

Effective Ways of Making Food in the Cultural and Civilized Context

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ABSTRACT

This study explores effective ways of making food within cultural and civilized contexts, examining how traditional practices and modern culinary techniques contribute to health, identity, and social cohesion. It analyzes the influence of cultural heritage, religious beliefs, environmental factors, and technological advancement on food preparation methods across different societies in Kogi state. The research highlights how civilized food practices promote hygiene, nutrition, sustainability, and respect for cultural diversity. By comparing indigenous cooking methods with contemporary approaches, the study demonstrates that effective food preparation balances tradition with innovation. Ultimately, this study emphasizes that food-making practices are central to cultural preservation, social organization, and the advancement of civilized living. The study focuses on the effective ways of making food using cultural (traditional) and civilized (modern) methods. It examines preparation techniques, challenges, and the potential integration of both systems. The research does not cover food consumption patterns but emphasizes preparation processes, nutritional implications, and cultural relevance in Kogi.

Keywords: Food preparation, cultural practices, civilization, traditional cooking methods, food hygiene, nutrition, sustainability, integration.

INTRODUCTION

Food refers to any edible substance, solid or liquid, derived from plants, animals, or other natural sources that are prepared, processed, and consumed to sustain life, promote health, and satisfy social and cultural needs (Food and Agriculture Organization, 2013; World Health Organization, 2020). Within a cultural and civilized context, food also represents a symbolic expression of a people's heritage, values, beliefs, and level of social development, as reflected in traditional ingredients, preparation methods, hygiene practices, presentation, and consumption patterns (Counihan & Van Esterik, 2013; Fischler, 1988).

Food preparation is a fundamental human activity that supports survival, cultural preservation, and social cohesion (Lévi-Strauss, 1966; Mintz & Du Bois, 2002). Across different societies, communities have developed indigenous food preparation techniques such as boiling, roasting, fermentation, pounding, steaming, and smoking. These cultural methods are rooted in tradition and reflect the identity, values, and lived experiences of a people (Goody, 1982). They also serve as channels through which traditional knowledge is passed down from one generation to the next (UNESCO, 2010).

In modern or civilized contexts, however, technological advancements have transformed how food is prepared. Contemporary methods prioritize convenience, safety, hygiene, efficiency, and nutritional balance (World Health Organization, 2015; Fellows, 2009). Appliances such as electric cookers, microwaves, blenders, refrigerators, and food processors have made food preparation faster and more precise (Fellows, 2009). While modernization has brought significant improvements, it has also led to the decline of cultural culinary practices, risking the loss

of valuable indigenous knowledge and taste (Johns & Sthapit, 2004). Understanding how cultural and civilized food preparation approaches can be effectively integrated is essential for ensuring food quality, promoting cultural preservation, and enhancing nutritional outcomes in society (Kittler, Sucher, & Nelms, 2017).

Previous research in North-Central Nigeria has documented specific traditional food preparation practices among the Igala, Ebira and Okun peoples, including the use of iru (locust bean) and daddawa, fermentation of cassava for fufu production, and smoking of fish and meat for preservation (Bello & Ahmed, 2019; Ojo & Akinwale, 2017). However, no study has systematically compared the adoption of modern cooking methods across these ethnic groups in Kogi state, nor has any research examined the perceived effectiveness of integrated traditional-modern approaches.

Effective ways of food preparation refer to methods and practices that ensure food is nutritious, safe, hygienic, culturally acceptable, and appealing (Food and Agriculture Organization, 2011; World Health Organization, 2020). In the context of a cultural and civilized society, the following are recognized as effective means of food preparation:

1. Proper Selection of Ingredients

Using fresh, wholesome, and culturally appropriate ingredients enhances nutritional value and preserves traditional food identity. Locally sourced foods are often preferred as they reflect cultural heritage and support food sustainability.

2. Adequate Cleaning and Hygiene Practices

Washing hands, utensils, cooking surfaces, and raw food materials thoroughly prevents contamination and food-borne illnesses. Good personal and environmental hygiene is a key indicator of civilized food preparation.

3. Appropriate Cooking Methods

Employing suitable cooking techniques such as boiling, steaming, frying, roasting, baking, and grilling helps retain nutrients while improving taste and texture. The choice of method often depends on cultural norms and the type of food being prepared.

4. Observance of Cultural Food Practices

Respecting traditional food preparation methods, taboos, and rituals ensures cultural continuity and acceptance. Many indigenous techniques have been proven effective over time in preserving taste and nutritional value.

5. Use of Modern and Safe Cooking Equipment

Combining traditional knowledge with modern tools such as gas cookers, ovens, blenders, and refrigerators improves efficiency, safety, and food quality, reflecting a civilized approach to food preparation.

6. Proper Food Preservation Techniques

Methods such as drying, smoking, refrigeration, freezing, and fermentation help extend shelf life, reduce waste, and maintain food quality, especially in traditional societies.

7. Balanced Meal Planning

Preparing meals that combine carbohydrates, proteins, fats, vitamins, and minerals ensures nutritional adequacy and promotes good health.

