

## Traditional Food Glewo Rice As An Authentic Icon Of Semarang

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**Abstract.** *Traditional or local food is one of the identifying characteristics of a community group that is easily found and recognized. Semarang City has a variety of culinary products from the cultural activities of its people. The diversity of cuisine reflects the personality and characteristics of the people of Semarang. Glewo rice cuisine is one of the things that must be preserved so that it does not disappear and is loved by all groups, especially the younger generation of culinary lovers. Many people do not know that Glewo rice has been a typical dish of old Semarang since the 1930s which is gradually losing its existence in today's society. The purpose of this research is to increase the presence of Nasi Glewo which is almost forgotten, therefore it is necessary to have new innovations and creativity to revive the popularity of Glewo rice including using promotional media, collaboration, innovation, and festivals. The method used is descriptive qualitative by emphasizing the research process and the meaning of data and information. The results of this study show that Glewo Rice as a typical cuisine of Semarang city, has not entirely disappeared from the memory of the people of Semarang, still in order to be used as an authentic Semarang icon, it is necessary to collaborate with other parties, increase the promotion of Glewo rice and increase innovation in the presentation of Glewo rice. This can be by giving a touch of mixture with contemporary cuisine that is in great demand by the general public or served in places that are a favorite of the people of Semarang.*

**Keywords.** *Traditional Food, Authentic Icon, Glewo Rice, Improving, Existence*

### INTRODUCTION

Culinary development is currently growing rapidly, it's no wonder that many people are starting a culinary business. The culinary field is one type of activity that can be considered very promising because food is actually a daily necessity for everyone. The high demand for food motivates many people to start a culinary business.

Semarang is the largest city in Central Java and offers many culinary specialties. Semarang's specialties include traditional cuisine, fast food, snacks or unique snacks, and a variety of specialty drinks. Delicious dishes can easily be found in every corner of Semarang. Not all of Semarang's culinary specialties are the original concoction of Semarang residents. Some of these specialties are the result of acculturation of different cultures and have existed since ancient times because the city of Semarang is a port city that is visited by many foreigners. (Thenu, 2021)

Semarang city specialties have unique flavors that are different and difficult to find in other areas. Culinary wealth is a legacy of ancestors so it needs to be preserved to be passed on to the next generation. The preservation of typical dishes or traditional dishes of Semarang City must be guaranteed because some typical dishes begin to lose their existence in the community.

Some are even less recognized, especially among the younger generation. The rich culinary heritage is gradually being lost and forgotten along with the strong development of today's culinary business.

Semarang's culinary specialties are not just one but consist of various types of dishes with their uniqueness and uniqueness, some of which are the result of acculturation of Chinese, Arabic, and Dutch cultures.

According to Neily Rahma et al 2017, the research shows that Semarang's culinary specialties are known to have unique flavors because they often use traditional recipes. Some of Semarang's famous culinary specialties that can be found throughout Semarang include Lumpia and Tahu Gimbal. Tahu Pong, Bandeng Presto and Wingko Babad. According to the research, some of the culinary delights mentioned above are rarely found in other areas and the prices offered by the people of Semarang City are very cheap and affordable. (Rahma et al., 2017)

Another research conducted by Ardi Pramudika, a student of the Department of Religious and Social Counseling at IAIN Walisongo Semarang, about the culinary history of Semarang City, revealed that some of the culinary specialties of Semarang City include Lunpia, Rasika, Mie Titte, Rondo Royal, Ganjel Rel, Soto Semarang, Babat Gongso (originally from Purwodadi), Tahu Telur, Lontong Cap Go Meh, Buntill, Bandeng Presto, Mangut, Wingko, Glewo Kloyor, and Tahu Pong. (Pramudika, 2015)

Nasi Glewo atau glewo rice as mentioned, is one of the traditional culinary of the ancient people in the city of Semarang. It is a traditional Semarang dish that is close to families in the city of Semarang. Glewo rice is one of the legendary culinary that has existed for approximately 50 years, since 1930, and has almost lost its existence due to the actions of the people of the city of Semarang today. The existence of nasi glewo began to decline in 1992 due to changes that occurred due to competition in the culinary field. The existence of glewo rice, which is identical to the menu of coconut milk and fatty old people's dishes, is now less popular in today's society, especially among teenagers and the younger generation who tend to favor modern cuisine such as dry food. (AP, 2023)

Glewo rice is an intangible cultural heritage in 2022. However, because it is not widely known to the public, the Semarang City Government deliberately invited the public to taste glewo rice during the celebration of the 476th anniversary of the founding of Semarang City, on Wednesday (March 5, 2023). As well as efforts to reintroduce Glewo Rice, especially to the younger generation so that its existence returns. According to intangible heritage cultural

activist Mr. Haryadi Dwi Prasetyo, at the celebration of the 476th anniversary of the founding of Semarang City, Nasi Glewo has existed for more than 50 years. (Fauziyah & Utomo, 2023)

Many people in Semarang today do not know that glewo rice is a specialty of Semarang. Glewo rice started to reappear in 2017. Currently, in Semarang, there are not many people who sell glewo rice because it has been hereditary that glewo rice traders do not continue their parents' business for generations.

