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SEGO BERKAT AS A GASTRONOMIC HERITAGE AND CULINARY TOURISM ATTRACTION IN GUNUNGKIDUL, D.I.YOGYAKARTA

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ABSTRACT

Sego Berkat is a traditional food of Gunungkidul rooted in kenduri, slametan, rasulan, and food-sharing traditions. This study identifies its gastronomic characteristics and analyses its potential as a culinary tourism attraction. A descriptive qualitative approach was employed using culinary documentation, visual records, scholarly literature, and 16 contextual documents on Sego Berkat. Data were analysed through reduction, categorisation, presentation, and conclusion drawing. The findings show that Sego Berkat is distinguished by the cultural meaning of sharing blessings, home-style side dishes, simple cooking techniques, traditional kitchen practices, and teak-leaf wrapping. Its transformation from ritual food into a commercial culinary product has widened tourist access while maintaining recognisable local identity. Its historical narrative, flavour, traditional packaging, cultural story, and affordability support its development as a culinary tourism attraction in Gunungkidul.

Keyword: Sego Berkat; gastronomy; culinary heritage; culinary tourism attraction

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INTRODUCTION

Culinary tourism has developed into an important component of destination development because food allows visitors to experience local culture through everyday practices. A traditional dish may communicate the agricultural environment of a place, household knowledge, techniques of preparation, social relations, and the meanings attached to eating and sharing. For tourists, local food can therefore function simultaneously as consumption, cultural interpretation, and a marker of destination identity. Kivela & Crotts (2006) argue that gastronomy influences the way tourists experience a destination, while Ellis et al. (2018) emphasise that food tourism is closely related to place, culture, identity, and experience. Local cuisine is consequently valuable not only because it tastes different from food available elsewhere, but because it can provide access to the story of a community.

This relationship between food and place is particularly important in areas where traditional culinary practices remain visible in contemporary life. Björk & Kauppinen-Räisänen (2019) describe the destination foodscape as the wider environment in which travellers meet food, producers, service providers, spaces, and local practices. In this context, traditional foods can strengthen a destination when the culinary product remains connected with the people and practices that make it distinctive. Research on heritage food also indicates that legacy, people, place, recipe authenticity, local ingredients, and knowledgeable practitioners are important in maintaining culinary authenticity (Almansouri et al., 2022).

Gunungkidul Regency, in the Special Region of Yogyakarta, has a culinary culture that developed alongside dry-land agriculture, household production, village traditions, and strong communal relationships. Traditional foods are found not only in markets and food stalls but also in rituals, family celebrations, agricultural ceremonies, and village gatherings. One of these foods is Sego Berkat, a rice-based meal commonly associated with kenduri, slametan, rasulan, and other communal events. The word sego or sega means rice in Javanese, while berkat refers to food that is given or taken home after a communal or religious gathering. The name therefore reflects both the material form of the dish and its social function.

The cultural position of Sego Berkat distinguishes it from an ordinary rice package. In local descriptions, Sego Berkat is associated with food that has been prepared for a communal gathering, prayed over, divided, given to participants, and carried home. In this process, food becomes part of reciprocity and social connection. Values frequently associated with the tradition include gotong royong, guyub rukun, tepa selira, hospitality, mutual understanding, and gratitude. The food is therefore connected with the social idea of sharing blessings rather than with individual consumption alone. The cultural weight of Javanese rice-dish naming has also been documented in recent gastrolinguistic research, which shows that names of sega dishes may encode purpose, serving practices, characteristics, and cultural meanings (Nurlina et al., 2025).

Sego Berkat also has visible gastronomic characteristics. It is typically composed of white rice and several home-style side dishes. Documentary sources commonly mention sautéed tempeh with green chilli, vermicelli or glass noodles, serundeng, and small portions of meat or chicken, with commercial variations including empal, babat, iso, baceman, egg, or crackers. The exact composition may vary between ceremonial, household, and commercial settings. This variation is important because traditional food should not automatically be defined as a fixed recipe. What remains recognisable is the combination of rice, familiar Javanese side dishes, modest portions, and the traditional presentation that links the meal with the social idea of berkat.