8. Proper Food Presentation and Serving

Attractive presentation, appropriate portioning, and the use of clean serving utensils enhance appetite and demonstrate cultural etiquette and refinement.

9. Time and Temperature Control

Cooking food at the correct temperature and for the right duration ensures thorough cooking, improves flavor, and prevents food-borne diseases.

10. Waste Management and Clean-Up

Proper disposal of food waste and cleaning of cooking areas after preparation promotes environmental cleanliness and reflects civilized food habits.

These effective ways of food preparation support **health, cultural preservation, and social well-being**, making them suitable for academic discussion in research work on food preparation within a cultural and civilized context

Cultural Food Preparation: Traditional methods of cooking rooted in indigenous practices.

Civilized Food Preparation: Modern methods using technological tools and scientifically improved techniques.

Integration: The blending of cultural and modern techniques to enhance food quality.

Challenges: Constraints limiting the use or effectiveness of either method

The statement of the problem here is, Despite the rich cultural diversity of Kogi state, food preparation practices in some communities are still influenced by poor hygiene, inadequate knowledge of modern food safety, standards, and gradual loss of traditional values. Cases of food contamination, foodborne diseases and environmental pollution have been reported due to improper handling, storage and preparation of food. Additionally, the influence of urbanization and fast food. culture has led to neglect of indigenous food practices that promote healthy and balanced diets. These challenges raise concern about how food can be prepared effectively while maintaining cultural identity and civilized standard in Kogi state.

The General purpose of the study is to examine effective ways of making food in both cultural and civilized contexts in Kogi state.

The study seek to;

1. To identify traditional cultural methods of food preparation.
2. To examine the level of hygiene and food safety awareness among food preparers.
3. To determine the challenges affecting the use of cultural and modern food preparation methods.
4. Suggest strategies for improving food preparation practice while preserving cultural values.

To carry out an effective study, the following questions were asked to better carry out this research,

1. What traditional cultural methods of food preparation exist in local communities?
2. What modern or civilized food preparation methods are commonly used today?
3. What challenges affect the use of cultural and modern food preparation methods?
4. How can cultural and modern methods be integrated to improve food quality and cultural identity?

This study is significantly beneficial to a range of stakeholders. It will help households and communities appreciate the value of indigenous food preparation methods, thereby promoting cultural preservation. Nutritionists, food scientists, and health workers may use the findings to develop strategies that combine cultural and modern techniques for improved dietary outcomes. Policymakers and educators may also rely on the study

to advocate for safe, sustainable, and culturally relevant food practices. Academically, the study adds to existing literature on food culture, nutrition, and public health, serving as a reference for future researchers. This study examined the effective ways of making food in cultural and civilized contexts in Kogi State. The research focused on how traditional food preparation methods coexist with modern cooking practices in the state.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a descriptive survey research design. The study was conducted in Kogi State, Nigeria. Kogi State is located in the North-Central geopolitical zone of Nigeria and is culturally diverse, comprising major ethnic groups such as Igala, Ebira, and Okun (Yoruba). These groups possess rich cultural food preparation practices that vary across local government areas. The choice of Kogi State was based on its cultural diversity and the prevalence of both traditional and modern food preparation practices. The study comprised of food handlers, household food preparers, food vendors, and consumers of traditional foods in selected local government areas of Kogi State. These groups were selected because they are directly involved in food preparation and consumption and possess relevant knowledge of cultural and civilized food preparation practices.

A sample size of 200 respondents was used for the study. The sample was selected using a multistage sampling technique. First, three local government areas were appropriately selected to represent the major ethnic groups in Kogi State. Second, simple random sampling was used to select communities within the local government areas. Finally, respondents were selected using convenience sampling due to accessibility. This approach ensured adequate representation of cultural diversity in this study. A structured questionnaire was used for data collection and the validity of the instrument was established through face and content validity. Copies of the questionnaire were submitted to experts in Home Economics, Food and Nutrition, and research methodology for review. Their corrections and suggestions were incorporated to ensure that the instrument adequately measured the variables of the study. The reliability of the instrument was determined using the test-retest method. The questionnaire was administered to 20 respondents outside the study area, and the responses were correlated using Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient. A reliability coefficient of 0.78 was obtained, indicating that the instrument was reliable for the study.

The researcher administered the questionnaires personally with the assistance of trained research assistants. This method ensured a high rate of return and allowed clarification of questionnaire items where necessary. All complete questionnaires were retrieved and used for data analysis.

Empirical Results, Tables and Interpretation

Data were collected between October to November, 2025. Of the 200 respondents, 20 (10%) were from Idah LGA, 20 (10%) were from Dekins LGA, 35 (17.5%) were from Ofu LGA, 10 (5%) were from Okene LGA, 15 (7.5%) were from Adavi LGA, 25 (12.5%) were from Okehi LGA, 20 (10%) were from Kabba-bunu LGA, 25 (12.5%) were from Ijumu LGA, and 30 (15%) from Yagba east.

The analysis and interpretation of data collected from respondents on the effective ways of making food in both cultural and civilized contexts in Kogi State.