To introduce Glewo rice as a culinary specialty of Semarang City, as well as restore its existence as a culinary specialty and intangible cultural heritage to the younger generation, the Semarang City Government must work harder in developing Glewo rice, both in terms of taste, variety, packaging, and advertising to reach all levels of society, especially the younger generation, in the midst of the many culinary businesses, which are increasingly rapid. The city government must also ensure the socialization of Nasi Glewo to the people of Semarang. So that the citizens of Semarang City can find out information about Glewo rice, one of the typical dishes of Semarang City.

The purpose of this research is to analyze the potential of Nasi Glewo traditional food that can be used as an authentic icon of Semarang, and how the Semarang City government's efforts to introduce Glewo rice and restore its existence in the community, especially for the younger generation, amid the current culinary business.

## **METHOD**

To fully understand the discovery of the traditional dish Glewo rice as a symbol of Semarang City, the method used is a qualitative approach, which explores thoughts and phenomena that occur based on the point of view of individuals or communities in a natural way. Therefore, this research was conducted directly in the place where the phenomenon occurred. (Widyaningsih, 2020).

The data collection method uses techniques, including:

1. Interview

Interview activities are carried out directly and indirectly, namely through WhatsApp messages. The interview is used in order to obtain the right response to the questions asked regarding the phenomena that occur at the location. (Fadhallah, 2020). The sources of this research are direct data sources from the government, intangible cultural heritage activists, entrepreneurs, local traders, and tourists.

2. Observation

Observation in this study was conducted directly in Semarang City, on the existence of Glewo rice in Semarang City. Observations were made to collect actual data and facts from the scene through in-depth, systematic, and periodic observations. (Joesyiana, 2018)

3. Literature review.

Researchers reviewed various sources of articles and documents to obtain information that complemented the data obtained in the field. The literature review was conducted to collect data or information, evaluate data, theories, or research results, and analyze the results of other publications related to the topic discussed. (Cahyono et al., 2019)

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **1. History of Glewo rice**



**Figure 1.** Glewo rice

Source. [Kemenparekraf.go.id](http://Kemenparekraf.go.id)

The history of glewo rice dates back to 1930. Glewo is Semarang's signature dish in Javanese culture. With special meat seasoning, curry seasoning, and many more. Glewo rice is similar to chicken rice, as most people know. However, the ingredients used are not chicken but muscle meat commonly called koyor, and beef topped with fried chayote and areh sauce (gudeg seasoning) and mlinjo fries. The difference with chicken rice in general lies in the recipe. (Purbaya, 2017).

The process of serving Glewo rice is done with coconut milk and seasoning. Then layer it with beef, koyor, and mlinjo and sprinkle with fried onions. Glewo nasi shows the value of simplicity. The koyor filling replaces meat, as not everyone can afford beef at the same price.

Glewo rice is a culinary that is the result of the acculturation of Chinese and Javanese cultures. Glewo rice in Javanese means "strange, disturbing". Meanwhile, Glewo itself comes from the word "glewor-glewor koyore" which means "tufted koyor". Thus, glewo rice can be said to be a dish with a distinctive Javanese flavor that is rich in spices. The origin of the name Glewo itself is still unknown or a mystery. Glewo is said to come from the bubbles when rice and spices are sautéed together in a wok.

Glewo rice was originally found in Chinatown, an area with a Chinese cultural center in the city of Semarang. According to legend, in the 15th century, there was a Chinese Muslim merchant named Tjoa Siok Lie. He was a spice trader who migrated to Semarang

and opened a business in China. Tjoa Siok Lie came up with the idea of cooking processed meat in a unique way. The result is a meat dish that is tender, fragrant, and with a characteristic spicy flavor. The dish was later called nasi glewo, which in Hokkien means "meat prepared in a special way".