The most distinctive material characteristic is the use of teak leaves as wrapping. When warm rice and side dishes are enclosed in the leaf, the package acquires a recognisable appearance and aroma. The leaf is therefore not merely an economical container. It contributes to the sensory identity of the food and differentiates Sego Berkat from rice dishes served in plastic, paper, or standard restaurant ware. Research on local food tourism suggests that sensory appeal and perceived authenticity are important to visitor responses because smell, taste, appearance, and material cues help form memory and attachment to place (Li et al., 2023).

In recent years, Sego Berkat has become increasingly visible outside the ritual setting. It can be found in traditional markets, simple food stalls, restaurants, and tourism locations in Gunungkidul. One documented commercial development began around 2014 when a local restaurant introduced a Sego Berkat menu inspired by memories of food brought home after social gatherings. This commercial initiative should not be understood as the origin of Sego Berkat itself; rather, it represents a modern commercial adaptation of an older culinary tradition. The development illustrates how traditional food can move from private or ceremonial circulation into public culinary markets while retaining recognisable cultural markers.

This shift creates opportunities for culinary tourism. Tourists can access Sego Berkat without attending a private ritual, while local culinary businesses can transform traditional knowledge into economic value. At the same time, commercialisation may simplify cultural meaning if the food is presented only as an inexpensive rice package. Heritage-food research shows that authenticity is not static, but tourism adaptation can produce risks when ingredients, techniques, knowledge holders, or presentation are disconnected from their cultural context (Almansouri et al., 2022). The tourism development of Sego Berkat therefore requires identification of the gastronomic elements that should remain visible and understandable to visitors.

Studies published in Gastronomy and Culinary Art provide a useful comparison. Farizqi & Prasetyanto (2025) examine Sego Gono in Temanggung through its history, ingredients, preparation, philosophical meaning, and potential as a culinary tourism attraction. Their study shows that a traditional dish can become more valuable to tourism when its history and preparation are communicated to visitors. Studies in Special Region of Yogyakarta also emphasise the importance of local ingredients, traditional culinary practices, and community participation for sustainable culinary tourism (Ainiya et al., 2025); (Sita et al., 2025); (Witara et al., 2025).

Despite the growing public visibility of Sego Berkat, existing information remains scattered among culinary reports, cultural documentation, restaurant stories, and tourism promotion. Some sources emphasise its ritual origins, others focus on teak-leaf packaging, commercial outlets, nostalgic value, or heritage recognition. A concise gastronomic description that brings these aspects together is still needed. Although Sego Berkat has increasingly appeared in culinary media, cultural documentation, and commercial food settings, previous information remains fragmented and has largely focused on its ritual background, teak-leaf packaging, local popularity, or commercial availability. A systematic gastronomic account that integrates its socio-cultural meaning, culinary characteristics, traditional presentation, material identity, and contemporary commercial transformation remains limited. The novelty of this study lies in bringing these dispersed dimensions together to explain Sego Berkat as a form of gastronomic heritage whose cultural and material characteristics may provide a basis for culinary tourism development. Unlike studies that focus primarily on visitor perception or tourism experience, this study examines the culinary object itself and the cultural meanings, practices, and material elements that sustain its distinctiveness.

Academically, this study contributes to culinary tourism literature by illustrating how a traditional food can be analysed through the interconnected dimensions of cultural meaning, culinary practice, material presentation, and commercial transformation. The study also provides a documented case of how a food originally embedded in communal and ritual practices can enter contemporary commercial food settings while retaining identifiable elements of local culinary heritage. Rather than claiming demonstrated tourist demand, the study identifies gastronomic characteristics that may constitute resources for future culinary tourism development and empirical testing. Accordingly, this study addresses two questions: (1) How can Sego Berkat be described gastronomically in terms of its history, cultural meaning, ingredients, cooking practices, utensils, presentation, and traditional packaging? and (2) Which gastronomic characteristics of Sego Berkat may provide a basis for its development as a culinary tourism attraction in Gunungkidul? The study therefore aims to identify the gastronomic characteristics of Sego Berkat and to examine their relevance as potential resources for culinary tourism development.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Culinary Tourism and Gastronomy

Culinary tourism places food at the centre of travel-related experience. Food may motivate travel, enrich an existing trip, or become one of the activities through which tourists interpret a destination. Kivela & Crotts (2006) explain that gastronomy has a significant influence on destination experience, while Ab Karim & Chi (2010) demonstrate that food image can operate as a destination attraction. Ellis et al. (2018) further show that food tourism is not limited to eating but is connected with cultural identity, heritage, and place. These perspectives are useful for traditional foods because they direct attention to what visitors learn and encounter through the food, not simply to whether the food is delicious.

