

## **Innovation of rabbit (*oryctolagus cuniculus*) meat recipes and sensory evaluation**

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**Abstract:** This study was conducted at Central Poblacion and Ambayec, Bokod, Benguet and Benguet National High School, Wangal, La Trinidad, Benguet last November and December 2023. Sensory evaluation was conducted to determine the qualities of the innovated recipes and preferences of the respondents towards the different rabbit meat samples. The eight rabbit meat samples were subjected to sensory evaluation by 70 consumer type panel to evaluate the comparative acceptability and preferences of rabbit meat samples with the different recipes. Rabbit meat stew sample was brought to DOST-CAR Regional standards and Testing Laboratory for Microbial analysis of the rabbit sample. Based on the result the Total coliform count is  $<10^{**}CFU/g$ , E. coli count is  $<10^{**}CFU/g$ , Aerobic plate count is  $<250 CFU/g$  and salmonella detection is negative at 25g sample. Its total coliform count was analyzed through Petrifilm™ E Coliform count plate. The Aerobic plate count was determined using Pour plate method following the Bacteriological Analytical Manual, 2001. The Salmonella detection was determined through 3M™ Petrifilm™ SALX Salmonella Express System AOAC 21st ed., 2019, Method 2014. 01. In terms of general preferences and over all liking, the rabbit meat samples were Liked extremely and Liked Very Much. Based on the findings of the study showed that the rabbit meat samples are acceptable in terms of taste, aroma, texture and over all preference. Generally, the most preferred by the respondents is the one-year rabbit kinuday stew.

Keywords: rabbit meat, sensory evaluation, consumer preference, microbial analysis, kinuday stew

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## INTRODUCTION

Meat industry is increasing global importance in modern times due to consumer demand and intense competition within the industry. Meat is a major source of fat in the diet, especially saturated fatty acids (SFA), which have been implicated in diseases associated with modern life, especially in developed countries. This led to consumers becoming increasingly concerned about the nutritional value and safety of meat. The relationship between health and nutrition is becoming an important factor in changing consumer habits. Accordingly, rabbit meat is extremely nutritious, low in fat, and rich in protein. It is a recommended diet for the elderly. Furthermore, rabbit meat is a significant source of easily absorbed micronutrients, including vitamins and minerals. Also, it is low in purines and free of uric acid according to research of (Para et al., 2015).

In support of the Sustainable Development Goals number 2 (2022) of achieving zero hunger, ensuring access to safe and nutritious food, ensuring sustainable food production, ending all forms of malnutrition, and boosting and implementing resilient agricultural practices that increase productivity and production, rabbit raising is being promoted as a fast-growing alternative for livestock, as conveyed by Paladan, N. (2022). Thus, this study is also to promote rabbit farming as an alternative meat to improve the Bokodians' diet.

Rabbit meat has long been integrated into the culinary traditions of various countries, particularly in Spain—often referred to as the "Land of Rabbits"—where it is widely consumed and easily available. In ancient Rome, rabbit farming or cuniculture was practiced, contributing to the widespread utilization of rabbit meat in Mediterranean cuisine, such as the famous Italian dish *Coniglio all'ischitana*. Stewing, as a traditional cooking technique dating back to early civilizations, has proven effective for preparing rabbit meat due to its tenderizing effect and ability to infuse flavors.

In the Philippines, rabbit meat was introduced as a food alternative during World War II by international aid organizations to combat food scarcity. While rabbits are often viewed as pets in Filipino households, their potential as a sustainable protein source is gaining attention. Due to the African Swine Fever outbreak and rising pork prices, rabbit meat has been promoted by the Department of Agriculture as a viable substitute. Its nutritional advantages—including high protein content, low fat, and rich vitamin and mineral profile—make it an excellent alternative to pork and beef.

Several innovations across the Philippines demonstrate growing acceptance of rabbit meat, including empanadas in Bulacan, longganisa in Leyte, and gourmet dishes in Baguio City cafés. Nonetheless, despite its health benefits and culinary versatility, rabbit meat remains underutilized and less popular in the Filipino diet.

