

## The Representation of Baba-Nyonya Cuisine in the Context of Halal Tourism Industry in Malacca, Malaysia

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### Abstract

Culinary becomes one of the fast growing industries along with the development of tourism. The Baba-Nyonya or Peranakan foods is one of Malacca's distinctive dishes as a form of acculturation of Chinese and Malaysian culture which presents to complement the diversity of attractions and services in the Malaysian tourism and hospitality industry. Several Baba-Nyonya restaurants are available in Malacca and most are located in Bandar Hilir, where the Peranakan community lived in the past. Baba-Nyonya restaurants emerge to have contribution to the development of Malaysia as Halal Tourism Destination. This research then finds a form of representation of Baba-Nyonya foods in an effort to provide halal products and services in Malacca, Malaysia. Through observation, interviews, and literature studies it is known that some restaurants are starting to change food menus from pork menus to pork-free menus. Although they do not hold halal certificates, they are categorized as Muslim-friendly Baba-Nyonya Restaurants and visited by Muslim customers. The restaurant does not have pork on its menu, but chicken, duck, seafood and vegetables. Also, there is one Baba-Nyonya restaurant who has obtained a halal kitchen certificate and a certificate of cleanliness application, so that it can be a reference in the Halal system and industry. The establishment of a halal assurance system can also be pursued in order to further enhance the confidence of Muslim customers of the Baba-Nyonya food products consumed.

**Keywords:** *Nyonya cuisine, cultural acculturation, halal tourism industry*

### Introduction

Food becomes reason on why one travels. The tourist often come to destination to taste local foods and delicacies which are different to what they have in their daily life. Those kind of local foods are also part of the local culture, which prepared from local ingredients and spices, with recipes which transferred from one generation to another. Even, the local people tend to use local traditional tools in preparing the foods.

In the tourism context, those local foods become brand of the destination which then attract visitors or tourist to come. Their travel experience has not been completed without tasting the local food and beverage that served by local people. Food is

considered as an element of local culture and as an expression of the history, habits and traditions of a community or a geographical area (Kivela and Crotts, 2006). For particular tourists, local products like local food expresses identity of place and plays cultural function, and even it seems like they ignore the nutritional content. As a type of food becomes popular among tourist, local people try to sell in many different ways and developments.

Malacca, Malaysia is also popular as food tourist destination. According to Fam et al (2017), exploring cultural resources includes seeking variety of traditional food become push factor on why tourists visit Malacca. This city has several unique taste of foods with rich combination of many different ingredients and spices. One of the popular foods in Malacca is Baba-Nyonya food or Peranakan Chinese and Malay food. This type of food is form of acculturation of Chinese foods toward local Malay foods. Among tourists, Baba-Nyonya cuisine is one of tourist attraction in Malacca. Many tourists visit Malacca to taste the Baba-Nyonya foods that served in some restaurants available along the Heeren street and Jonker street. The Baba-Nyonya restaurants occupy the narrow-long old house where initially occupied by Baba-Nyonya elder generation.

Baba-Nyonya cuisine becomes one local food that could be found in Malacca. Unfortunately, most of peranakan foods consist of pork which make it prohibited to be consumed by Muslim. Meanwhile Malaysia declares itself to be one of Halal tourism destination in the world. It is listed as the top ten Halal or muslim friendly destination, according to Crescentrating's Halal Friendly Travel (CRaHFT) Ranking 2014 of OIC (Organization of Islamic Cooperation). Efforts through Large-scale campaigns as well as smaller businesses have been conducted to promote Malaysia as an Islamic destination, such as making Islamic Civilization, working on Halal Master Plan, Establishment of Islamic Tourism Centre (ITC) by Tourism Malaysia in 2009, Catering to Muslim needs in the hospitality industry (Shafaei and Mohamed, 2015). Specifically, tangible and intangible Islamic attributes in Malaysia have been strived to be offered to inspire Muslim tourists to visit the country, including Halal food paradise for Muslims. It means that any product offered by Malaysia tourism industry should be enjoyable for any tourist, included muslim. According to Chiu et al (2017), having the opportunity to acquire new knowledge during travels became one of the motivations among muslim tourist in Malaysia and easy access to the halal food in the travel destination became one of the requirements.