Traditional Food as Culinary Heritage

Traditional food may be regarded as culinary heritage when it contains continuity of knowledge, preparation, social meaning, and place. Almansouri et al. (2022) conceptualise heritage food through legacy, people, and place and show that the authenticity of recipes, cooking practices, local ingredients, and knowledgeable cultural representatives contributes to the credibility of heritage food. This view is particularly relevant to Sego Berkat because its identity is associated with communal traditions, familiar household preparation, local serving practices, and a recognisable material presentation. Culinary heritage does not require every serving to be identical; however, sufficient continuity must remain for the food to be recognised by the community.

Authenticity, Sensory Appeal, and Local Food

Authenticity and sensory appeal are important to the tourism value of local food. Sims (2009) argues that local food can contribute to sustainable tourism by linking visitors with a destination's place identity. Li et al. (2023) show that food authenticity and sensory appeal influence tourist experience and behavioural intention through affective responses, memory, and destination attachment. In practical terms, tourists may interpret authenticity from ingredients, flavour, preparation, presentation, atmosphere, interaction, or knowledge about the food. Sego Berkat contains several of these cues, especially its home-style flavour, teak-leaf packaging, relationship with the traditional kitchen, and cultural association with food sharing.

Traditional Food and Tourism Development

Traditional cuisine can support destination development when the food is accessible to tourists and its distinctiveness is communicated effectively. Park & Widyanta (2022) , working in Special Region of Yogyakarta, show that local food experiences may expand the destination foodscape through interactions among tourists, local providers, and food spaces. The implication is that commercial development does not necessarily eliminate local identity. Instead, culinary businesses can provide new points of access to traditional food. Sustainable culinary tourism, however, requires attention to community benefit, cultural continuity, resource use, and the maintenance of local knowledge (Ainiya et al., 2025); (Kalenjuk Pivarski et al., 2023); (Witara et al., 2025).

METHOD

This study employed a descriptive qualitative approach to identify the gastronomic characteristics of Sego Berkat and to analyse its potential as a culinary tourism attraction in Gunungkidul. Qualitative description is appropriate when a study seeks to provide a comprehensive and relatively direct description of a phenomenon rather than develop an abstract theoretical interpretation (Sandelowski, 2010). Accordingly, the present study was designed to organise and describe information concerning Sego Berkat, including its cultural background, culinary characteristics, traditional presentation, commercial development, and relevance to culinary tourism.

Sego Berkat was selected purposively because it represents a traditional food of Gunungkidul that continues to appear in communal traditions, household food practices, and commercial culinary settings(Sego Berkat Diusulkan Jadi Warisan Budaya Tak Benda Gunungkidul - RRI.Co.Id, n.d.). Purposive selection enables researchers to choose cases or information sources that correspond closely with the aims and objectives of a study (Campbell et al., 2020). The selection was therefore based on the cultural relevance of Sego Berkat, the availability of culinary documentation, and its growing visibility in the culinary tourism context of Gunungkidul.

No new interviews or survey data were collected for this study. The research relied on existing culinary documentation, visual records, written activity records, scholarly literature, and a contextual documentary corpus. Documentary analysis is appropriate for qualitative research because documents can provide information about events, practices, meanings, institutional activities, and social phenomena and can be systematically reviewed alongside other forms of evidence (Bowen, 2009). The core culinary documentation included descriptions and visual records of Sego Berkat, traditional cooking settings, side dishes, teak-leaf presentation, and local culinary practices.

The contextual documentary corpus consisted of 16 written sources published between 2020 and 2026, including local and national media reports, culinary documentation, cultural reports, and an academic article concerning the naming of Javanese rice dishes. Sources were purposively included when they contained information relevant to at least one of the following aspects: historical or cultural background, meaning of the dish, ingredients and side dishes, traditional presentation, commercial development, tourism consumption, nostalgia, or cultural recognition. Sources that merely mentioned Sego Berkat without providing substantive information relevant to these categories were not used in the analysis.

