, and cultural exchange. However, the rapid expansion of tourism has also raised concerns regarding environmental degradation, socio-cultural disruption, and the erosion of local identity. As a response to these challenges, the concept of sustainable tourism has emerged as a key framework for ensuring that tourism development balances economic growth with environmental protection and cultural preservation (Terkenli et al., 2021). Sustainable tourism emphasizes the responsible use of cultural and natural resources while ensuring long-term socio-economic benefits for local communities and preserving cultural heritage



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for future generations (UNWTO, 2018). In this context, tourism is increasingly viewed not only as an economic activity but also as a strategic instrument for cultural sustainability and heritage preservation.

One important component of sustainable tourism is culinary tourism, which has gained increasing attention from both researchers and tourism practitioners. Culinary tourism refers to tourism experiences that involve the exploration and consumption of local food and culinary traditions as part of the travel experience (Long, 2004; Hall & Sharples, 2008). Local cuisine represents a tangible expression of cultural identity and plays a crucial role in shaping destination image and tourist experiences (Ellis et al., 2018). Culinary tourism enhances destination attractiveness by offering authentic and culturally meaningful experiences, thereby strengthening the emotional connection between tourists and destinations (Kim et al., 2009). Furthermore, gastronomic tourism contributes to destination competitiveness and tourism sustainability by promoting local products, supporting small businesses, and preserving traditional food practices (Richards, 2018; Sánchez-Sánchez et al., 2025).

From a theoretical perspective, culinary tourism is closely related to cultural tourism and heritage preservation. Cultural tourism emphasizes the importance of cultural resources, including traditional food, as key elements of tourism attraction and destination differentiation (Richards, 2012). Traditional cuisine represents an important form of intangible cultural heritage, reflecting local knowledge, cultural values, and historical traditions (Lin & Mao, 2021). The preservation of culinary heritage is therefore essential for maintaining cultural identity and authenticity in tourism destinations. Gastronomy tourism also plays a strategic role in supporting sustainable development by generating economic opportunities for local communities while preserving cultural heritage (UNWTO, 2019; Madandola, 2023). In addition, sustainable culinary tourism contributes to local economic resilience by supporting local producers, traditional food businesses, and cultural practitioners (Geçikli et al., 2024).

Indonesia, particularly Bali, has significant potential for culinary tourism development due to its rich cultural and culinary diversity. Bali is internationally recognized as a cultural tourism destination, where traditional food plays an important role in tourism experiences and destination attractiveness. Traditional Balinese cuisine reflects cultural identity, religious values, and local wisdom through the use of traditional ingredients, cooking techniques, and ceremonial practices. Previous research has shown that traditional Balinese cuisine contributes significantly to tourist satisfaction and enhances the overall tourism experience (Arcana & Mahadewi, 2019). As a result, culinary tourism has become an important component of tourism development strategies in Bali.

Among tourism destinations in Bali, Ubud has emerged as a leading center for cultural and sustainable tourism. Ubud is widely known for its strong cultural identity, traditional arts, and community-based tourism development. Culinary tourism in Ubud has grown rapidly, including traditional restaurants, cooking classes, food festivals, and gastronomic experiences that allow tourists to engage directly with Balinese culinary traditions (Bestari & Putra, 2022). These culinary experiences not only enhance tourist satisfaction but also contribute to preserving traditional culinary practices and supporting local economic development. Furthermore, the promotion of culinary heritage in tourism villages in Bali has been identified as an effective strategy for strengthening cultural preservation and tourism sustainability (Ginaya et al., 2025).

Despite these opportunities, the rapid growth of tourism in Ubud has also created sustainability challenges. Increasing tourism demand has led to commercialization, adaptation of traditional food to meet tourist preferences, and the potential loss of culinary authenticity. The



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transformation of traditional food into commercial tourism products may result in cultural commodification and the erosion of traditional culinary knowledge if not managed sustainably (Richards, 2018; Terkenli et al., 2021). Therefore, it is essential to ensure that culinary tourism development in Ubud supports cultural preservation while simultaneously contributing to tourism growth and local economic sustainability. Sustainable culinary tourism provides an integrated approach to achieving this balance by promoting authentic culinary experiences while preserving traditional food heritage and supporting community livelihoods (UNWTO, 2022).