Recently, the popularity of glewo rice has declined, not only due to changes in people's lifestyles. In the past, there were not many fast foods, so many people chose delicious regional dishes. Nowadays, people prefer fast food to traditional food such as glewo rice. Many people think traditional dishes are outdated and have flavors that are too special because of the spices. Another thing that makes the culinary pleasure of Glewo Rice increasingly rare is that there are not many people selling the Glewo rice because no one has been doing the traditional business for generations

## 2. Glewo Rice Making Process

Glewo rice, Semarang's culinary specialty, may become unfamiliar to the city itself if not preserved properly. This popular dish of the 70s and 80s is now almost extinct and hard to find, even just the recipe. When you look at it, glewo rice looks like a delicious rice dish that comes with chicken and tofu, plus chayote and coriander sauce. The difference is that the side dish of glewo rice is not chicken opor but sapide and koyor meat. The gravy is similar to terik vegetables but flavored with kencur. Terik itself is a yellow seasoning for steaming tofu and tempeh with a slightly sweet flavor.

The Semarang City Government, Culture and Tourism Office has promoted glewo rice through cooperation with the World Indonesia Achievement Institute to organize a mass Glewo Rice Eating Record Breaking activity at the 476th Semarang City Anniversary Reception on May 2, 2023, which took place at the Semarang City Hall which was attended by 11,476 people from Semarang City and outside Semarang City.

In preparation for the celebration, the Semarang City Government has circulated a recipe for the glewo rice menu, which is processed according to the given recipe. The glewo rice recipe is as follows:

### a. Glewo rice recipe (6 – 8 servings )

**Table 1. Glewo Rice Recipe**

• 500 grams of beef tendon	• ½ teaspoon pepper
• 1 liter of water	• 1 ½ teaspoon mushroom broth
• 65 ml coconut milk	• 1 teaspoon salt
• 2 lemongrass stalks	• 80 grams onion
• 1 lime leaf	• 40 grams of garlic
• 1 bay leaf	• 4 big red chili peppers
• 3 galangal knuckles	• 1 turmeric knuckle

• 1 knuckle of ginger	• 3 roasted candlenuts
• 15 grams of brown sugar	• 1 kencur knuckle
• 1 teaspoon coriander	• White rice to taste

**b. How to Make Glewo Rice**

- 1) Simmer the beef tendon with 1 lemongrass stalk, bay leaves, and lime leaves for 45 minutes
- 2) After 45 minutes, remove from heat and drain well. Slice into pieces when the beef tendon has cooled down.
- 3) Blend shallots, garlic, big red chili, turmeric, candlenuts, and galangal until smooth with a little water.
- 4) In addition, grind lemongrass, galangal, and ginger until flat.
- 5) Then, saute the ground spices together with lemongrass, galangal, and ginger until it is cooked.
- 6) When it's cooked, add the sapid vein and the rest of the ingredients except the coconut milk and rice. Cook! Until the sauce boils.
- 7) Finally, add the coconut milk and keep stirring until the sauce thickens.
- 8) Serve this side dish with white rice. With that, Semarang's signature glewo rice is ready to be served.

**3. The Uniqueness of Nasi Glewo as an Authentic Culinary Icon of Semarang City**

As one of the culinary specialties that is almost lost, glewo rice has several advantages that can be introduced to the Semarang community and outside communities as a symbol of the real city of Semarang. Here are some of the advantages of glewo rice, a/l:

- a. Distinctive flavor: the flavor of a mixture of herbs and spices. The combination of traditional spices with beef or chicken is savory and spicy.
- b. Variants of ingredients: glewo rice is made from several different types of ingredients as well as various spices. All the ingredients and spices are mixed and then cooked into a typical Semarang dish.
- c. Suitable for all tastes: glewo rice dishes can be for everyone. The level of spiciness can be adjusted. Not only that, the composition and portion of glewo rice can be adjusted as desired and can be made as a snack or main meal.
- d. Local tradition: Glewo rice is part of the culinary heritage, which has now become an Intangible Cultural Heritage. Glewo rice can be used as part of the culinary tradition and part of the celebration in the city of Semarang so that more people recognize glewo rice.
- e. Affordable price: glewo rice can be found in several places in the city of Semarang, at affordable prices.
- f. Balanced meal: in one serving of glewo rice, you can get rice as a source of carbohydrates, meat or eggs as a source of protein, vegetables for fiber, and gravy that completes the dish and makes it a nutritionally balanced meal.

**4. Government efforts to reintroduce glewo rice**

The recent scarcity of Semarang's signature dish, Glewo rice, is due to a lack of interest in the traditional dish and a shift in public opinion that considers it outdated and imperfect, especially among young people. Therefore, to avoid the scarcity and even loss of culinary specialties that have great historical value, it is necessary to increase public awareness. Culinary matters seem trivial but are actually not too important because they only concern the stomach. But on the other hand, we must also think about the rich cultural

heritage passed down by our ancestors.