There are several factors influence the food consumption among people, included tourists. They often relate food consumption with socio-demographic factors, food-related personality traits, exposure and past experience, and cultural-religious influence (Mak, 2012). Some cultures and religions apply dietary rules in consuming foods to the believers, as they are allowed to consume some foods and prohibited to consume some particular. Among muslim, there are terminology of halal (permissible) and haram (prohibited) in food consumption and eating behaviour. It is obligatory for all Muslims to eat only *halal* food even when they are travelling in foreign destinations (Bon and Hussain, 2010). Hassan and Hall (2003) also mentioned that Islamic religious belief have impacted Muslim tourists visiting New Zealand in food consumption behaviour. Those majority of Muslim travelers always tried to find halal foods, even some of them prepared their own foods, due to lack of information and knowledge regarding the availability of halal foods in New Zealand.

The increasing of Islamism among Muslim affects their awareness and preference to have Halal living, includes halal food consumption. It finally leads to the current trend of Halal tourism which promoted not only in Muslim countries but also in many other non-Muslim countries around the globe. The availability of Halal food in hotel becomes one of Halal Friendly attributes which also affects to the hotel selection and customers satisfaction (Putit et al., 2016). Hashim et al. (2007) also suggested that a list of nearby Halal restaurants should be available in influencing Muslim tourists towards a particular destination of interest. The availability and easy access to Halal food contribute to a stress-free holiday among Muslim tourist, since they have to follow a strict dietary rules everywhere they go (Battour, Battor, and Ismail, 2012). For that reason, marketers are suggested to run promotional strategies that focus on the availability of Halal food and drink in promoting a destination, especially for Muslim tourists (Battour, Battor, and Bhatti, 2014). Halal friendly hotel service providers also need to monitor their attributes and service performances in order to improve their services quality, since highly perceived Halal friendly attributes services will lead to satisfied customers.

Malaysia is one of the muslim countries which also highlight the issue of Halal living and food. It has strict regulation related to halal food to be consumed by its citizens. Any food products in Malaysia should be certified by Malaysia's Department of Islamic Development so called JAKIM, which follow and cover the Islamic dietary guidelines. With this certification, Muslim have no doubt concerning the halalness of food product. As soon as organization has received certification, a logo stated the products is halal can be use on their products packaging or stated at their premises. Furthermore, Malaysia has successfully been example among Islamic nation in the development of halal industry. Being a member of the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC) and promoting halal center, Malaysia is pushing its halal certification, the only logo in the world that is supported by its government, as an international standardized logo to be used for all the Muslim nations (Abdul Majid, 2015)

For the purpose of halal products, Malaysian government released the manual procedures for halal certification which published in 2015 by Jabatan Kemajuan Islam Malaysia (JAKIM). It includes the scope, definition, scheme, and condition of halal certification. It also mentions about general and specific requirements for certification application procedures according to the scheme, and the certification fee. The general requirements for certification includes requirements of raw material/ingredients/processing aid, packaging and labelling, factory, food premise, workers, sanitation system, halal records, worker's basic amenities and welfare, training, supervision and monitoring, as well as the Original Equipment Manufacturing (OEM). The last sessions of this manual procedures consist of audit procedures, monitoring and enforcement, Malaysia halal certificate and logo, also responsibilities of Malaysia halal certificate holder.

However, Malaysia is trying to enhance the competitiveness of halal food industry and develop strategies to promote Malaysia as global halal hub (Bohari, 2013). They enhance the awareness about Malaysia as the center for halal products and services, manage the increasing competition from countries in the region, and optimize the investment to gain access to raw materials. Furthermore, they also develop halal-compliant services, maximize the halal Standard to differentiate Malaysia's halal products, ensure the product quality and food safety, and strengthen the institutional

capacity of organisations involved in the development and promotion of halal products and services.