This study addresses a critical gap in literature: the limited research on the sensory acceptability and consumer preference for rabbit meat stew, a potentially marketable dish. Conducted in Bokod and La Trinidad, Benguet, the study aimed to innovate a nutritious rabbit stew and assess its taste, aroma, texture, and overall acceptability using the Hedonic scale. It also evaluated the microbial safety of the stew through laboratory analysis.

The findings contribute to the promotion of rabbit farming as an alternative protein source and aim to support food security and dietary diversification in rural communities. By introducing rabbit stew as a culturally adapted, safe, and acceptable dish, the study aspires to enhance local awareness and appreciation for rabbit meat while strengthening the rabbit industry at the barangay level.

### *Problem Statement*

This study's objective was to create a special innovative, nutritious variation of rabbit stew using rabbit meat as the primary ingredient. The goal of this study is to evaluate the sensory acceptability of rabbit stew in terms of its taste, aroma, texture, and overall acceptability using the Hedonic scale method.

This study is a modest step toward advancing the municipality's rabbit industry. The rabbit industry will benefit from taking into consideration the various viewpoints and insights gathered about the acceptance of rabbit stew and the assessment of its sensory qualities.

The above-cited facts show the essential distinct benefits of rabbit in our community and its numerous purposes. With a focus on the rabbit meat stew recipe and meat characteristics that will be evaluated by the respondents. With the baseline information from this paper and appropriate interventions from government agencies, community and rabbit raisers, the potential of rabbit farming in the barangay is expected to be enhanced. Additionally, this study is to promote rabbit farming as an alternative meat to improve the Bokodians' diet. Generally, the study was conducted to evaluate rabbit meat cooked in different recipe: plain boiled rabbit meat, rabbit stew, rabbit stew mix with pork kinuday and rabbit kinuday stew using guava trunk and its branches as a smoking material.

Specifically, the study aimed to determine the microbial analysis of rabbit stew including the total Coliform count, Escherichia coli count, Aerobic plate count and Salmonella detection, for the food safety of the recipe.

## METHODOLOGY

### *Research design*

To support this study, the researcher used a descriptive developmental quantitative survey research method. The descriptive developmental quantitative survey research is design employed to get the responses about the population or a phenomenon through analysis but without manipulating any variable. This is to give a detailed account of the characteristics, trends, and patterns within the population or the phenomenon under study. Survey research method entails asking subject questions and tabulating their responses to learn more about one or more groups of people, such as their ideas, attitudes, or experience (Bernardo, 2021). Surveys can be administered in various ways; in-person, on the phone, via mail, via the web, etc. Regardless of the venue, it's crucial to think about the survey's accessibility, convenience, logical organization, and clarity of both its purpose and its questions to maximize respondents' participation (Bradrosenew, 2017). Data was obtained through a field survey using face-to-face interviews, combined with unstructured questionnaire. Personal observations during the fieldwork also helped the researcher in gathering information. Hedonic scale was used to evaluate consumer acceptance.

### *Respondents of the study*

This study employed a purposive sampling method on account of the respondents' knowledge and understanding of the indicators in the checklist survey to evaluate the product. The participants were the residents of the Poblacion, Bokod and students from Benguet National High school. The participants were purposely selected coming from different groups of respondents: teachers (5), students (37), business owners (5), barangay health worker (1), farmers and rabbit raisers (5), midwife (1), barangay kagawad (1), fire officer (1), admin assistant (1), Government internship program (1), architect (1), accountant (1), Department of agriculture employees (2), and police officers (5) the total of 70 respondents. The respondents were selected purposely among the residents belonging to the residents. Central and Ambayek Poblacion is a growing population it is a good opportunity to conduct a survey for our rabbit meat because it has a larger number of rabbit raisers based on the initial survey, it is also the center of the town where it was easier to get the target respondents that would give rate to our product.

### *Data Gathering Instruments*

To gather the appropriate and important data needed in the study, the researcher used the sensory evaluation checklist to evaluate the acceptability of product in terms of taste, texture, aroma and overall acceptability. The said checklist is a modified research instrument adapted from (Adique et al., 2020). Additionally, it is composed of checklist prompting to evaluate the acceptability of the product. An unstructured interview was used to gather data and determine consumers' sensory evaluation of rabbit meat recipe as an alternative source of protein.