Scholarly literature and documentary sources served different analytical purposes. Peer-reviewed literature provided the conceptual background for culinary tourism, culinary heritage, authenticity, sustainability, and local-food tourism, whereas documentary media were treated as contextual evidence concerning how Sego Berkat has been represented, consumed, and commercialised. This distinction is consistent with documentary analysis, in which documents are examined for their relevance, context, credibility, and contribution to the research question rather than being treated as equivalent forms of evidence (Bowen, 2009).

Data were analysed using a qualitative content analysis procedure. Qualitative content analysis enables textual information to be systematically organised into categories that represent recurring meanings and characteristics within the data (Elo et al., 2014). The analysis involved four stages. First, all documentary materials were read repeatedly to identify information relevant to the objectives of the study. Second, relevant information was reduced and grouped into categories covering historical and socio-cultural background, ingredients and side dishes, cooking techniques, utensils and cooking spaces, teak-leaf packaging, serving practices, commercial development, and tourism potential. Third, the categories were organised narratively and compared across sources to identify similarities, differences, and recurring descriptions. Finally, conclusions were developed by relating the identified gastronomic characteristics of Sego Berkat to established concepts of culinary heritage and culinary tourism.

To strengthen the credibility of the analysis, information was compared across different documentary sources rather than relying on a single report. Greater analytical weight was given to information that appeared consistently in several independent documents, was supported by the existing culinary documentation, or was consistent with peer-reviewed research. Attention to the selection of data, organisation of categories, interpretation, and transparent reporting is important for establishing the trustworthiness of qualitative content analysis (Elo et al., 2014). The analysis was limited to identifying and interpreting gastronomic characteristics documented across the available sources, because this study relies entirely on documentary and secondary materials. The study did not collect primary data from tourists, culinary business operators, local communities, or destination managers. Consequently, references to the tourism potential of Sego Berkat are interpreted as analytical possibilities derived from its documented gastronomic characteristics, rather than as evidence of actual tourist demand, visitor satisfaction, market feasibility, or behavioural intention. Empirical validation of these tourism-related dimensions requires further field-based research.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Sego Berkat in the Culinary Tradition of Gunungkidul

The documentary synthesis indicates that Sego Berkat is closely connected with the social and ceremonial life of Gunungkidul. It commonly appears in kenduri, slametan, rasulan, family celebrations, and other gatherings where food is prepared collectively and distributed to participants. In this setting, the word berkat is not merely a product name. It refers to food associated with blessing and giving, usually received after the gathering and taken home. This meaning gives the dish a social function that distinguishes it from an ordinary packed meal. It means that the cultural meaning of Sego Berkat is strongly related to togetherness. Preparation for communal events traditionally requires cooperation among family members and neighbours. Tasks such as preparing ingredients, cooking rice, making side dishes, arranging portions, and distributing food involve collective labour. This practice reflects gotong royong and guyub rukun, values frequently used to describe Javanese community relationships. The food thus represents not only the outcome of cooking but also the social process through which it is made and shared.

Historical descriptions also connect Sego Berkat with gratitude and social reciprocity. Food is distributed because the host shares the outcome of a communal occasion with those who attend or assist. For the receiver, the package becomes a material reminder of participation in the event. This relationship between food, occasion, and social exchange is important for culinary tourism because it provides a story that tourists can understand even when they encounter Sego Berkat in a commercial setting. The culinary product has a cultural narrative that already exists independently of tourism. Recent institutional attention strengthens this interpretation of Sego Berkat as heritage. In 2026, Sego Berkat was proposed by the cultural authority of Gunungkidul as an Intangible Cultural Heritage candidate. At the time of this study, the proposal was still under review and should not be interpreted as a completed designation. Nevertheless, the proposal demonstrates that local institutions recognise the dish as a cultural practice transmitted across generations and connected with the continuing traditions of rasulan, kenduri, and slametan.

Gastronomic Characteristics of Sego Berkat

Sego Berkat from a gastronomic perspective is characterised by simplicity rather than elaborate presentation. The basic structure is white rice accompanied by several familiar Javanese side dishes. Documentary sources repeatedly mention sautéed tempeh with green chilli, vermicelli or glass noodles, serundeng, and small portions of meat or chicken. Other versions may include baceman, empal, babat, iso, egg, or crackers. The composition is therefore variable, especially between ceremonial and commercial versions. This variation suggests that the gastronomic identity of Sego Berkat is based on a recognisable style of meal rather than a single standardised recipe.