Although culinary tourism has become an important component of tourism development in Bali, particularly in Ubud, existing studies have primarily focused on culinary tourism as a tourism attraction, marketing strategy, or contributor to tourist satisfaction (Arcana & Mahadewi, 2019; Bestari & Putra, 2022; Wijaya, 2023). Limited research has examined culinary tourism from a sustainability perspective, particularly in relation to preserving traditional culinary heritage while supporting tourism growth. Furthermore, there is insufficient empirical research exploring how sustainable culinary tourism practices can balance cultural preservation, tourism development, and local economic benefits within specific cultural tourism destinations such as Ubud.

As tourism continues to grow in Ubud, there is an increasing need to ensure that culinary tourism development does not compromise traditional culinary heritage and cultural authenticity. Without sustainable management, tourism development may contribute to cultural commodification and the gradual loss of traditional culinary knowledge. Therefore, it is important to examine how sustainable culinary tourism can preserve traditional Balinese culinary heritage while supporting tourism growth and benefiting local communities. This study seeks to address this gap by investigating sustainable culinary tourism practices in Ubud, Bali, and their role in preserving traditional food heritage and supporting tourism development.

## METHODS

This study employed a qualitative case study design to explore sustainable culinary tourism practices in Ubud, Bali, particularly in relation to preserving traditional Balinese food heritage while supporting tourism growth. A qualitative approach was chosen to enable an in-depth understanding of social phenomena, cultural practices, and stakeholder perspectives within their natural context (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Heykal et al., 2024; Yin, 2018). Ubud, located in Gianyar Regency, Bali, was selected as the research site due to its strong cultural identity, traditional culinary heritage, and prominent role in culinary tourism development. Participants were selected through purposive sampling, targeting key stakeholders involved in culinary tourism, including traditional restaurant owners and managers, local chefs, cooking class providers, tourism practitioners, and community members engaged in traditional food preparation. The number of participants was determined based on data saturation principles (Guest et al., 2006). Data were collected through semi-structured in-depth interviews, direct observation at culinary tourism sites, and documentation analysis, allowing triangulation of multiple data sources. Interviews explored themes related to culinary tourism practices, heritage preservation, sustainability, challenges, and economic contributions. Data were analyzed using thematic analysis following processes of transcription, coding, theme development, and interpretation (Braun & Clarke, 2006). To ensure trustworthiness, the study applied credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability criteria (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Ethical considerations were maintained through informed consent, voluntary participation, confidentiality protection, and participants' right to withdraw at any time.



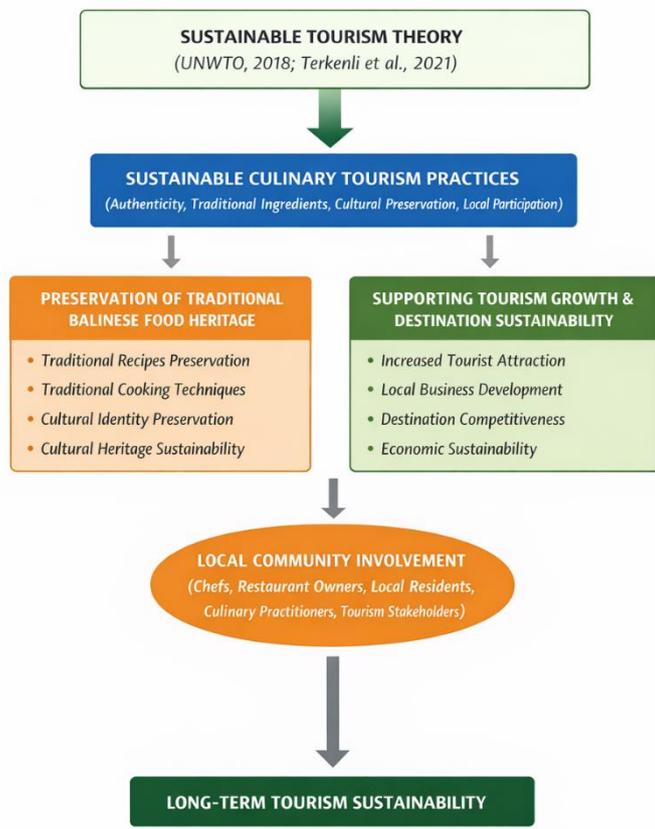


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Role of Sustainable Culinary Tourism in Preserving Traditional Balinese Food Heritage.

