

Exploration of the Food Preparation Myths and Practices among Carinderia Owners

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Abstract. This study explored the food preparation myths and practices among carinderia owners in Mandaon, Masbate. Specifically, it determined the respondents' demographic profile in terms of age, sex, educational attainment, religious affiliation, and length of experience; identified commonly observed food preparation myths and practices; assessed the level of adherence to these beliefs; and developed a guidebook promoting scientifically sound and safe food handling practices. The study employed a mixed-method research design involving 30 registered carinderia owners selected through purposive sampling from the municipality's 26 barangays. Quantitative data were gathered using a structured questionnaire and analyzed through frequency, percentage, weighted mean, and ranking. Qualitative data were collected through responses regarding food preparation beliefs and practices and were analyzed using thematic analysis. Findings revealed that most respondents were female, middle- to late-aged adults, college graduates, Roman Catholics, and had more than eight years of experience operating carinderias. Food preparation practices were largely influenced by tradition, cultural beliefs, and personal experience. Common practices included repeated washing for perceived cleanliness, adding ice or fork to a boiling pot to tenderize meat, and adding vinegar to the oil when frying to make the food crispy. The overall level of adherence to food preparation myths and beliefs was interpreted as sometimes practiced, indicating moderate observance. Cleanliness and storage-related beliefs were the most frequently practiced, while meat tenderization myths showed the lowest level of adherence. Based on the findings, a guidebook entitled "Kusina Serye Comics" was developed to address common food preparation misconceptions and promote evidence-based food safety practices. The study concludes that while traditional beliefs remain influential, there is a gradual shift toward safer and more scientifically informed food handling practices among carinderia owners.

Keywords: Carinderia Owners; Food Preparation Myths; Practices

Introduction

Food is one of the most essential human needs, serving not only as a source of nourishment but also as a significant component of culture, identity, and social interaction. Beyond sustaining life, food reflects traditions, beliefs, and practices that are passed from one generation to another. According to Counihan and Van Esterik (2013), food practices are closely associated with cultural values, social relationships, and emotional well-being. As a result, many food preparation methods and beliefs become deeply embedded within communities and continue to influence everyday practices.

Among these beliefs are food myths, which are widely accepted ideas about food and nutrition that lack scientific evidence but are often regarded as factual. Verbanac et al. (2019) defined food myths as widespread false beliefs about food and nutrition that eventually become habitual practices. These beliefs are frequently transmitted through families, peers, and communities, making them difficult to challenge or change. In the Philippines, carinderias play an important role in providing affordable and accessible meals to the public. Carinderia owners are directly involved in food preparation and handling, often relying on recipes and cooking techniques inherited from previous generations. While these practices help preserve cultural traditions, some may be based on misconceptions rather than scientific knowledge.

Many food preparation myths persist despite scientific evidence disproving them. These myths often arise from cultural traditions, social norms, and long-held beliefs that shape food-related behaviors (Worsley, 2002). For example, some individuals believe that washing raw chicken removes harmful bacteria, although scientific evidence shows that this practice can spread bacteria through cross-contamination and increase

food safety risks (USDA, 2020). When such misconceptions are routinely practiced by food handlers, they may pose serious threats to public health. Recognizing the importance of food safety, the Philippine government enacted Republic Act No. 10611, otherwise known as the Food Safety Act of 2013, to strengthen food safety standards and promote scientific-based food handling practices. This legislation demonstrates the country's commitment to protecting consumers and ensuring safe food systems. The law is closely aligned with Sustainable Development Goal 3, which seeks to ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages. Through the promotion of safe food handling and evidence-based food preparation practices, efforts to reduce foodborne illnesses contribute directly to achieving this global development goal. Despite these initiatives, food preparation myths continue to exist, suggesting that policy measures alone may not be sufficient to change deeply rooted beliefs and practices. The persistence of food myths highlights the need to critically examine traditional food preparation practices using scientific standards. Dela Cruz and Ernesto (2018) emphasized that distinguishing between scientifically sound practices and inherited beliefs is essential, particularly when public health is at stake.

Despite the existence of food safety laws, continuing reports of foodborne illnesses and the persistence of unsafe traditional practices indicate a gap between scientific standards and actual food handling behaviors among carinderia owners in Mandaon, Masbate. This lack of localized evidence hinders the development of targeted interventions and educational materials that could correct misconceptions and improve food safety practices. Hence, there is a need to systematically assess the food preparation myths and practices of carinderia owners, determine their level of adherence to such beliefs, and identify their profile characteristics in relation to these practices.