Samples were evaluated for consumer preference using a Nine-Point Hedonic Scale with the corresponding discipline interpretation one (1) as Dislike extremely, two (2) Dislike Very Much, three (3) Disliked moderately, four (4) Disliked slightly, five (5) Neither liked nor disliked, six (6) Like Slightly, seven (7) Like moderately, eight (8) Like very much, (9) Liked extremely.

### *Data Gathering Procedure*

The researchers will seek approval first to the Principal of Suyo National High School (SNHS) before conducting the study. After securing the permit from the Principal, the respondents will ask permission to the evaluators who will try to assess the sensory evaluation of the product in terms of taste, texture, appearance, aroma, and color. The researchers will also subject the research instrument for validation before using it to evaluate the product. After the validation of instrument, the researchers will take the chance of gathering data by the means survey questionnaire that will be given to the evaluators. After the respondents have answered the survey, their response will be tallied, summarized and analysed. The comments and suggestions of the evaluators will be considered for the improvement of the product. The researchers will seek approval first to the Principal of Suyo National High School (SNHS) before conducting the study. After securing the permit from the Principal, the respondents will ask permission to the evaluators who will try to assess the sensory evaluation of the product in terms of taste, texture, appearance, aroma, and color.

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Moreover, upon the approval of the request the researcher conducted an experiment and distributed the finish product to the respondents, prior to the distribution of products the respondents were informed ahead of time. The researcher conducts research in Poblacion Central and Sitio Ambayek through survey. The researcher explained the importance of the participation of the respondents to the study and clarifies some terms so that they can answer the questionnaire with full knowledge of their responsibility with all honesty. In addition, the researcher asked permission from the School Head, advisers and respondents specially the guidance of the mother or guardians of the minor age before documenting their opinions for us to fulfill the ethical provisions that guide all research processes. After approving the letter of permission the researcher conducted food tasting and survey, the respondents have answered the survey questionnaire, their response was gathered, tallied, summarized, and analyzed. The suggestions and comments of the respondents were considered for the improvement of the product. The views of the respondents that were captured in research study will solely for academic used.

### *Data Analysis Procedure*

For the statistical analysis, the gathered responses from the sensory evaluation of rabbit meat samples were tabulated. Pairwise comparisons were used to determine the varietal sensory qualities of rabbit meat samples. Pairwise comparison is the method of comparing alternative entities in pairs to find out the preferred one (AcqNotes, 2023). Chi-square tests were used to determine the respondent's preference of rabbit meat stew among the treatments. It also Examines whether two categorical variables are related or not (Biswal, 2024).

The result of the microbial analysis for the rabbit stew sample was from the report of DOST-CAR RSTL. THE results in the tests were discussed accordingly in the succeeding chapter.

## DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

### *Innovation of Rabbit Meat Recipes*

The researcher made eight (8) recipes, such as Plain boiled rabbit meat, Rabbit Stew, Rabbit stew mixed with pork kinuday and Rabbit Kinuday. It was found that among the recipes of the rabbit meat samples, the overall liking and has the highest weighted mean of 8.65 is the 1-year-old rabbit kinuday Stew sample. An average of 8.65 for a hedonic scale from 1 to 9 is liked extremely. Moreover, in terms of taste, the widest degree of likeness manifested in the 6-month Rabbit stew mixed with pork kinuday as it had the highest mean of 8.52 liked extremely and as the most preferred of the respondents. In terms of aroma the most preferred recipe sample of the respondents is the 1-year-old rabbit kinuday stew with the mean of 8.57, interpreted as liked extremely. Lastly, on texture, the most preferred by the respondents is the 1-year rabbit stew with pork kinuday with a weighted mean of 8.56, liked extremely.

### *Sensory evaluation preferences of Rabbit Meat Recipes Taste*

The sensory evaluation of rabbit meat samples revealed that the **6-month and 1-year rabbit stews with pork kinuday** were the most preferred in terms of **taste, aroma, and texture**, consistently receiving ratings of “*Liked Extremely*” from respondents. Among the taste samples, the **6-month rabbit stew with pork kinuday** achieved the highest mean score of 8.52, followed closely by the 1-year version with a score of 8.50, indicating that both the age of the rabbit and the inclusion of pork kinuday contributed significantly to the dish's appeal. Respondents described the dishes as *delicious, satisfying, tasty*, and even reminiscent of chicken, noting the rich blend of herbs, spices, and the balancing effect of sweet potatoes and pork kinuday.