The latest research about Restaurant Manager and Halal certification (Marzuki, 2012) indicates that restaurant managers want to display certification, since it could provide Muslim customers confidence to their food consumption. Restaurant managers also claimed that when there is *halal* certification, the food is guaranteed clean and safe. Moreover, the non-Muslim restaurant manager have been respecting the Muslim religious food for generations as well as the processes that get the food from farm to table. However, there are certain issues surrounding halal certification, such as inconsistent manner by the slaughtering house of poultry and meat with the rites of Islam and ingredients which intermixed with non halal materials (Abdul Majid et al, 2015). It is also another issue where the manufacturers or food producers still use the same halal certificate even though the certificate is already expired. It is difficult for them to always renew the halal certificate since it costs money and time, as well as it requires strict process to renew the certificate. Such an apparent that most companies are practicing putting halal mark on their products and premises, even though they do not understand the actual concept of halal as if they are doing it just for the sake of gaining confidence from the Muslim consumers (Zakaria, 2008). Noordin et al. (2009) also mention that operational inefficiency and halal governance are the 2 reasons that delay the process of obtaining the halal certification. The problem from the food manufacturers side includes inadequate understanding of halal procedures, incomplete documents, or defrayment of certification fee. Meanwhile the problems from the internal are lack of expertise, as new staffs have little knowledge and slowing the halal certification process, unsystematic filing system, premise inspection which required more than a day and delay in receiving lab test result. Halal value chain consists of feed and farm management, ingredients, manufacturing or processing, logistics, research and development or technology, finance and communication or branding. It covers the entire value chain from agricultural up to consumption.

The literatures and references about Halal food products and services focus more on the concept of the halal in Islamic law itself and the governmental regulation as well as the development on halal products. It leads to the question on how its implementation among halal food service provider. This research is trying to look at the development of Baba-Nyonya cuisine in Malacca, in the context of halal tourism industry. It finds out the current existence of Baba-Nyonya foods in relation to Muslim visitors and Halal industry. It also seeks the strategies toward the Halalness of Baba-Nyonya foods to attract and welcome more customers, included Muslim tourists. For that purpose, the author will focus on the representation of Baba-Nyonya cuisine in Malacca which consumable for Muslim, such as Seri Nyonya Peranakan Restaurant and Kocik Kitchen.

## Method

The author conducted three main techniques in collecting data about the Halal assurance system of Baba Nyonya Cuisine in Malacca. First, through observation which was done by visiting some Nyonya Restaurants, including Seri Nyonya Peranakan Restaurant in Equatorial Hotel and Kocik Kitchen in order to look at the current representation of Nyonya Food in Malacca. Especially, the author intent to have a look at the menu list and other elements in supporting its availability in Halal system.

Second, interview was also conducted by the author toward the restaurant owner or manager, as well as the chef. Third, literature studies have also been done to find out more references about Nyonya foods, its history, the Halal concepts in Islamic, and also the implementation and development of Halal product and service in Malaysia. The author then went through books and articles (which mostly available in the journals), as well as the authorized websites providing information about Nyonya foods in Malacca. Officially, the observation and interview had been conducted from November 25 to December 5, 2018. But the literature studies continued until August 2019.

## Result and Discussion

### *The Existence of Baba-Nyonya Foods in Malacca*

Baba-Nyonya is a call to decendants of Chines traders who migrated in 15<sup>th</sup> - 17<sup>th</sup> century and intermarried with local Malaccan people. Baba (male) is used to call a son of Chinese-Malay couple and Nyonya (female) ise used to call the daughter. The word 'Peranakan', which derived from Malay word 'anak' (child), could also be used to call the offsprings of intermarriage between foreigner and native, such as Malay-Chinese, Malay-Portugese, or Malay-Indian. During their stay in Malacca, they adopted Malay customs and assimilated into local communities. The adaptation and adoption into local communities created acculturation which can be seen from language, clothing, and foods.