The results of this study will serve as a basis for developing a scientifically grounded guidebook on food preparation myths and practices, which may help bridge the gap between traditional beliefs and evidence-based food safety standards, ultimately promoting safer food handling and protecting public health in the community.

Research Questions

This study aims to determine the food preparation myths and practices of carinderia owners in Mandaon, Masbate. Specifically, it seeks to answer the following questions:

1. What is the demographic profile of the carinderia owners in terms of:
 - 1.1 Age
 - 1.2 Sex
 - 1.3 Educational attainment
 - 1.4 Religious affiliation
 - 1.5 Length of experience as a carinderia owner
2. What food preparation myths and practices are commonly observed among carinderia owners in Mandaon, Masbate?
3. What is the level of adherence or practice of carinderia owners to food preparation myths and beliefs?
4. Based on the findings, what guidebook on food preparation myths and practices may be developed to promote scientifically sound and safe food handling practices?

Scope and Delimitation of the Study

This study focused on determining the food preparation myths and practices of carinderia owners in Mandaon, Masbate. It examined the respondents' profile in terms of age, sex, educational attainment, religious affiliation, and length of experience as carinderia owners, as well as the commonly observed food preparation myths and their level of adherence to these practices. The study also served as a basis for developing a guidebook on scientifically sound food preparation practices. The respondents were limited to selected carinderia owners in Mandaon, Masbate. Other food establishments, food handlers outside carinderias, and consumers were not included. The study was also limited to self-reported data and did not involve laboratory testing or microbiological analysis of food samples. It was further confined to the period of data collection and did not account for changes in practices over time. The study was limited to food preparation myths and practices and did not cover other aspects of food business operations such as marketing or financial management.

Literature Review

Blanca et al. (2025) examined the food safety practices and attitudes of food handlers in eateries (carinderias) in Marikina City in their study entitled Food Safety Practices and Attitudes of Food Handlers in Eateries at Marikina City: Basis for Information Campaign. The study focused on assessing compliance with

food safety standards in terms of personal hygiene, food storage and temperature control, cleaning and sanitation, and food handling practices. The findings revealed that food safety practices were implemented to a very high extent, indicating strong adherence to established food safety protocols. Personal hygiene and sanitation practices were consistently observed, suggesting that food handlers generally maintain proper cleanliness in their daily operations. This reflects a strong culture of compliance in small-scale food establishments. Furthermore, the study found that food handlers demonstrated a favorable attitude toward food safety, which was significantly associated with their actual practices. A moderate positive correlation was identified between attitude and practice, implying that improved awareness and perception of food safety contribute to better compliance. Despite these positive results, Blanca et al. (2025) emphasized the need for continuous improvement through structured interventions such as food safety campaigns, regular training programs, stricter monitoring, and the use of compliance tools.

Babor et al. (2024) conducted a study entitled Food Safety Awareness and Proper Hygiene among Food Vendors, published in the International Journal of Innovative Research in Multidisciplinary Education. The study assessed the level of food safety awareness and hygiene practices among street food vendors in Digos City, Davao del Sur. Using a descriptive-comparative research design, data were collected from 150 randomly selected food vendors through a 5-point Likert scale questionnaire. The study examined the extent of awareness and implementation of proper hygiene practices in food vending operations.

Findings revealed that food safety awareness among vendors was high, indicating that food safety standards are generally well understood and consistently observed. Similarly, hygiene practices were also rated as high, suggesting that proper food handling and cleanliness are widely practiced among vendors. The study also found significant differences in food safety awareness and hygiene practices when grouped according to respondent profile. The study conducted by Putri and Susanna (2021) examined the food safety knowledge, attitudes, and practices (KAP) of 72 food handlers in kitchen premises located in Port "X," North Jakarta, Indonesia. Using a cross-sectional design, data were gathered through questionnaires and observation to determine how food safety awareness relates to actual food handling behavior. Findings revealed that food handlers generally demonstrated adequate knowledge in personal hygiene, cross-contamination prevention, and time-temperature control, but showed limited understanding of foodborne diseases, particularly pathogens such as *Staphylococcus aureus* and *Salmonella typhi*. This gap in knowledge suggests a weakness in awareness of microbiological risks despite familiarity with basic hygiene principles. In terms of attitudes, most respondents recognized the importance of food safety and expressed positive views toward hygiene practices and training. However, a notable proportion reported limited willingness to attend food safety training due to time constraints, reflecting practical barriers that may affect behavioral change.