Table 1. Preservation of Traditional Balinese Culinary Heritage

Research Question	Informant Responses	Interpretation
How does culinary tourism contribute to preserving traditional Balinese food heritage in Ubud?	I1 (Restaurant Owner): "We still use traditional recipes inherited from our parents. Tourists want authentic Balinese taste, so we maintain the original cooking methods." I2 (Cooking Class Instructor): "Through cooking classes, tourists learn how to prepare traditional Balinese dishes using traditional ingredients and techniques." I3 (Local Chef): "Traditional cooking is part of our culture. Tourism helps us preserve it because tourists are interested in authentic food."	Culinary tourism supports the preservation of traditional culinary heritage by maintaining traditional recipes, techniques, and ingredients while facilitating knowledge transmission through tourism activities.



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Primary Data, 2026

The findings demonstrate that sustainable culinary tourism plays a significant role in preserving traditional Balinese culinary heritage in Ubud. Informants emphasized that traditional recipes and cooking techniques are maintained and continue to be practiced in culinary tourism activities. Informant I1 explained that traditional recipes inherited from previous generations are still used to maintain authenticity, while informant I2 highlighted the role of cooking classes in transmitting culinary knowledge to tourists. Informant I3 further emphasized that culinary tourism creates opportunities to sustain traditional cooking practices by increasing demand for authentic cuisine.

These findings align with cultural heritage theory, which states that traditional food represents an important form of intangible cultural heritage that reflects cultural identity and historical continuity (Lin & Mao, 2021). Culinary heritage preservation requires continuous practice and transmission, and tourism can facilitate this process by increasing awareness and demand for traditional cuisine.

Previous studies have shown that culinary tourism plays a significant role in preserving cultural heritage by maintaining traditional food practices and increasing cultural awareness (Ellis et al., 2018; Richards, 2018). Arcana and Mahadewi (2019) also found that traditional Balinese cuisine enhances tourism experiences while strengthening cultural identity.

The findings of this study extend previous research by demonstrating that sustainable culinary tourism in Ubud functions not only as a tourism attraction but also as an active mechanism for preserving culinary heritage. Tourism demand encourages culinary practitioners to maintain traditional practices, thereby supporting cultural sustainability.

### Role of Culinary Tourism in Supporting Tourism Growth.

**Table 2.** Contribution of Culinary Tourism to Tourism Growth

Research Question	Informant Responses	Interpretation
How does culinary tourism support tourism growth in Ubud?	I1 (Restaurant Owner): "Many tourists come to our restaurant specifically to try traditional Balinese food." I2 (Cooking Class Instructor): "Cooking classes are very popular among international tourists. It increases tourism activities in Ubud." I3 (Tourism Practitioner): "Culinary tourism strengthens Ubud's position as a cultural tourism destination."	Culinary tourism enhances tourist attraction, strengthens destination competitiveness, and supports tourism growth.

Primary Data, 2026

The findings indicate that culinary tourism contributes significantly to tourism growth in Ubud by enhancing destination attractiveness and supporting tourism-related economic activities. Informant I1 noted that tourists specifically seek traditional culinary experiences, while informant I2 emphasized the popularity of cooking classes among international tourists. Informant I3 further explained that culinary tourism strengthens Ubud's competitiveness as a cultural tourism destination.



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This finding supports culinary tourism theory, which emphasizes that food tourism enhances destination attractiveness and tourist satisfaction (Ellis et al., 2018). Culinary experiences create unique tourism products that differentiate destinations and strengthen their competitiveness (Richards, 2018).

Previous research has shown that culinary tourism contributes to tourism growth by enhancing tourist experiences and supporting local economic development (Kim et al., 2009; UNWTO, 2019). Wijaya (2023) also found that culinary tourism plays an important role in strengthening tourism destinations in Indonesia.

