

The Dessert Connections: Unveiling the Importance of Dessert in Phuket's Ba-Ba Wedding Ritual

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Abstract

This academic article presents knowledge about auspicious desserts in the wedding rituals of the Baba ethnic group. The objectives are as follows: 1. To provide information about the beliefs and various symbols associated with auspicious desserts in wedding ceremonies. 2. To explore the connections of the Baba ethnic group within the context of wedding rituals. 3. To reflect societal aspects. The author employs descriptive and narrative methods, incorporating selected images to support the description.

The study findings reveal that: 1) Kuih Kapit – Love Letters (Wealth and lifelong companionship), 2) Xi Gua Kuih (Greatness, nobility, all ranks and harmonious unity), 3) Kuih Bahulu (Prosperity and flourishing progress), 4) Pak Thong Kuih (The family is prosperous and thriving), 5) Kanom Tian (Harmony, love and connection, flourishing and blooming), 6) Khao Neaw Heep – Pulut Tai Tai (Learning, camaraderie, and joyful adaptation), 7) Gao Teng Kuih – Kuih Lapis (The experience of love as sweet and deeply binding), 8) Kanom Phing – Kuih Bangkit (The process of cultivating love through time, care, and mutual understanding), 9) Kanom Hor – Kanom Sai Sai (The presence of love between two individuals coming from different places). 2. The Interconnection of Relationships within Baba Ethnic Group Wedding Ceremonies reveals that Chinese migrants arrived on Thai soil during the reign of King Rama III, prompted by 1) economic hardships, 2) royal levies, and 3) cultural transformations. Subsequently, intermarriage with local women ensued, leading to a confluence of cultures. 3. Reflecting societal aspects, disseminating the culture of the Baba ethnic group in various dimensions that influence tourism and sustainable economy.

Keyword : The Dessert , Phuket's Ba-Ba , Wedding Ritual

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The diversity of ethnicities in Phuket province results in differences in beliefs, thoughts, and religious practices among the population. Each tradition is associated with food, which varies in terms of form, appearance, significance, and symbolism. Some types of food are found in the coastal areas of the Andaman Sea, but the names for the same food can differ depending on the preferences, beliefs, and attitudes of each province's culture. The culinary culture of the Baba people has been international since ancient times. Baba ethnic food is present in various ceremonies, such as Chinese New Year, local festivals, religious activities, and wedding ceremonies.

Baba ethnic food is known for its variety, with more than 300 dishes, including single dishes, side dishes, desserts, and special dishes for various festivals and traditional beliefs. Many of these dishes are found in coastal areas in Asia and Oceania. Baba people have a rich culinary heritage, and their dishes are known for their unique flavors, local names, beautiful colors, and balanced nutrition from local ingredients.

The Baba ethnic group is associated with the local culinary wisdom, as their food is deeply rooted in the culture and has been passed down through generations for about 150 years. They incorporate various influences from different ethnicities, and Baba people have a keen culinary sense, enabling them to blend different culinary traditions into their local cuisine. They use local ingredients, adapt to the climate (with hot and humid weather in the southern region), and utilize seasonal vegetables to create a cooling effect in their food.

The key characteristics of Baba ethnic food include:

Names: They use a mix of Chinese, Hokkien, Malayu, and Thai words in their culinary language.

Development: The cuisine has evolved from Peranakan (Penang and Malacca) and Thai local cuisines, influenced by Muslim and Western cultures.

Appearance: The food is typically well-cooked and consumed hot, with an emphasis on aesthetics, including decorative vegetables and fruits.

Flavor: The flavors are well-balanced, with some dishes being sweet, salty, and slightly spicy. Some dishes incorporate sourness from ingredients like tamarind, lime, and lemon. Umami flavors are also present, resulting from ingredients like soy sauce and fermented beans.

Use of Natural Packaging: Traditional packaging methods use natural materials such as banana leaves and coconut leaves to wrap, tie, and pack various dishes.

Medicinal Properties: Some Baba dishes are considered medicinal, as they contain beneficial nutrients and herbs, such as tamarind, galangal, and turmeric.

The Baba wedding ceremony in Phuket is a unique blend of Thai and Chinese cultures. It has evolved over time to become a distinct "Baba wedding" tradition. The

wedding ceremony involves several steps, including engagement, offering to the ancestors, paying respects to the parents, receiving blessings, and celebrating with a banquet.

The traditional wedding ceremony consists of the following steps:

Mediation: The mother (matchmaker) observes the behavior of the bride's family and conveys it to the groom's family.

Secret Observation: The groom's parents consult with each other secretly to prepare gifts for the bride without her knowledge.

Ring Exchange: A guarantee that the wedding ceremony will definitely take place. The matchmaker and elders from both sides prepare red thread-bound rings and bring them wrapped in red paper to the bride's house along with auspicious cakes.

Heaven and Earth Worship: The couple bows to the celestial deity in front of the house. The groom's friend lights three large incense sticks and hands them to the bride's father to worship. After that, the bride's father hands the incense sticks to the bride's mother. The groom's friend then lights three small incense sticks for the couple to pay their respects. The matchmaker instructs the bride and groom to kneel and bow to the deity twelve times as a sign of respect to the ancestors.

Chair Cleansing Ritual: The matchmaker invites the groom's parents to sit in chairs. The bride and groom must first dust off the chairs for the groom's parents before they can sit. The matchmaker offers a face towel to the bride and groom. They each fold the towels into triangles and place them on the chairs. The groom's friend calls the groom's parents to sit, and they remove the face towels and place them on trays before sitting down to receive respects.