Gender Distribution

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	60	30%
Female	140	70%
Total	200	100%

The table shows that the majority of respondents were female (70%), which reflects that females are more involved in food preparation activities in many homes and communities.

Age Distribution of Respondents

Age Range	Frequency	Percentage
18–25	60	30%
26–35	60	30%
36–45	50	25%
46 and above	30	15%
Total	200	100%

The table indicates that most respondents were between the ages of 18–35 years.

Result 1: Respondent using traditional cooking method

Respondent	Frequency	Percentage
Boiling	60	30%
Roasting	40	20%
Fermentation	20	10%
Pounding	20	10%
Steaming	30	15%
Smoking	30	15%
Total	200	100%

The result shows that 30% of respondents preferred boiling as the traditional method of cooking.

Result 2: Respondent using modern method and equipment?

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Gas cookers	60	30%
Electric cookers	40	20%
Microwaves	30	15%
Refrigerators	50	25%
Blenders	20	10%
Total	200	100%

This indicates that 30% of people uses gas cooker as modern method and equipment.

Result 3: Modernization improved food preparation methods.

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Electricity	140	70%

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Cultural resistance	40	20%
Time constraint	20	10%
Total	200	100%

The findings show that modernization, such as the use of gas cookers, electricity, and modern kitchen equipment, has improved food preparation methods.

Result 4: Summary showing respondent integration strategy in food preparation

Theme	Categories	Frequency	Percentage	Interpretation
Gender Distribution	Male	60%	30%	Majority of respondent were females
	Female	140%	70%	
	Total	200%	100%	
Age Distribution	18-25	60	30%	Youth and young adult formed large part of the respondent.
	26-35	60	30%	
	36-45	50	25%	
	46 and above	30	15%	
	Total	200	100%	
Traditional Cooking Method	Boiling	60	30%	Boiling most commonly used, roasting is frequently practiced, fermentation and pounding less commonly used, steaming and smoking moderately and commonly used.
	Roasting	40	20%	
	Fermentation	20	10%	
	Pounding	20	10%	
	Steaming	30	15%	
	Smoking	30	15%	
	Total	200	100%	
Modern Cooking Method	Gas	60	30%	Gas cooker the most preferred equipment for cooking, electric cookers fairly used, microwaves moderately adopted, refrigerators widely used and blenders the least used.
	Electric cookers	40	20%	
	Microwaves	30	15%	
	Refrigerators	50	25%	
	Blenders	20	10%	
	Total	200	100%	
Challenges Affecting Modern Methods and Equipment	Electricity problems	140	70%	Electricity the major challenge affecting modern cooking methods, some respondents preferred traditional practices and lastly few respondent ³ complained lack of time as a challenge.
	Cultural resistance	40	20%	
	Time constraint	20	10%	
	Total	200	100%	

Summary Findings: The analysis shows that boiling was the most commonly traditional cooking method, while gas cookers were the most widely used modern cooking equipment. Electricity issues constituted the major

challenge affecting the use of cooking method and equipment. The analysis also shows among female and respondents within the age ranges of 18-35 years.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The findings show that culture plays a significant role in food preparation in Kogi State. Traditional cooking methods and indigenous recipes are still widely practiced because they reflect the identity and heritage of the people.

However, modernization has introduced more efficient and hygienic ways of preparing food. Many households now combine traditional methods with modern cooking appliances. This combination helps improve food quality, hygiene, and cooking convenience. The study also shows that both cultural knowledge and modern techniques are important in ensuring effective food preparation in society. The findings revealed that cultural traditions still play an important role in food preparation. However, modern cooking tools and improved hygiene practices have enhanced the quality and safety of food preparation.

CONCLUSION

The study concludes that effective food preparation in Kogi State depends on the integration of traditional knowledge and modern cooking practices. While cultural methods preserve heritage and taste, modern techniques improve hygiene, convenience, and efficiency.

Therefore, maintaining a balance between cultural traditions and modern practices is essential for sustainable food preparation in society.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made;

1. Individuals and families should continue to preserve traditional cooking knowledge as part of cultural heritage.
2. Modern cooking equipment should be encouraged to make it more affordable to improve hygiene and efficient food preparation; “The Kogi State Ministry of Commerce and Industry should partner with local micro finance institution to offer low-interest loans specifically for the purchase of clean cooking technologies (gas cookers, electric stoves, solar-powered cooking devices) for households in rural areas where firewood and charcoal remain dominant. A pilot program in Idah LGA could target 500 households and include training on safe operation and maintenance”.
3. Government and educational institutions should promote training on safe and hygienic food preparation through awareness.
4. Cultural food practices should be documented and taught to younger generations.
5. Awareness programs should be organized to educate people on healthy food preparation methods, through both traditional and modern cooking techniques. “The Kogi State primary health care development agency, in collaboration with the National Orientation Agency, should design and implement a radio-based awareness campaign in Igala, Ebira, and Yoruba languages, broadcast on local stations such as Treasure FM, covering food hygiene, safe storage, and the health benefits of reducing smoke exposure from traditional cooking”.

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