This study confirms that sustainable culinary tourism contributes to tourism growth in Ubud by attracting tourists and enhancing destination competitiveness. Culinary tourism, therefore, serves as an important component of sustainable tourism development.

**Role of Local Community Involvement in Sustainable Culinary Tourism.**

**Table 3.** Role of Local Community Involvement

Research Question	Informant Responses	Interpretation
How does community involvement support sustainable culinary tourism?	<p>I1 (Local Chef): "Local people are responsible for preserving traditional recipes."</p> <p>I2 (Restaurant Owner): "We involve local staff who understand traditional cooking."</p> <p>I3 (Tourism Practitioner): "Community involvement ensures authenticity in culinary tourism."</p>	Community involvement ensures cultural preservation and supports sustainable culinary tourism.

Primary Data, 2026

The findings highlight the critical role of local community involvement in sustainable culinary tourism. Informant I1 emphasized that local people serve as custodians of traditional culinary knowledge, while informant I2 noted that local staff play an important role in maintaining traditional cooking practices. Informant I3 further explained that community involvement ensures the authenticity of culinary tourism experiences.

These findings align with sustainable tourism theory, which emphasizes community participation as a key factor in achieving tourism sustainability (UNWTO, 2018). Community involvement ensures that tourism benefits local stakeholders while preserving cultural heritage.

Previous research has demonstrated that community participation is essential for preserving cultural heritage and ensuring sustainable tourism development (Geçikli et al., 2024). Richards (2018) also emphasized that local communities play a central role in maintaining cultural authenticity.

This study confirms that community involvement is essential for sustainable culinary tourism in Ubud, as local communities play a key role in preserving culinary heritage and ensuring tourism sustainability.

**Challenges in Sustainable Culinary Tourism.**

**Table 4.** Challenges in Sustainable Culinary Tourism

Research Question	Informant Responses	Interpretation
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**What challenges affect sustainable culinary tourism?**

I1 (Restaurant Owner): "Some restaurants modify traditional food to suit tourist tastes."  
 I2 (Chef): "Young people are less interested in learning traditional cooking."  
 I3 (Tourism Practitioner): "Maintaining authenticity is a challenge."

Tourism commercialization and cultural change pose challenges to culinary heritage preservation.

Primary Data, 2026

The findings indicate that sustainable culinary tourism faces challenges related to commercialization and cultural change. Informants noted that tourism demand may lead to modification of traditional food, which may threaten authenticity.

This finding supports Richards (2018), who argued that tourism commercialization may threaten cultural authenticity. Sustainable tourism theory emphasizes balancing tourism development with cultural preservation (UNWTO, 2018).

This study highlights the importance of sustainable culinary tourism practices in preserving culinary heritage while supporting tourism growth.

**CONCLUSION**

This study examined the role of sustainable culinary tourism in preserving traditional Balinese food heritage while supporting tourism growth in Ubud, Bali. The findings demonstrate that sustainable culinary tourism plays a significant dual role in both cultural preservation and tourism development.

First, sustainable culinary tourism contributes to the preservation of traditional Balinese culinary heritage through the continued use of traditional recipes, cooking techniques, and local ingredients. Culinary tourism activities, such as traditional restaurants and cooking classes, serve as important platforms for transmitting culinary knowledge and maintaining cultural authenticity. These practices ensure that traditional culinary heritage remains relevant and preserved despite increasing tourism development.

Second, culinary tourism contributes significantly to tourism growth and destination sustainability. Culinary experiences enhance Ubud's attractiveness as a cultural tourism destination, strengthen destination competitiveness, and support local economic development. Culinary tourism creates employment opportunities and provides economic benefits for local communities, which are essential components of sustainable tourism development.

Third, local community involvement plays a crucial role in ensuring the sustainability of culinary tourism. Local chefs, restaurant owners, and community members serve as custodians of traditional culinary knowledge and play a key role in preserving cultural authenticity. Their participation ensures that culinary tourism remains culturally grounded and socially sustainable.

However, this study also identified challenges related to commercialization and the potential loss of culinary authenticity. Tourism demand may lead to adaptation and modification of traditional cuisine, which may threaten cultural preservation if not managed sustainably. Therefore, sustainable culinary tourism practices are essential to balance tourism development and cultural preservation.



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