Foods were also part of acculturation product among Baba-Nyonya community in Malacca. Initially, Chinese immigrants found the local food didn't suit their taste buds. However, they were unable to cook the food of their homeland due to unavailability of ingredients, spices, or any other cooking materials. They then tried to produce their own food with local materials. Baba-Nyonya foods can be divided into three categories: traditional Chinese (Hokkien) with some changes, Malay-style dishes, and innovated foods (Ng, Chien Y. & Shahrin Ab. Karim, 2016). Some defines Baba-Nyonya cuisine as preparing dishes using Chinese technique such as Wok-frying and pork, with Malay-Chinese spices and flavors (Oh et al, 2019).

Actually, Baba-Nyonya food is not only combination between Chinese and Malay foods. It's also influenced by Indonesia, Thailand, India, Portugal, Holland, and England (Lee, 2008). It's using ingredients such as *galangal*, *serai*, chillis, tumeric, ginger, *tau cheow*, tamarind, lime juice, *belachan*, *buah keras*, *gula Melaka*, spices such as star anise, cinnamon, cardamom, cloves, nutmeg, leaves such as *daun kesum*, *daun kaduk*, *daun cekok*, *daun limau perut*, *pandan leaves*. Examples of ingredients derived from the Chinese culture are black mushrooms, fungus such as bok jee (wood ears), kim chiam (lily buds), taukee (soybean sticks), fish maws, tanghoon (glass noodles), beehoon (rice vermicelli) and different varieties of seasonings such as tauchio/taucheo (salted soybean paste) and tichio (sweet sauce). The most distinctive spice in both Baba-Nyonya and Malay cuisines is chilli, which can be used in both fresh and dried forms followed by others such as serai (lemon grass) and flower buds such as bunga kantan (torch ginger buds), as well as fruits, nuts and seeds, specifically buah keras (candlenuts), buah keluak (a large black nut), lime juice, asam Jawa (tamarind), cinnamon, cloves, nutmeg and ketumbar (coriander seeds)

The taste of Baba-Nyonya cuisine which predominantly is spicy and sour creates a piquant taste to the consumer. Some well-known Baba-Nyonya dishes are *Otak Otak*, *Ayam Pongteh*, *Assam Laksa*, *Roti Babi*, *Itik Tim*, *Buah Keluak*, *Perut Ikan*, *Achar*, *Sek*

*Bak, Hong Bak, Cheng Chuan Hoo, Cincalok Omelette, and Pork Liver Balls.* In addition to ingredients and types of foods, the adaptation and acculturation to local culture as well as the evolution to be Malaccan food identity could also be seen in methods of cooking and eating decorum (Tumin, 2017). Despite the Peranakan word refers to Baba and Nyonya (male and female), the Nyonya is mostly used to indicate foods or cuisines. In the past, Peranakans followed the strict traditions of their Chinese ancestry where the womenfolk of a household were confined to their respective houses most of the time (Lee, 2008). Therefore, Peranakan women spent most of their time mainly in the kitchen of the house since it was said the kitchen was the heart of life and activity of a house at that time. And their cooking ability was judged and standardised the worth of women in the community. There was a period when Peranakan culture, including Baba-Nyonya foods, had ever been less popular among public. The political factor in the early twentieth century, depleted the Peranakans of their massive wealth. Nevertheless, the decline of rubber and tin (the core commodity of their business) also contributed to the downfall of Peranakan community. Some of the wealth was also donated to help rejuvenate the crippled economy of the Malay Archipelago due to the world wars and to help their colonial British bosses in some cases (Oh et al, 2019). The withdrawal of the colonial British and independence of Malaysia and Singapore further weakened the Peranakans, stripping them of their special social status and privileges as well as their sense of identity. Moreover, the younger generations were practicing old traditions less and less due to declining interest among them.