Figure 1. Sego Berkat structure and side dishes

The flavour profile generally combines savoury, mildly sweet, spicy, and aromatic elements. Rice provides a neutral base, while tempeh and noodles contribute savoury and spicy notes. Serundeng adds coconut aroma, sweetness, and a dry texture. Meat, chicken or offal provides richness in versions where it is included. These elements are common in Javanese home-style cooking, which is significant because Sego Berkat derives much of its identity from familiarity. Its attraction does not depend on luxury ingredients but on the combination of everyday tastes, traditional preparation, and cultural associations.

Cooking techniques are also relatively simple and consistent with household or communal food production. Rice is boiled or steamed; tempeh and noodles are sautéed; coconut is seasoned and cooked into serundeng; meat or chicken may be braised, fried, or cooked with spices depending on the version. In traditional settings, the food may be prepared in a pawon using basic cooking utensils and heat sources appropriate to household or communal cooking. The simplicity of these techniques contributes to the dish's accessibility and explains why it can be produced for both community gatherings and commercial food service.

Ingredients, Cooking Practices, and Serving

Table 1 summarises the gastronomic components most consistently identified in the documentation. The table does not present a fixed standard recipe because the available evidence shows variation across households and commercial outlets. Instead, it describes the common culinary structure of Sego Berkat and the role of each component.

Table 1. Typical Gastronomic Components of Sego Berkat

Component	Common elements	Typical technique	Gastronomic role
Rice	White rice	Boiled or steamed	Main staple and neutral base for side dishes
Tempeh	Tempeh, green chilli, seasoning	Sautéed	Savoury-spicy home-style element
Noodles	Vermicelli or glass noodles	Sautéed	Soft texture and savoury accompaniment
Serundeng	Grated coconut and spices	Seasoned and dry-cooked	Aromatic, slightly sweet and dry component
Meat /chicken / protein	Shredded beef or Shredded chicken; variations may include empal, babat, iso, egg, or baceman	Braised, fried, or spiced depending on version	Adds richness and distinguishes outlet or occasion
Packaging	Teak leaves (godhong jati)	Leaf cleaned, prepared, and folded around warm food	Visual identity, aroma, tactile experience, and traditional presentation

The table highlights two important points. First, Sego Berkat is a complete meal assembled from several relatively simple preparations rather than one complex cooking technique. Second, variation is part of the culinary tradition. Different households and commercial outlets may change the protein or side dishes, yet the combination of rice, familiar accompaniments, and teak-leaf presentation continues to make the meal recognisable as Sego Berkat.

Teak Leaves as Traditional Packaging and Culinary Identity

The use of teak leaves, or godhong jati, is one of the strongest visual markers of Sego Berkat in Gunungkidul. While different Javanese foods may use banana leaves or paper, Sego Berkat is repeatedly represented in the documentary corpus as rice and side dishes wrapped in teak leaves. The package is easily recognised because the broad leaf creates a natural brown-green surface and a rustic appearance that contrasts with modern disposable packaging. The culinary role of teak leaves extends beyond appearance. Warm food enclosed in the leaf produces a characteristic aroma, adding an olfactory dimension to the meal. This sensory effect is important because aroma is one of the cues through which tourists evaluate the distinctiveness and authenticity of food. Li et al. (2023) show that sensory appeal

contributes to tourist experience and memory. In the case of Sego Berkat, the wrapper becomes part of the eating experience because the visitor sees, smells, touches, and opens it before consuming the meal.

Teak-leaf packaging also provides an interpretive opportunity for culinary tourism. A seller or guide can explain why the leaf is used, how it is prepared, and how it relates to older practices of food packaging in the region. Such explanation turns a practical material into cultural knowledge. The tourism value therefore lies not only in promoting the leaf as environmentally friendly, but in retaining its connection with local food practice and avoiding unsupported claims about preservation or food safety unless these are demonstrated scientifically.