Scientific support from Kumar et al. (2023) suggests that rabbit meat aged 18 weeks to 6 months possesses more tenderness due to higher intramuscular fat and less fibrous muscle, enhancing its palatability during prolonged stewing.

In terms of **aroma**, the **1-year rabbit kinuday stew** received the highest rating of 8.57, with the 1-year rabbit stew with pork kinuday close behind at 8.55. These results suggest that the smoking method—specifically using guava wood—greatly contributed to the distinctive and highly appreciated aroma. Respondents affirmed this, stating the aroma of the stew was not only pleasing but comparable or even superior to traditional smoked pork.

For **texture**, the **1-year rabbit stew with pork kinuday** again stood out with the highest score of 8.56, followed by both the 6-month rabbit stew with pork kinuday and the 6-month rabbit kinuday stew, each scoring 8.55. Respondents emphasized the tenderness and softness of the meat, with well-blended flavors that complemented the pork kinuday.

Overall, the study confirmed that rabbit stews, especially those enhanced with pork kinuday and prepared from 6-month to 1-year-old rabbits, are highly acceptable and enjoyable for consumers. The combination of proper meat age, traditional smoking techniques, and ingredient balance resulted in dishes that were well-liked across all sensory parameters—taste, aroma, and texture—supporting rabbit meat's potential as a palatable and nutritious meat alternative.

#### *Recreational Sports Engagement of MAPEH Teachers*

The findings of this study reveal that, when considered as a whole group, the 222 MAPEH teachers reported a high level of recreational sports engagement, with a grand mean score of 3.49. This strong engagement was consistent across all specific areas, including gym exercise (mean = 3.55), individual sports (mean = 3.48), dual sports (mean = 3.46), and team sports (mean = 3.45). These results highlight that MAPEH teachers not only promote physical activity in their classrooms but also actively incorporate it into their own lives, embodying the principle of “a sound mind in a sound body.” Their high involvement, particularly in gym exercises, suggests a personal commitment to maintaining physical conditioning, which supports both their teaching roles and their professional credibility.

Qualitative insights further reinforced these findings. One discussant emphasized that engaging in sports is part of their job description as MAPEH teachers and that they serve as role models for students by practicing what they teach. Another discussant, despite acknowledging the physical limitations brought on by aging, expressed a continued commitment to sports activities like jogging, Zumba, and even recreational shooting, motivated by the desire to apply the lessons they impart to students and to model lifelong fitness.

These results align with the findings of Chen and Wang (2020), who reported that regular physical activity among MAPEH teachers helps maintain high energy levels and promotes a positive teaching outlook. Similarly, Adams and colleagues found that high recreational sports engagement brings both physical benefits, such as improved cardiovascular fitness and stress reduction, and psychological benefits, including enhanced mood and job satisfaction. Conversely, the study by O'Connor et al. (2024) highlighted the negative effects faced by MAPEH teachers with low sports engagement, noting that they often struggled to maintain a healthy work-life balance and experienced elevated stress levels, suggesting that failing to practice what they teach can have personal and professional repercussions.

Overall, the findings underscore that MAPEH teachers' strong engagement in recreational sports is not just a professional necessity but also a personal passion for many. This commitment enhances their physical health, supports their psychological well-being, and reinforces their effectiveness and credibility as educators, ultimately benefiting both themselves and the students they teach.

#### *Overall preference of the Rabbit meat samples*

The study revealed that among all rabbit meat preparations, the 1-year-old Rabbit Kinuday Stew emerged as the most preferred across all sensory dimensions—taste, aroma, texture, and overall acceptability—achieving the highest mean score of 8.65, categorized as “*Liked Extremely*.” This was followed closely by the 6-month-old Rabbit Kinuday Stew, indicating that both age and preparation method significantly influenced consumer preferences.