Labao et al. (2023) investigated the relationship between food safety knowledge and hygiene practices among 150 street vendors in Barangay Tibal-og, Santo Tomas, Davao del Norte using a descriptive-correlational research design. The study utilized adopted structured questionnaires to measure respondents' knowledge in key areas of food safety, including foodborne disease transmission, personal and environmental hygiene, cross-contamination prevention, and temperature control, along with their actual hygiene practices in food handling. More importantly, the study established a significant positive relationship between food safety knowledge and hygiene practices, suggesting that vendors who possess higher levels of understanding about food safety are more likely to implement proper hygienic behaviors in food preparation and handling. However, several studies also emphasize a persistent gap between knowledge and actual practice. Putri and Susanna (2021) and Alemayehu et al. (2021) both found that even when food handlers demonstrate adequate knowledge and positive attitudes, this does not always result in consistent or correct food safety practices. Structural limitations such as lack of access to clean water, inadequate facilities, and limited resources were identified as contributing factors to unsafe practices. This pattern is further supported by Tayco et al. (2025), who noted that environmental constraints in street vending settings significantly hinder full compliance with food safety standards despite high awareness levels.

Furthermore, several studies underscore the importance of continuous training, policy enforcement, and targeted interventions to strengthen food safety compliance. Empeño et al. (2023), Labana et al. (2024), and Dulton et al. (2015) emphasize that structured education, monitoring, and reinforcement mechanisms significantly improve hygiene practices and compliance with sanitation standards. These findings imply that sustained capacity-building efforts are necessary to bridge the gap between awareness and actual implementation, particularly in small-scale food enterprises such as carinderias.

Methodology

Research Design

This study employed a mixed-method research design to provide a comprehensive analysis of food preparation myths and practices among carinderia owners in Mandaon, Masbate. For the quantitative



component, the study described the demographic profile of the respondents in terms of age, sex, educational attainment, religious affiliation, and length of experience as carinderia owners. Data were gathered using a structured questionnaire and analyzed using descriptive statistics such as frequency, percentage, weighted mean, and ranking. This allowed the study to present measurable patterns regarding the prevalence and extent of food preparation myths and practices among the respondents. For the qualitative component, the study explored the food preparation myths and practices commonly observed among carinderia owners in Mandaon, Masbate. This phase focused on capturing the participants' lived experiences, beliefs, and culturally influenced practices related to food preparation, cooking, storage, and food handling. Data were collected through open-ended responses that allowed participants to freely express their views and practices. The responses were analyzed using thematic analysis, following the framework of Braun and Clarke (2006), which involved identifying, organizing, and interpreting recurring patterns and themes within the data.

Sampling Design

The study employed a purposive sampling technique was employed in selecting the respondents. This non-probability sampling method was deemed appropriate as it allows the researcher to deliberately choose individuals who possess the specific characteristics, knowledge, and experience relevant to the study. In this case, the selection focused on carinderia owners who are actively engaged in food preparation and handling, as their experiences are essential in identifying food preparation myths and practices within the locality.

Research Locale

The study was conducted across the the twenty-six barangays of Mandaon, Masbate. The respondents of the study were the thirty (30) carinderia owners with direct involvement in food preparation and business operations. The selection focused on carinderia owners who are actively engaged in food preparation and handling, as their experiences are essential in identifying food preparation myths and practices within the locality.

Research Participants

The respondents of the study were the thirty (30) carinderia owners operating across the twenty-six (26) barangays of Mandaon, Masbate. These participants were selected based on their direct involvement in food preparation and business operations, making them most appropriate sources of information for the study. To ensure the credibility and reliability of responses, only those who were bona fide owners of carinderia establishments and who were formally registered with their respective barangay or municipal business offices were included as participants.