Finally, in the 1980s the Peranakan started to take back the public interest since the films and drama series such as *Pilih Menantu* emerged to tell public about Baba-Nyonya culture. Cookbooks illustrating Nyonya cuisines, like *Mr. Lee Cookbook*, support such cuisine to revive. The book *Nyonya kebaya* in 2004 and exhibition by Datin Seri Endon Mahmood, the previous First Lady of Malaysia, contributed to have great attention of public in 2000s. Baba-Nyonya restaurants continue to appear in Malaysia due to their unique flavours which sustain Peranakan cuisine in society. There has been an increase of curiosity and contribution of such Nyonya cuisine in regions' cookbooks, blogs, online websites and food product which sustains public interest towards Nyonya cuisine (Gin, 2017)

Peranakan foods now become one of typical popular food in Malacca, Malaysia. There are numbers of Baba-Nyonya restaurants serving this peranakan cuisine, which mostly located in Jonker Street and Heeren Street, occupying the narrow-long traditional Chinese house. Jonker street and Heeren street formerly was a neighborhood of Chinese immigrants. People can see the houses and buildings with Chinese architecture and decoration along these streets.



Picture 1. The Nyonya Restaurants in Malacca

Source: Google Map

Numbers of Nyonya Restaurants are also available in Bandar Hilir Area to attract visitors, such as Restaurant Nyonya Makko, Nancy's Kitchen, Amy Heritage Nyonya Cuisine, Restoran Ole Sayang, and many more. Bandar Hilir is an economic district as well as a tourism center with a number of tourist destinations and attractions, such as Stadthuys, A Famosa, and Maritime Museum. The development of Baba-Nyonya food in Bandar Hilir area then became an exact reason in the scope of the tourism industry. Peranakan culture (more to Chinese atmosphere) could also be seen from the ornament, wall decoration, painting, classical Chinese ceramics, red lanterns, or other Chinese writing, even worship corner with statue and incenses. Since Baba-Nyonya cuisine became the typical and heritage food of Malacca, it's developed into huge business which attract visitors and customers as well as generate income. Some Baba-Nyonya cuisine are also represented in modern and big restaurant, such as Restoran Peranakan and Restoran Nyonya Makko. Some are even represented in the hotel, such as Seri Nyonya Peranakan Restaurant.

To meet the different needs of visitors, the restaurants are trying to add more variations. Becoming Halal Tourism destination, Malaysia is visited more by Muslim citizens around the world who want to enjoy Syariah compliance attractions, including culinary experience. As Baba-Nyonya food turns into popular attraction, many Muslim tourists demand to taste the such food. Some Baba-Nyonya restaurant in Malacca are also available for Muslim to enjoy the foods. They develop into 'Pork-free' Peranakan cuisine which considered to be Muslim-friendly restaurant, such as Kocik Kitchen, Jonker 88, and Cottage Spice Nyonya Restaurant. Seri Nyonya Peranakan Restaurant even hold the Halal Kitchen certificate to make the customers sure about the foods. However, the authenticity of the taste among Baba-Nyonya food has been tried to be kept simultaneously.

### ***The Nyonya Restaurants within the Malaysian Halal System***

Migration of Chinese people to Malacca and the new identity as Peranakan family still somehow take pork into the menu list. Pork is usually cooked with local Malaccan spices, such as Keluak, and turns into a dark color of Pong Teh. Since consuming pork is prohibited among Muslim, the restaurants put effort to change pork with beef or

chicken. No-pork menus are much more available in current Malaccan Nyonya Restaurants. The 'no-pork' menus are served in at least 4 Restaurant in Malacca, such as Kocik Kitchen, Cottage Spices Nyonya Restaurant, Jonker 88, and Seri Nyonya Peranakan. They serve chicken, duck, seafood, and vegetables. Among them, the popular Baba-Nyonya dishes are Ayam Pong Teh, Ayam Buah Keluak, and Ikan Gerang Asam. Many customers also ordered for Pai Tie (cake like a hat), otak-otak Nyonya, Popiah, and took Cendol or Cendol Durian as bevarage. As it comes to Malay culture with Islamic domination, the Chinese regular foods turn into Islam-Malay friendly foods which consumable for Muslim-Malay people. Usually, the restaurant's owner put some sign, such as 'No-Pork', in front of the restaurants.