Ceremony of Offering Tea: The bride and groom jointly pay their respects to the groom's parents. The groom's friend offers tea to the bride and groom's parents, who, in turn, offer their respects by lifting the tea cups and placing items such as red envelopes or other gifts into the tea tray. The groom's friend informs the guests about the gifts given by the bride and groom's parents. Then, they pay their respects to the elders in order of seniority.

In terms of food during the ceremony, it includes auspicious cakes, auspicious fruits, and five-flavored tea. These components play a role in the wedding ceremony. The sweet dishes used in the wedding ceremony are usually made from rice flour. In the past, rice grains were selected and milled to make rice flour for these auspicious cakes. Common ingredients used include:

Sticky Rice: Used for making cakes that require a soft and fluffy texture, such as Hua Kao (flower-shaped cakes).

Sticky Rice Flour: Boiled sticky rice is used to make sweet dishes like sticky rice balls.

Semolina: Used to make crispy and fluffy cakes.

Yellow Split Peas: Used to make various types of tofu.

Other common ingredients include coconut in various forms, eggs, sugar, and natural food coloring from the local area. These cakes are known for their texture, aroma, and the harmony of their flavors, making them a significant part of the wedding ceremony.

Wedding Day Cakes: On the actual wedding day, special pink sticky rice cakes are prepared and placed on a tray to be offered to the bride. These cakes are called "Khao Tom Khao" and are wrapped in banana leaves.

The days leading up to the wedding involve the preparation of various types of dried cakes, including "Khao Tom," "Khao Kapo," and "Kao Niew Dum." Leaves known as "Lerd" are also prepared for wrapping the cakes. After steaming, the cakes should not change color.

On the day before the wedding, there is a ritual known as "Gwan Gan Mue" or "Kalama." It involves making an important cake called "Gwan Gan Mue" which is essential for the wedding. Elders advise the bride that if she ever gets angry with her groom, she should remember the day they made the cake together to stay united.

These cakes have deep symbolic meanings in the traditional wedding customs of Phuket province, and they are an essential part of the ceremony, representing unity, respect, and blessings for the couple's future life together.

1. Kanom Kalamar is a significant dessert that must be present on a wedding day. It carries the meaning of reminding the newlyweds to love each other closely, avoid getting angry, and not think of separating from each other.



Figure 1 : Kanom Kalamar

source : Yuttapong Tonpradoo. (2023)

2. Kanom Chaan May the newlyweds be fortunate, ascending to the heights of nobility, progressing in their careers and family life, akin to the layers of a nine-tiered cake. The term "nine" signifies advancement and prosperity



Figure 2 : Kanom Chaan

source : Yuttapong Tonpradoo. (2023)

3. Kanom Hor – Kanom Sai Sai May the newlyweds dwell in a love-filled home, with their affection for each other remaining strong and enduring, symbolized by the presence of two intertwined pastries, wrapped in banana leaves.



Figure 3 : Kanom Hor – Kanom Sai Sai
source : Yuttapong Tonpradoo. (2023)

4. Kanom Tian These pastries are made from glutinous rice dough with fillings crafted from mung beans and palm sugar. The stickiness represents the unity, while the palm sugar symbolizes the profound sweetness, and the mung beans signify flourishing and beauty.



Figure 4 : Kanom Tian
source : Yuttapong Tonpradoo. (2023)

5. Kanom Pak Thong Kuih Similar to "Haw-Muk", it signifies a prosperous and progressive family life forever.



Figure 5 : Kanom Pak Thong Kuih
source : Yuttapong Tonpradoo. (2023)

6. Kanom Xi Gua Kuih It is a dessert named after a fruit used in auspicious ceremonies. It symbolizes greatness, nobility, and the roundness of the fruit represents the unbreakable bond between the bride and groom



Figure 6 : Kanom Xi Gua Kuih
source : Yuttapong Tonpradoo. (2023)

7. Kuih Kapit – Love Letters May the married life of the bride and groom be prosperous and closely bound together, always walking hand in hand throughout their lives.



Figure 7 : Kuih Kapit – Love Letters

source : Yuttapong Tonpradoo. (2023)

8. Kanom Hoon Kyo May the family be filled with happy love, joy, and lasting sweetness throughout their lives.



Figure 8 : Kanom Hoon Kyo

source : Yuttapong Tonpradoo. (2023)

9. Kanom Xhi Taox Koy May the bride and groom's life together be filled with happiness and joy forever.



Figure 9 : Kanom Xhi Taox Koy

source : Yuttapong Tonpradoo. (2023)

10. Kanom Ping May the family of the bride and groom be filled with warmth, love, sweetness, and mutual support for each other forever.



Figure 10 : Kanom Ping

source : Yuttapong Tonpradoo. (2023)

11. Kanom Kuih Bahulu May the family of the bride and groom prosper and thrive forever.



Figure 11 : Kanom Kuih Bahulu

source : Yuttapong Tonpradoo. (2023)

12. Khao Neaw Heep – Pulut Tai Tai May the bride and groom's love for each other remain strong and unwavering, even if they come from different families, just like the sticky rice in a container, which can be tightly bound together in unity, whether it's white or purple in color.



Figure 12 : Khao Neaw Heep – Pulut Tai Tai

source : Yuttapong Tonpradoo. (2023)

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