Figure 2. Sego Berkat Packaging

From Ritual Food to Commercial Culinary Product

Sego Berkat has undergone an important change in accessibility. Traditionally, access was connected with participation in a communal or ceremonial event. A person received the food because he or she attended, helped, or was socially connected with the host. This circulation limited the dish largely to community networks. Commercial food service created a new route of access: visitors can now purchase Sego Berkat without entering a private ritual context. A frequently documented example of commercial adaptation is the development of a Sego Berkat menu by a Gunungkidul restaurant around 2014. The idea was inspired by childhood memories of waiting for parents to return from social gatherings carrying food. The commercial version used rice, sautéed tempeh, noodles, shredded beef, serundeng, and teak-leaf wrapping at an affordable price. This example is important because it shows how nostalgia and cultural memory were translated into a marketable product. It does not represent the origin of Sego Berkat, which is older and embedded in social traditions, but it demonstrates one path through which the dish entered modern culinary business. Commercialisation has since widened the locations in which Sego Berkat can be encountered. Reports describe its presence in Wonosari, traditional markets, simple warungs, and tourism areas, including coastal destinations. This expansion makes the dish more relevant to culinary tourism because visitors can include it in ordinary travel itineraries. Commercial availability also allows local enterprises to benefit from a food that already has strong cultural recognition. It follows by challenges. The challenge is to maintain recognisable identity while adapting to food-service requirements. Heritage-food research shows

that authenticity can change over time and that adaptation is not automatically negative (Almansouri et al., 2022). For Sego Berkat, practical adaptation may include portion size, outlet setting, service speed, or menu variation. However, if the meal loses its key flavour profile, teak-leaf presentation, cultural story, and connection with local culinary practice, it may become difficult to distinguish from other rice packages. Commercial development should therefore preserve several core markers while allowing reasonable variation.

Sego Berkat as a Culinary Tourism Attraction

The findings indicate that Sego Berkat has several characteristics that can support its development as a culinary tourism attraction. The first is cultural distinctiveness. The dish is linked with kenduri, slametan, rasulan, gratitude, and food sharing. This gives visitors more than a menu description; it provides a story about how food operates in local social life. Culinary tourism research consistently shows that tourists use local food to understand destination culture and identity (Ellis et al., 2018).

The second characteristic is gastronomic recognisability. Sego Berkat combines familiar Javanese home-style side dishes with a presentation that is visually distinctive. A food attraction does not need rare ingredients to be memorable. Badu-Baiden and Kim (2022) show that memorable local food consumption involves several dimensions beyond product novelty, including local culture, conviviality, and experience. Sego Berkat's value therefore lies in the coherence between simple food, local taste, cultural meaning, and presentation.

The third characteristic is sensory identity, particularly the teak-leaf wrapper. Packaging can become part of attraction when it is recognisable, culturally meaningful, and connected with the way the food is consumed. Visitors can observe the wrapping process, learn how the leaf is used, and experience the aroma when the package is opened. This type of simple culinary demonstration is consistent with the idea that food tourism may involve producers, preparation, service, and interpretation rather than eating alone (Kivela & Crotts, 2006).

The fourth characteristic is accessibility. Unlike foods that are available only during a specific ritual, Sego Berkat can now be purchased in commercial outlets. This accessibility allows destination managers or tourism businesses to integrate it into breakfast recommendations, culinary maps, local-food itineraries, or visits to traditional markets and community-based tourism sites. Park & Widyanta (2022) show that local food tourism in Special Region of Yogyakarta develops through interactions among visitors, suppliers, and food environments. Sego Berkat can contribute to this wider foodscape by connecting tourists with everyday local culinary spaces.

The fifth characteristic is affordability. Commercial descriptions consistently frame Sego Berkat as a simple and relatively inexpensive meal. Affordability broadens the potential market because the food can be consumed by different visitor segments without requiring a specialised fine-dining setting. For destination development, this is advantageous: the dish can remain close to ordinary local consumption while still becoming part of tourism promotion. Culinary tourism therefore does not have to transform traditional food into an exclusive product.

The sixth characteristic is storytelling potential. The history of berkat, communal preparation, teak-leaf wrapping, commercial transformation, and current heritage-recognition efforts provide several layers of story. Farizqi & Prasetyanto (2025) similarly show that the history and philosophical meaning of Sego Gono can strengthen its tourism value when communicated to visitors. For Sego Berkat, short and accurate storytelling can be attached to menus, culinary maps, tour interpretation, food demonstrations, or conversations with sellers. The purpose is not to romanticise the food, but to help visitors understand why it matters locally.