Although having no-pork foods in the menu, some of the restaurants have not yet hold the Halal certificate. One of the restaurant's owner mentioned that she tries to provide consumable foods for Muslim, by selecting butcher and meat supplier who hold Halal Certificate. Moreover, she always makes sure that those Halal Certificate holders are continuing to have the document. It means that the supplier always tries to re-new the certificate. The owner also said that the only best ingredients and spices allowed to be supplied into the restaurants. Applying for Halal restaurant certificate is a bit hard to do in Malaysia, especially among Baba-Nyonya people. According to JAKIM's policy, having Islam as the religion is one of the requirements, which is quite complicated among those community.

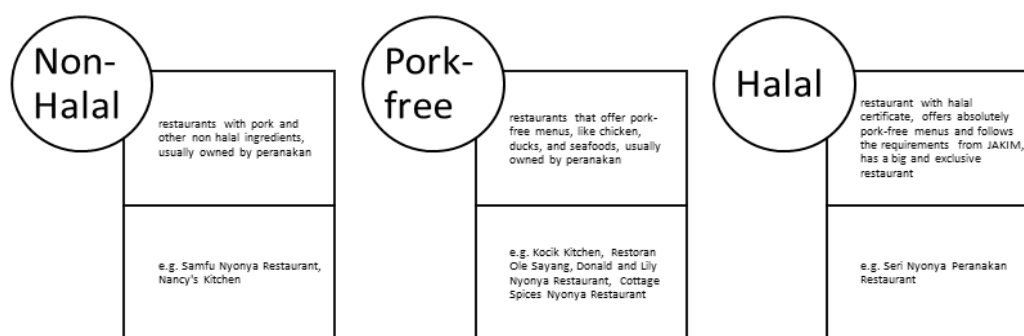
Changing the cuisine into chicken, duck, and seafood (pork free) could still be source of the doubt among customers, especially the Muslim. It may not contain the pork, but customers cannot sure about the spices, the flavoring, the paste, sauces, or any other ingredients used by chef to cook the Baba-Nyonya foods. For this reason, one restaurant so called Seri Nyonya Peranakan Restaurant also tried to apply for Halal certification from JAKIM to provide confidence to all customers. There are procedures and requirements to get the certificate (JAKIM, 2014). One of the main requirements is having supply chain who also hold the Halal certificate. They have to ensure that raw material or ingredients source are halal and safe. Raw material or ingredients both sourced from animal and plants should have a valid halal certificate. Equipment used to prepare food should be free from dirt (najs) and does not contain any dangerous and poisonous materials which may result in side effects to the products produced. Appliances/brushes from animal hair are not allowed. Non-halal food/beverages are also not allowed to be brought into the kitchen or restaurant. They also have to ensure that no alcoholic drinks or materials sourced from liquor is strictly prohibited to be in the halal kitchen and restaurant or hotel including the storage area.

Halal certification procedures in not only talking about the raw material or ingredients for the food or other products. The whole parts of the restaurant should be in line with Halal standarts. Beside required to wear proper and suitable attire, the workers are also required to practice code of ethics and Good Hygienic Practices (GHP) as stated in the Food Hygiene Regulations. Regarding the sanitation system, the environment should be clean and its cleaning schedule shall be properly regulated and free from pollution.