The Semarang city government together with the Tourism agency is trying to reintroduce Glewo rice which has begun to disappear from the memory of the people of Semarang city. Some of the efforts made include:

**a. Promotion**

The government has promoted Glewo rice as a unique and delicious culinary specialty of Semarang through social media, websites, and events held in Semarang City. In addition to mass media or social networks in the form of articles, flyers, leaflets, or video advertising. Semarang Government in the framework of the 476th Anniversary of the founding of Semarang City invites everyone who participates in the celebration to try Glewo rice, Semarang's specialty food. This step was taken by the government as a form of promotion to introduce Glewo rice to the public. The Glewo rice at the Semarang celebration was prepared by the Hotel Restaurant Association. (PHRI).

**b. Collaboration**

The Government has begun cooperating with restaurants and food vendors to serve glewo rice as a specialty menu. Meanwhile, during the celebration of Semarang City's 476th Anniversary, the Semarang City Tourism Office, obliged hotel and restaurant operators throughout the city of Semarang to serve glewo rice as a food menu. The presentation of the glewo rice menu at the hotel can be seen in Figure. 2

With the cooperation between the government and entrepreneurs, the popularity of glewo rice will rise again and be recognized by the people of Semarang as a typical Semarang food.



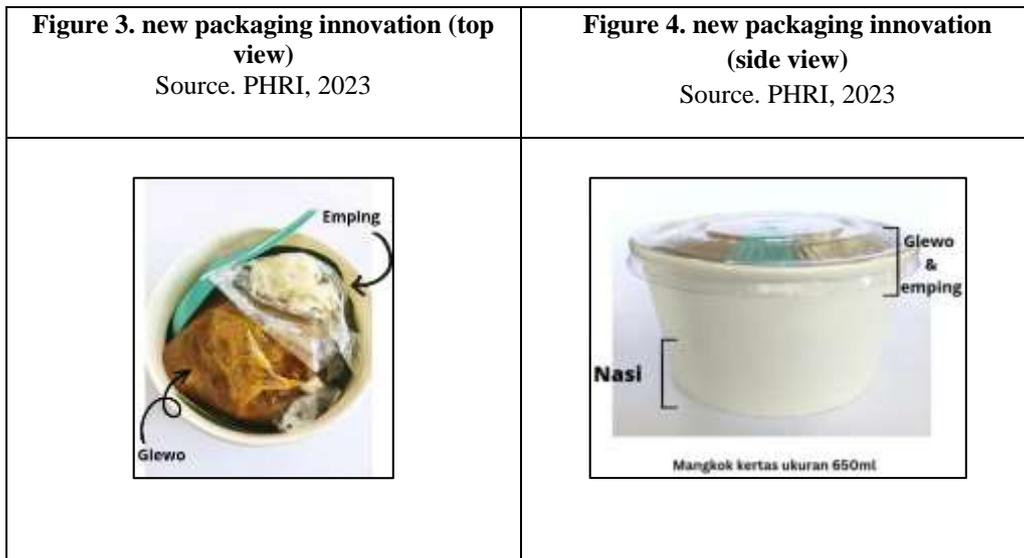
**Figure 2. Glewo Rice Display at Chanti Semarang Hotel**

Source. Chief Anas, 2023

**c. Innovation**

The innovation made by Glewo rice traders is to try to create new variations on Glewo rice, for example by adding new ingredients or changing the way it is served. The variations that will be made to this glewo rice will increase its appeal among culinary connoisseurs so that glewo rice can still exist in the era of culinary revival. The

latest innovation is the new packaging of glewo rice, especially for those who want to take home or order online, as shown in Figures 3 and 4.



#### d. Food Festival

In addition to being included in the hotel menu, the Government and Tourism Office also hope that glewo rice can be included in culinary festivals. So that it can be better introduced to the public. Organizing events or festivals that highlight Semarang's distinctive cuisine can be a way to promote and preserve the culinary arts and the history behind the origin of the cuisine.

## CONCLUSION

Semarang's distinctive cuisine emerged as the city grew. The people of Semarang as part of a coastal society have characteristics that are very acculturated and adapted to other cultures that enter their environment. The existence of other cultures brought by some foreigners also influenced the culinary taste of Semarang. Glewo rice has been one of the traditional culinary of the Semarang city community since a long time ago, a traditional dish that is close to families in the city of Semarang. Glewo rice is one of Semarang's legendary culinary delights that has been almost extinct since 1930. It can be said that at this time the existence of food contained in Semarang cuisine is almost difficult to find.

This is because the social characteristics of acculturation and adaptation have contributed to the continuity of Semarang cuisine. From the beginning of its acceptance until now, many other types have been created to replace the others. As students, our active role certainly also has an impact on the preservation of Semarang's culinary specialties. Students must be able to do new and creative things to revive Semarang's culinary reputation. Of course, it can be in the

form of studies like this or other activities such as promotions, collaborations, innovations, and festivals.

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