In terms of taste, respondents favored the distinct, tender, and flavorful combination of rabbit meat and smoked pork (kinuday), noting its similarity to chicken and the way herbs, spices, and sweet potatoes enhanced the flavor. Aroma ratings were highest for stews utilizing guava wood-

smoking, which imparted a *stimulating fragrance* especially appealing to respondents. For texture, all samples were rated *very soft*, with the 1-year Rabbit Stew with Pork Kinuday receiving the highest score, attributed to the tenderizing effects of slow stewing and the age of the meat.

Demographic correlations highlighted notable differences based on gender, age, and occupation. Female respondents showed a stronger preference for the taste of plain boiled rabbit meat, while males rated its aroma higher. Age significantly influenced taste perception, with younger respondents (ages 20–29) preferring stronger rabbit flavors. Students preferred moderately strong rabbit flavors and found the 6-month rabbit control to have the most *stimulating fragrance*. However, across all groups, texture showed no significant correlation with gender, age, or occupation, suggesting that cooking method and meat quality were the primary influencers. Microbial testing confirmed that the rabbit meat stew met food safety standards. The total coliform count and *Escherichia coli* levels were both below <10 CFU/g, and aerobic plate count was below <250 CFU/g, all well within acceptable limits. Most notably, Salmonella was not detected in the 25g sample, further affirming the microbiological safety of the stew.

These findings collectively underscore the culinary potential of rabbit meat, particularly when prepared using traditional methods like kinuday smoking and stewing. The combination of favorable sensory attributes, cultural acceptability, and proven microbial safety make rabbit meat stew a promising dish to promote as an alternative protein source in the Philippines. Moreover, the study provides a scientific foundation to support local rabbit farming and consumption, addressing both nutritional needs and economic opportunities in rural communities like Bokod, Benguet.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the findings, the study concludes that among the eight developed rabbit meat recipes—namely plain boiled rabbit meat, rabbit stew, rabbit stew mixed with pork kinuday, and rabbit kinuday, the most preferred overall by respondents was the 1-year-old Rabbit Kinuday Stew. This sample received the highest weighted mean of 8.65 on the 9-point Hedonic scale, interpreted as "liked extremely." In terms of taste, the 6-month-old Rabbit Stew with Pork Kinuday ranked highest, with a mean of 8.52, also liked extremely. This preference is attributed to its well-balanced blend of ingredients, including sweet potatoes, pork kinuday smoked with guava branches, a bouquet garni of herbs, and mirepoix vegetables, which contributed to its rich and savory profile. For aroma, the 1-year-old Rabbit Kinuday Stew was again the most favored, with a mean score of 8.57. The stimulating fragrance, enhanced by the use of guava wood for smoking, was highly appreciated by the panelists. In terms of texture, the 1-year-old Rabbit Stew with Pork Kinuday stood out, scoring 8.56 and being described as soft and tender. This texture was achieved through pressure cooking and smoking with guava wood for three days.

Correlation analyses revealed several demographic influences on sensory preferences. Female respondents preferred the strong flavor of plain boiled rabbit meat, while male respondents showed no significant correlation with taste. Both genders favored the 6-month-old plain boiled rabbit sample for its stimulating aroma. There was no significant gender-based correlation in texture preferences. Age was found to influence taste, with respondents aged 20–29 preferring the strong flavor of the 1-year-old plain boiled rabbit meat. Respondents aged 15–19 favored the aroma of the 6-month-old plain boiled rabbit sample. However, no significant age-based correlation was found in texture evaluation, as all samples were rated very soft across age groups.

In terms of occupation, students rated the 6-month-old plain boiled rabbit meat highest in taste, while both students and business owners showed a preference for the aroma of the kinuday stews. Texture preferences did not significantly vary across occupations.

Microbial analysis of the 6-month-old rabbit stew confirmed its safety for consumption. The total coliform count and *E. coli* levels were both below 10 CFU/g, the aerobic plate count was below 250 CFU/g, and salmonella was not detected in a 25g sample. These results affirm the product's microbiological safety.

Overall, the study concludes that rabbit meat—especially when prepared as kinuday stew—is a highly acceptable and safe food product. The use of traditional smoking methods, balanced ingredients, and proper cooking techniques significantly enhanced its sensory appeal. The findings support the potential of rabbit meat as a nutritious and culturally adaptable protein source that can contribute to local food security and dietary improvement.

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