After all procedures and requirements are fulfilled, the restaurant may get the cetificate and has to renew that certificate every year. The process to renew the certificate is similar to the one they apply for the first time. However, the problem occurs when the restaurant applies to renew the certificate, but the slaughterhouse,



raw material or ingredients supplier has no new version of the certificate. In this case, the restaurant has to find another supplier who has valid halal certificate. Seri Nyonya Peranakan holds not only halal kitchen certificate but also the cleanliness certificate (*Sijil Penarafan Kebersihan Premis Makanan*). This certificate put on the table in front of the restaurant to improve the confidence of the customers toward the safety and quality of the food and bevarages products. The halal kitchen certificate is hung in the kitchen area and could be shown to customers who ask about it or who has doubt on the halalness of the foods.



Picture 2. The classification of available Nyonya Restaurants in Malacca  
Source: Author analysis

**Establishing the ‘Halal’ and Hygiene Assurance System**

It is indeed difficult for non-Muslim restaurant owners to apply for certificate. However, the halal assurance system could still be afforded by establishing the Halal and Hygiene team, like the one done by Seri Nyonya Peranakan. To control halal assurance system, Seri Nyonya Peranakan Restaurant establish internal halal committee to ensure that every single part in the restuarant is halal and safe. The management should also ensure that all workers attended halal related training, as well as appoint at least of two Muslim workers in every kitchen or restaurant, either permanent or contract based workers. Those Muslim workers should work fulltime in the kitchen, in food handling section, or in operation section. Beside checking the halal certificate owned by each supplier, the halal committee also observe them in processing the raw materials. They come to the slaughterhouse to watch them cut the animal. They also join the supplier to find fish and other seafood at 3 am. They also have to visit the garden of ingredients supplier sourced from plants to make sure that they don’t use any hazardous fertilizer or even organic fertilizer made from pig manure. The halal and hygiene team works as reviewer who control all things in the restaurant. They have to make sure that anyone in the restaurant supports halalness and hygiene of the food product. Anything the chef want to purchase should get the license from the halal committe, as they need to check the product before purchasing. This halal committe also check all the kitchen every week to control the quality of food product.



Picture 3 and 4. Certificates owned by Seri Nyonya Peranakan Restaurant displayed in the kitchen and on the table in front of the restaurant  
Source: author documents

The halal-hygiene team works also to produce standardized recipes (Standard Operating Procedures for recipe) for Baba-Nyonya foods. They should mention in the recipes the ingredients, cooking steps, and other instruction includes the brands of some ingredients and spices. With this standard, anyone (the chef in this context) should obey the 'rule' written in the recipe. The strategy is applicable for Baba-Nyonya Restaurant with frequent cook changes. Having the team and its strategy could help to maintain the quality and halal standards. Although it seems to still be complicated to apply halal certificate to JAKIM among non-Muslim owners, such halal and hygiene team is affordable to improve Muslim customer's confidence in consuming Baba-Nyonya delights.

#### ***A Demand in Providing Halal Food Service Among Baba-Nyonya Restaurant***

The popularity of the Baba-Nyonya Food in Malacca as a culinary product is no doubt. Its distinctive taste combined with tradition and cultural heritage is potential for culinary development, specifically in Malacca. This type of peranakan food is reasonably promoted to be Malacca's tourist attraction. The challenge then arises from the readiness of restaurant owners and the surrounding sectors to meet market needs and demands.

As a country with majority Muslim population, Malaysia has regulations and procedures in the affairs of food products and services, especially those relating to halal-ness. Demand for halal food and services in restaurants has also increased along with the increasing trend among Malaysians for eating out (Shamsudin & Selamat, 2005). Malaysia is also among the fastest growing tourist destinations in South East Asia, with significant numbers of both Islamic and non-Muslim visitors (Teh & Cabanban, 2007). Even the declaration of Malaysia as a halal tourist destination also adds to the government's steps to meet the expectations of global citizens, especially

Muslim guests. In a sense, the provision of halal food service is not limited to supplying the needs of citizens, but also foreign tourists from various ethnic and cultural backgrounds that make Malaysia a place to enjoy holidays and leisure time.