Research Instrument

The researcher used a questionnaire as the principal tool in gathering data from the respondents. The questionnaire was divided into two parts. Part I covered the demographic profile of the respondents to provide a contextual understanding of their background. This included age, sex, educational attainment, religious affiliation, and length of experience as a carinderia owner. An optional space for the respondent's name was also provided; however, confidentiality was strictly observed, and names were not required for analysis. Part II focused on the level of adherence to food preparation myths and practices commonly observed among carinderia owners in Mandaon, Masbate. The items in this section were adapted from Florenca et al. (2021) and modified to reflect local food preparation myths and practices identified in the study area. The draft questionnaire was submitted to the researcher's adviser and the Dean of the Graduate School and Research for validation and critiquing. All comments and suggestions were carefully reviewed, evaluated, and incorporated into the final version of the instrument to improve its accuracy, relevance, and alignment with the objectives of the study. Prior to its full administration, the questionnaire was pilot-tested among fifteen (15) respondents from a similar setting outside the study locale to determine its reliability. The internal consistency of the instrument was measured using Cronbach's alpha, ensuring that the items were suitable for measuring the intended variables.

Data Gathering Procedure

The researcher first secured an approved letter from the University of Saint Anthony (USANT) Dean of the Graduate Studies, which served as authorization to conduct the study. This letter will then be submitted to the baranggay office in the different barangay in Mandaon, Masbate. Once approval was granted, the researcher will proceed to conduct the survey and interview to every carinderia owners within each barangay in Mandaon, Masbate. All interviews were conducted with the consent of the participants. Each session was audio-recorded to ensure accuracy and was later transcribed verbatim for thematic analysis. The interview questions were aligned with the second and third research problems of the study,

focusing on commonly observed food myths and the level of adherence to these practices. The survey and interview were conducted within the respondents' respective barangays to ensure accessibility, comfort, and convenience. Prior to data collection, written permissions and approvals were secured from the Municipal Mayor's Office and the respective Barangay Captains of Mandaon, Masbate. This ensured that proper protocols were followed and that the study was conducted with the full cooperation and awareness of local authorities. Participation in the study was voluntary, and respondents were informed of the purpose of the research before their inclusion. They were also assured that they could withdraw from participation at any point without any consequence.

Results and Discussions

Research Question 1: What is the demographic profile of the carinderia owners in terms of Age, Sex, Educational attainment, religious affiliation, and length of experience as a carinderia owner?

Table 1. Demographic Profile of the Carinderia Owners in terms of Age

Age	Frequency	Percentage	Rank
26-30	2	7	5
31-35	7	23	2.5
36-40	1	3	6
41-45	7	23	2.5
46-50	8	27	4
51-55	5	17	1
Total	30	100	

Table 1 shows imply that most carinderia owners belong to the middle to late adulthood stage, particularly 46–50 years old. This age group is commonly associated with stable livelihood experience and long engagement in small food businesses. Studies on informal food vendors show that older adults tend to dominate small food enterprises due to accumulated experience and limited formal employment opportunities (Rifat et al., 2022). The second highest groups, 31–35 and 41–45, suggested that early to mid-career adults are also actively engaged in carinderia operations, often combining household responsibilities with income generation. The lowest group, 36–40 years, shows a minimal representation, which may reflect shifting engagement patterns or alternative livelihood choices during this life stage. Research by Kamboj et al. (2020) supports that food handling practices are often shaped by years of experience rather than age alone. The findings demonstrate that carinderia ownership in Mandaon, Masbate is predominantly managed by women. The high participation of female owners may be attributed to the traditional role of women in food preparation and household management, which naturally extends to food-related entrepreneurial activities. Empeño et al. (2023) observed that food-related enterprises are commonly operated by female proprietors who possess practical experience in food preparation and customer service.

Table 2. Demographic Profile of Carinderia Owners in terms of Sex

Sex	Frequency	Percentage	Rank
Male	6	20	2
Female	24	80	1
Over-all Mean	30	100	

Table 2 shows that findings demonstrated that carinderia ownership in Mandaon, Masbate is predominantly managed by women. The high participation of female owners may be attributed to the traditional role of women in food preparation and household management, which naturally extends to food-related entrepreneurial activities. Arreza (2024) found that informal eatery businesses are largely sustained through the resilience and adaptability of owners, many of whom are women who balance economic and family obligations. Their dominance in the business highlights their contribution to local economic activities and food service provision. Since most respondents are female, interventions related to food safety, food preparation practices, and the correction of food preparation myths should be designed in a manner that addresses the needs, experiences, and perspectives of women entrepreneurs to ensure greater effectiveness and relevance.