Taken together, the documented characteristics of Sego Berkat including its connection with communal traditions, recognisable composition, teak-leaf presentation, local culinary knowledge, and transformation into commercial food settings indicate that the dish possesses several attributes commonly associated with culinary tourism resources. These characteristics may support cultural storytelling, culinary interpretation, local-food promotion, and the strengthening of Gunungkidul's gastronomic identity. However, the present study does not provide empirical evidence of tourist demand, visitor satisfaction, willingness to visit, willingness to pay, or market feasibility. Therefore, Sego Berkat should be understood in this study as possessing documented gastronomic attributes that may support future tourism development, rather than as an empirically verified tourism attraction. Further research involving visitors, culinary entrepreneurs, community members, and tourism stakeholders is required to evaluate how these attributes are perceived and whether they translate into actual tourism demand and economic benefits.

Implications for Culinary Tourism Development in Gunungkidul

Developing Sego Berkat for tourism does not require transforming it into a large attraction. A more appropriate strategy is to strengthen the information and presentation around existing culinary practices. Food outlets can maintain teak-leaf presentation where feasible, provide a short explanation of the meaning of berkat, and identify the main traditional side dishes. Community-based tourism sites can demonstrate selected preparation or wrapping activities, while markets and restaurants can become points on a local culinary map. A second implication concerns differentiation. Gunungkidul has many traditional foods, and tourism promotion is stronger when each food has a clear identity. Sego Berkat can be positioned around three recognisable ideas: food sharing and blessing, home-style Gunungkidul flavour, and teak-leaf presentation. These characteristics are simple enough for tourists to remember and sufficiently grounded in documentary evidence to avoid constructing an artificial brand story.

A third implication is the involvement of local culinary businesses. The continuity of traditional food depends partly on whether people continue to cook, sell, and value it. Sustainable culinary tourism research emphasises that local ingredients, small enterprises, community participation, and cultural continuity should be considered together (Ainiya et al., 2025); (Kalenjuk Pivarski et al., 2023); (Witara et al., 2025). Promoting Sego Berkat through existing local businesses can therefore support both visitor access and local economic benefit. Finally, cultural recognition should be treated carefully. The 2026 proposal to register Sego Berkat as Intangible Cultural Heritage creates an opportunity for stronger documentation

and public awareness, but tourism communication should distinguish between a proposal and an official designation. Accurate interpretation is important because heritage tourism depends on credibility. Whether or not formal designation is eventually granted, the gastronomic characteristics identified in this study already demonstrate that Sego Berkat has substantial cultural and culinary value for Gunungkidul.

CONCLUSIONS

This study identifies Sego Berkat as a traditional culinary heritage of Gunungkidul whose gastronomic identity is constructed through the relationship between food, communal traditions, culinary practices, local knowledge, and material presentation. Its association with kenduri, slametan, and rasulan, the composition of rice and familiar Javanese side dishes, traditional preparation practices, and the distinctive use of teak leaves demonstrate that Sego Berkat represents more than an ordinary packaged meal. These elements communicate cultural meanings related to sharing, gratitude, social relationships, and local identity. The transformation of Sego Berkat from food primarily associated with communal and ritual occasions into a product that is also available in contemporary commercial culinary settings demonstrates the continuing adaptation of traditional cuisine. This transformation provides opportunities for culinary heritage to remain visible and economically relevant while maintaining recognisable cultural characteristics. From a tourism perspective, the findings indicate that the history, cultural meaning, traditional preparation, teak-leaf presentation, and local identity associated with Sego Berkat constitute potential gastronomic resources for culinary tourism development in Gunungkidul. These findings should not, however, be interpreted as evidence of established tourist demand or market feasibility. Because the study was based entirely on documentary and secondary materials, it did not measure tourist perceptions, visitor satisfaction, behavioural intentions, willingness to pay, or the economic impact of Sego Berkat as a tourism product. Further empirical research involving visitors, local culinary businesses, community members, and tourism stakeholders is therefore needed to assess how these gastronomic characteristics can be translated into viable and culturally responsible culinary tourism experiences.

DECLARATIONS

Competing Interests

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Generative artificial intelligence tools, specifically ChatGPT-4o and Gemini AI, were used to assist with language refinement, English-language editing, and improvement of the clarity and organisation of the manuscript. The authors independently reviewed, verified, revised, and take full responsibility for the accuracy, interpretation, citations, and final content of the manuscript. Artificial intelligence was not used as a source of empirical data, was not listed as an author, and did not replace the authors' scholarly judgement.

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