Ambali and Bakar (2014) said that increasing Muslim awareness about the obligation to consume halal food can increase demand for food availability based on the dietary rule, including demand for halal certified restaurants. They need the fulfillment of clean, safe, healthy, and high quality of food and drinks served at the restaurants they visit. Consequently, food product and service providers required to be able to better understand the needs and expectations of Muslim customers as well as to create a competitive advantage in the delivery of high service quality to this specific market over their competitors. The halal certificate and logo have advantages of capturing bigger market. By having halal certificate in a business, it will help the business to have better market signals, Islamic attributes, and marketing. The values of a halal certificate in a business indeed have broader appeal beyond religion as well as contribute to Malaysia's position as a tourism destination and a hub for the global Halal market as targeted by the government (Hanim Yusuf et al, 2016).

There are several dimensions in developing and validating halal service quality instruments for Malaysian food service, which include reability, responsive, competence, accessibility, courtesy, communication, credibility, security, understanding the customers and tangible (Ibrahim and Othman, 2014). Those dimensions mean ability to perform the promised service dependably and accurately, willingness to help customers and provide prompt service, possession of the required skills and knowledge to perform the service, as well as approachability and ease of contact. The meaning also includes the politeness, respect, consideration and friendliness of contact personnel, as well as keeping customers informed in language they can understand and listening to them. Trustworthiness, believability, honesty of the service provider and freedom from danger, risk or doubt are also part of dimension's definitions. In addition, making the effort to know customers and their needs, as well as the appearance of physical facilities, equipment, personal and communication materials are also being involved.

Beside the dimension, there are four key attributes of service quality among muslim respondents to choose to dine-in in halal restaurant according to Saaidin et al. (2018). Those key attributes are assurance, quality of food, cleanliness and staff service quality. Muslim consumers demand for *assurance* that the food they consume are halal. Muslim consumers would feel confident in dining when the halal logo or certification of Halal is visible. Generally, Muslim consumers place great consideration on Cleanliness and food quality in their assessment of service quality. Food hygiene and safe to be consumed are imperatives of service quality especially for halal restaurants as Islam, the religion advocates cleanliness in anything Muslims do either physically or spiritually.

## Conclusion

Malaysian Government applies the Halal procedures and requirements for food products through certification. Every food product and service provider should fulfill the requirements and procedures, pass the audit section, and get the certificate. Some Baba-Nyonya Restaurants are now turning into more Muslim-Friendly service by providing pork-free and halal menu, like Seri Nyonya Peranakan Restaurant, even

having the Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) for the recipes of every single food product. Regardless of the classification that applies to the Baba-Nyonya Restaurant, it must be admitted that some Muslims also do not have enough concern in seeing the halalness of a product. Some Muslims try to avoid eating pork but then do not go into too much details. Even so, it is undeniable that there are Muslim groups who pay keen attention to every product consumed. In this case, they really look at product details, including the halal factor. For the development of Baba-Nyonya food and restaurant it is necessary to take concrete steps and strategies to popularize these foods through a halal frame. There needs to be a certain systematic in the arrangement, assistance, and management of Baba-Nyonya food service, especially related to halal matters, so that it can be reached and consumed by wider market. Since Malaysia is an Islamic country and Halal tourism destination, it should have further strategy to promote the Halal product to international level. Baba-Nyonya cuisine as one of local cultural food in Malacca should be supported to pass halal certification to attract more Muslim visitors around the globe. It is not impossible, Baba-Nyonya food in the future can compete in the international arena in presenting an unforgettable experience in culinary journey. Forms of commodification might appear to accomplish such commercial goals. Even though halal is urgent to be realized, Baba-Nyonya food service providers and products must maintain authentic tastes, so that the cultural heritage chain does not necessarily break.

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