Table 3. Demographic Profile of Carinderia Owners in terms of Educational Attainment

Educational Attainment	Frequency	Percentage	Rank
High School	2	7	2
College	27	90	1
Masteral	1	3	1
Total	30	100	

Table 3 presents the demographic profile of carinderia owners in terms of educational attainment. The data show that the majority of the respondents are college graduates, with a frequency of 27 or 90 percent, ranking first. This is followed by respondents with no formal education, with a frequency of 5 or 16 percent, ranking second. High school graduates recorded a frequency of 2 or 6.66 percent, ranking third. The least represented group consists of respondents with a masteral degree, with a frequency of 1 or 3.33 percent, ranking fourth. The total number of respondents is 30, representing 100 percent of the sample. The findings reveal that most carinderia owners possess relatively high educational qualifications, particularly at the college level. This suggests that operating a carinderia is not limited to individuals with low educational backgrounds but also attracts those who have completed higher education. Alemayehu et al. (2021) found that education significantly influences food safety knowledge among food handlers, with individuals having higher educational backgrounds demonstrating better understanding of food safety principles. Aquino et al. (2021) also reported that food handlers with higher levels of education exhibited greater knowledge, attitudes, and practices related to food safety. The presence of respondents with no formal education indicates that some owners rely heavily on practical experience and traditional knowledge in managing their businesses. The predominance of college-educated respondents suggests a favorable foundation for the adoption of safe food handling practices.

Table 4. Demographic Profile of the Carinderia Owners in terms of Religious Affiliation

Religious Affiliation	Frequency	Percentage	Rank
Roman Catholic	24	80	1
Baptist	2	7	3
Gospel	41	13	2
Total	30	100	

Table 4 shows the demographic profile of carinderia owners in terms of religious affiliation. The data reveal that the majority of the respondents are Roman Catholics, with a frequency of 24 or 80 percent, ranking first. This is followed by respondents affiliated with the Gospel denomination, with a frequency of 4 or 13 percent, ranking second. Baptist respondents have a frequency of 2 or 7 percent, ranking third. The total number of respondents is 30, representing 100 percent of the sample. The findings show that Roman Catholicism is the dominant religious affiliation among carinderia owners in Mandaon, Masbate. This result reflects the religious composition commonly observed in many communities in the Philippines, where Roman Catholicism remains the predominant faith. Religious affiliation can influence food-related beliefs, traditions, and practices, including perceptions about food preparation, consumption, and cultural customs. Counihan and Van Esterik (2013) emphasized that food practices are often shaped by cultural and religious influences, which affect how individuals prepare, serve, and consume food. Since most respondents belong to the Roman Catholic faith, many food-related beliefs and practices may have been passed down through generations and reinforced by local customs.

Table 5. Length of Experience as a Carinderia Owner

Length of Experience	Frequency	Percentage	Rank
2 to 3 years	2	7	3.5
4 to 5 years	2	7	3.5
6 to 7 years	1	3	5
8 to 9 years	12	40	2
10 years or more	13	43	1
Over-All Mean	30	100	

Table 5 presents the demographic profile of carinderia owners in terms of length of experience as a carinderia owner. The data show that respondents with 10 years or more of experience comprise the largest

group, with a frequency of 13 or 43 percent, ranking first. This is followed by those with 8 to 9 years of experience, with a frequency of 12 or 40 percent, ranking second. Respondents with 2 to 3 years and 4 to 5 years of experience each recorded a frequency of 2 or 7 percent, sharing the rank of 3.5. The least represented group consists of those with 6 to 7 years of experience, with a frequency of 1 or 3 percent, ranking fifth. The total number of respondents is 30, representing 100 percent of the sample. The findings reveal that most carinderia owners have been operating their businesses for a considerable period, particularly those with 10 years or more and 8 to 9 years of experience. This suggests that carinderia operation is a stable source of livelihood that many owners maintain over an extended period. Macatula et al. (n.d.) also noted that experienced carinderia owners develop strategic approaches to sustain their businesses despite economic challenges such as increasing prices of raw ingredients. The limited number of respondents with shorter experience periods indicates that fewer individuals are newly entering the carinderia business. While extensive experience can enhance operational efficiency, it may also result in the continued use of traditional food preparation beliefs and practices that have been followed for many years. Walker et al. (2003) emphasized that food handling behavior is often influenced by long-established habits and routines developed through years of work experience.

