

Maritime Foods of the Coastal Communities in Central Vietnam: Heritage, Values and Changes in Contemporary Context

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Vietnam has 28/63 coastal provinces with about twenty-nine million residents living a life associated with the sea. Among them are fourteen provinces in Central Vietnam with over twenty-one million residents.

For generations, the traditional foods of the inhabitants in Central Vietnam, especially the coastal communities, have been sourced from the sea, or from the natural coastal environment, including wild animals and plants. Thanks to ingenious and skillful processing and cooking experience passed down through generations, the people in the central coast of Vietnam have created diverse and unique maritime foods.

The marine foods of the coastal communities in Central Vietnam include recipes for raw dishes, steamed dishes, boiled dishes, grilled dishes, fermented dishes, and fried dishes.

This paper provides an overview of the marine foods in Central Vietnam and the value of these marine foods and considers it an intangible cultural heritage of the community that needs to be maintained and preserved.

This paper also points out the risks that these foods face due to climate change and overfishing, leading to reduced resources for processing. This has changed the food structure in the traditional meal of the coastal communities in Central Vietnam, changing the value of this intangible cultural heritage.

1. Overview of maritime foods of the coastal communities in the Central Vietnam

1.1. The central coast

- Provinces and population
 - Population composition and their livelihoods
 - Communities of fishermen
 - Community of “half fishermen, half farmers”
 - Community of coastal farmers
- The natural environment of the central coast and its role in providing foods for the communities in this region
 - Food sources from the sea
 - Food sources from brackish lagoons
 - Food sources from coastal wetlands
 - Food source from narrow coastal plains
- Climate and environment and its impact on the formation of culinary culture in the central coast region

1.2. Maritime foods of the coastal communities in Central Vietnam

- Meals of fishing communities: ingredients; main dishes; number of meals per day.
- Meals of “half fishermen, half farmers” communities and coastal farmer communities: ingredients; main dishes; number of meals per day.

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2. Maritime foods of the coastal communities in the Central Vietnam: Heritage and Values

2.1. Maritime food heritage of the coastal communities in the Central Vietnam

2.1.1. Categorize dishes based on food ingredients

- Food from animals
 - Food sources from the sea
 - Food sources from the lagoon
 - Food sources from wetlands
- Plant-based dishes
 - Plants from the sea
 - Plants from the lagoon
 - Plants from coastal fields

2.1.2. Categorize dishes based on cooking method

- Raw dishes
- Steamed dishes
- Boiled dishes
- Grilled dishes
- Fermented dishes
- Cooked / fried dishes

2.1.3. Categorize dishes based on the importance

- Main dishes
- Side dishes
- The specialties of each region

2.2. Culinary value of central coast residents

- Nurturing value
- Cultural values
- Commercial/business value

3. Changes in the maritime foods of the coastal communities in the Central Vietnam present day

3.1. Causes of changes

3.1.1. Changes due to reduced food resources due to overexploitation

3.1.2. Changes due to reduced food resources due to unsafe mining and farming environments

- Unsafe due to tension between countries with disputes in the South China Sea
- Unsafe due to climate change

3.1.3. Changes due to a decrease in food resources due to a shrinking mining and farming environment

- Shrinking due to urbanization
- Narrowed by the boom of coastal resorts

3.1.4. Changes due to changes in the livelihoods of local communities

- Changing jobs: giving up fishing, participating in tourism, service activities, industrial job

- The main labor force in the communities in this region migrates to urban areas and industrial production areas to find jobs with higher and more stable incomes.
- Fishing and farming activities of the coastal communities in Central Vietnam have been delayed due to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic.

3.2. Manifestations of change

- Changes in the meal structure of residents: from 1 main meal + 2 snacks to 2 main meals + 1 snack.
- Changed food sources: farmed food is more than food extracted from the natural environment.
- Processing methods changed: raw / fresh dishes, steamed / boiled dishes decreased, fermented dishes decreased; cooked dishes increased.
- The authenticity of the food culture changes
 - Due to the source of material changes
 - Due to tourism and business activities (need to change to serve the needs of visitors from other places)

4. Conclusion

- The traditional maritime food of the coastal communities in Central Vietnam is a form of the community's intangible cultural heritage: rich, diverse, practiced, preserved, and handed down through generations.
- That cuisine is facing many challenges, it is necessary to take measures to protect the food supply, traditional forms of processing and cooking, and the authenticity of the dishes.