Research Question 2: What food preparation myths and practices are commonly observed among carinderia owners in Mandaon, Masbate?

The major themes include cleanliness and food safety myths, meat tenderization practices, rejection and non-practice of traditional methods, container and storage beliefs, traditional cooking practices, and food rituals and superstitions.

Cleanliness and Food Safety Myth. Participants strongly emphasized repeated washing of meat and vegetables until the water becomes clear as the main indicator of safety. Participant 7 stated, "Sabi ni Lola sadto an karne kag gulay dapat inahugasan hasta magin puti and tubig kay para masiguro na waay san kagaw an lulutuon na sura." (According to my grandmother, the meat and vegetables should be washed until the water becomes clear to ensure that there are no bacteria left before cooking). This belief shows that cleanliness is interpreted through visible transformation, where clearer water is equated with reduced contamination. This perception reflects a broader cognitive tendency among informal food handlers to rely on observable indicators when assessing safety. Labao et al. (2024) similarly found that street food vendors strongly associate visible cleanliness with food safety, often using washing as the primary preventive measure against foodborne illness. Zanin et al. (2017) explain that such beliefs stem from limited access to formal training, resulting in reliance on heuristic judgments rather than microbiological understanding. However, scientific evidence contradicts this assumption. Chen et al. (2021) demonstrated that even repeated washing does not eliminate all pathogens, as microorganisms can adhere strongly to food surfaces. Bredbenner et al. (2021) further emphasize that visual cleanliness is a poor predictor of microbial safety. The persistence of this belief indicates a gap between perceived cleanliness and actual food hygiene standards.

Meat Tenderizing Food Myths and Practices. Participants reported various traditional methods for tenderizing meat, including adding ice to boiling water, manipulating heat levels, and inserting utensils into cooking pots. Participant 1 stated, "Pagbutang san yelo sa inapabukalan na karne para magyumok an karne." (Adding ice to meat while it is boiling tenderizes the meat). Participant 9 added, "Permi dapat may kutsara kay para madali magyumok." (There should always be spoon in the boiling pots because it helps the meat become tender faster). These practices reflect an intuitive understanding of cooking processes but lack alignment with food science principles. Meat tenderness is primarily determined by collagen breakdown, which requires consistent heat over time. James et al. (2020) found that temperature fluctuations disrupt collagen conversion, resulting in tougher meat. Similarly, Roldán et al. (2020) reported that unstable heat conditions reduce moisture retention and negatively affect meat texture. The belief that utensils or ice can influence tenderness reflects what Kamboj et al. (2020) describe as folk interpretations of physical processes in food preparation. These interpretations often arise when individuals attempt to explain outcomes using observable events, such as heat, texture change, or cooking time, without understanding the underlying biochemical mechanisms. From a broader perspective, these practices show how food knowledge in informal sectors is constructed through experience rather than formal education. While participants recognize outcomes such as "soft meat," the causal explanations are culturally constructed rather than scientifically grounded.

Container and Storage Food Practices. Participants expressed strong preferences for stainless steel containers over plastic materials during marination. Participant 5 stated, "Dapat dili mag gamit san plastic containers pag nagamarinade kay madugay baya mahugasan kaya sigurado gayud na damo pa san

bilin na germs sa butangan." (plastic containers should not be used for marination because they are difficult to clean, which may result in remaining germs in the container). This belief reflects concerns about cleanliness, residue retention, and contamination risk. While the reasoning is experiential, it partially aligns with scientific findings. Lebelo et al. (2021) explain that food safety risks increase when materials interact with acidic ingredients used in marination, which may lead to migration of substances from packaging materials. Kabiesz (2024) further notes that stainless steel is widely preferred in food industries due to its durability, non-porous surface, and resistance to microbial adhesion. However, participants attribute risk mainly to cleaning difficulty rather than chemical interaction or microbial behavior. This shows how scientific principles are translated into simplified cultural explanations. The convergence between belief and science suggests that some traditional preferences may already support safer practices, even if the underlying rationale is incomplete.

Rejection and Non-Practice. Some participants reported discontinuing traditional practices due to modernization, convenience, and availability of faster methods. Participant 4 stated, "Waay naman na... damo naman na san madali na paagi yana sa pagpreparar san pagpakaon." (There is none...sometimes because their other convenient ways to use). Participant 5 similarly noted that newer tools and methods replaced older practices. This shift reflects behavioral change driven primarily by efficiency. Rogers' Diffusion of Innovations theory explains that practices perceived as more efficient or advantageous are more likely to replace traditional methods. Aquino et al. (2021) found that food handlers adopt practices that reduce time and labor demands, especially in small-scale food enterprises where workload is high. The findings suggest that food preparation practices are dynamic and responsive to economic and operational pressures. However, abandonment of traditional practices does not always guarantee improved safety, especially when replacement methods are adopted without proper training or awareness of hygiene standards. Thus, modernization in food handling is not automatically equivalent to improved food safety behavior.

Traditional Cooking Practices. Participants described various traditional cooking techniques aimed at improving texture, flavor, or cooking efficiency. These include using banana leaves, adding plant materials during boiling, and aging meat before cooking. Participant 3 stated, "Pag butang san dahon san saging pag dili naluto san mayo an luto." (Putting banana leaves when the rice is not cooked well. Participant 11 added, "Pagabutang san sibot or dahoon san mangga pag nagapabukal san karne." (Adding herbs or mango leaves when boiling meat) Banana leaves are traditionally used to retain moisture and enhance heat distribution. Kusumawati et al. (2020) confirmed that banana leaf wrapping improves moisture retention and reduces dryness during cooking. This supports the functional value of the practice, even if it is not formally understood in scientific terms. The use of mango leaves and other plant materials reflects empirical knowledge of natural tenderizing agents. Yusuf et al. (2019) found that mango leaves contain bioactive compounds that can contribute to mild tenderization effects. However, high heat exposure during boiling may reduce enzymatic activity, limiting effectiveness. These findings demonstrate that traditional cooking practices often contain practical wisdom, but lack scientific explanation, resulting in partial understanding of their effectiveness.

Food Rituals and Superstitions. Participants also reported ritualistic practices believed to influence business success and food sales. Participant 18 stated, "Gatuod kami na dapat pag nagaluto san pagkaon permi gayud pangadyian kay agud madali maubos kag mabakal dayun." (We believe that when cooking food for the carinderia, you should always pray so that it sells out quickly and gets bought immediately). Participant 29 added, "Permi krusan an pagkaon bago iserve agud damo an magbakal." (Always do the sign of the cross over the food before serving so that many customers will buy it). These practices reflect symbolic belief systems rooted in cultural and spiritual traditions. Rozin and Nemeroff (2002) describe this as sympathetic magic, where symbolic acts are believed to influence real-world outcomes. Veeck (2019) found that Filipino vendors commonly associate prayer and blessings with increased sales, reinforcing the role of spirituality in food commerce. While these practices do not influence food safety or quality, they play a significant role in emotional regulation and cultural identity among food handlers.

Research Question 3: What is the level of adherence or practice of carinderia owners to food preparation myths and beliefs?

Table 6. Level of Adherence to Food Preparation Myths and Beliefs in terms of Cleanliness and Food Safety Myths

	Indicators	Weighted Mean	Verbal Interpretation	Rank
1.	Washes meat and vegetables repeatedly until water becomes clear before cooking.	3.67	Often Practiced	1
2.	Believes that clearer rinse water means food is free from germs or bacteria.	3.54	Often Practiced	2
3.	Considers thorough washing as the main method of ensuring food safety.	3.51	Often Practiced	3
4.	Washes ingredients multiple times even if already visibly clean.	3.45	Often Practiced	4
5.	Relies on visual appearance of cleanliness rather than other food safety practices.	3.42	Often Practiced	5
	Total	3.46	Often Practiced	

Table 6 presents the level of practice to food preparation myths and beliefs in terms of cleanliness and food safety among carinderia owners. The data shows that washing meat and vegetables repeatedly until the water becomes clear obtained the highest weighted mean of 3.67 and ranked first, followed by the belief that clearer rinse water means food is free from germs or bacteria with 3.54. Considering thorough washing as the main method of ensuring food safety ranked third with a weighted mean of 3.51. Washing ingredients multiple times even if already visibly clean ranked fourth with 3.45. Reliance on visual appearance of cleanliness rather than other food safety practices obtained the lowest weighted mean of 3.42. The overall mean is 3.46 with a verbal interpretation of often practiced. These findings align with Bredbenner et al. (2021) who noted that food handlers in informal settings often equate visible cleanliness with microbial safety. Chen et al. (2021) found that repeated washing of vegetables does not fully remove pathogens even when water appears clear. Mazengia et al. (2018) also reported that visual cleanliness is not a reliable indicator of food safety due to persistent microbial contamination after rinsing. These studies support the idea that sensory judgment remains a dominant but inaccurate basis for food safety decisions among food handlers. The results imply that cleanliness practices are deeply rooted in traditional understanding rather than scientific knowledge.

Table 7. Level of Adherence to Food Preparation Myths and Beliefs in terms of Meat Tenderization Myths and Practices

	Indicators	Weighted Mean	Verbal Interpretation	Rank
1.	Believes that adding ice to boiling meat helps make it tender.	3.58	Often Practiced	2
2.	Uses utensils such as spoon or fork inside boiling meat to improve tenderness.	3.35	Sometimes Practiced	5
3.	Believes that continuous high heat or rapid boiling softens meat faster	3.62	Often Practiced	1
4.	Uses traditional additives such as matchstick heads or similar substances to tenderize meat..	2.10	Rarely Practiced	6
5.	Believes that repeated stirring and heat manipulation improves meat softness	3.40	Sometimes Practiced	4
6.	Uses low heat simmering as a method of tenderizing meat.	3.48	Often Practiced	3
	Total	3.25	Sometimes Practiced	

Table 7 presents the level of adherence to food preparation myths and beliefs in terms of meat tenderization myths and practices among carinderia owners. The data indicates that belief in continuous high heat or rapid boiling as a way to soften meat faster obtained the highest weighted mean of 3.62 and ranked first. Belief that adding ice to boiling meat helps tenderize it followed with 3.58 and ranked second. Use of low heat simmering as a method of tenderizing meat ranked third with 3.48. Belief that repeated stirring and heat manipulation improves meat softness ranked fourth with 3.40. Use of utensils such as spoon or fork inside boiling meat ranked fifth with 3.35. The lowest ranked indicator is the use of traditional additives such as matchstick heads or similar substances with 2.10. The overall mean is 3.25 with a verbal interpretation of sometimes practiced. The results show that meat tenderization practices are mainly based on heat control beliefs and traditional cooking observations. James et al. (2020) explain that temperature fluctuations can reduce collagen breakdown efficiency. The third indicator shows partial awareness of proper cooking methods since low heat simmering is supported. The lower ranked practices, especially the use of utensils inside boiling meat and matchstick additives, show limited adherence, which aligns with findings of Zanin et al. (2017) that unsafe traditional practices tend to decline when food

handlers gain better knowledge. The very low use of matchstick heads is consistent with safety concerns reported by Schanper et al. (2021), who identified toxic risks associated with such materials in food preparation. The findings imply that respondents are gradually shifting toward safer and more acceptable cooking methods, although some misconceptions about heat and temperature remain strong.

Table 8. Level of Adherence to Food Preparation Myths and Beliefs in terms of Container and Storage Practices

	Indicators	Weighted Mean	Verbal Interpretation	Rank
1.	Avoids using plastic containers for marination due to belief that it retains germs.	3.66	Often Practiced	1
2.	Prefers stainless steel containers for food safety and hygiene.	3.60	Often Practiced	2
3.	Believes acidic ingredients make plastic containers unsafe for food use.	3.42	Often Practiced	3
4.	Uses available plastic containers despite hygiene concerns when necessary.	3.20	Sometimes Practiced	5
5.	Believes container material directly affects food spoilage rate.	3.35	Sometimes Practiced	4
	Total	3.45	Often Practiced	

Table 8 presents the level of adherence to food preparation myths and beliefs in terms of container and storage practices among carinderia owners. The data shows that avoiding the use of plastic containers for marination due to the belief that it retains germs obtained the highest weighted mean of 3.66 and ranked first. Preference for stainless steel containers for food safety and hygiene followed with 3.60 and ranked second. Belief that acidic ingredients make plastic containers unsafe for food use ranked third with 3.42. Belief that container material directly affects food spoilage rate ranked fourth with 3.35. Using available plastic containers despite hygiene concerns when necessary ranked fifth with 3.20. The overall mean is 3.45 with a verbal interpretation of often practiced. The results show that respondents give strong importance to the type of container used in food preparation, particularly during marination and storage. Lebelo et al. (2021) explained that food storage materials influence contamination risks through possible residue retention and microbial transfer. Mazinianian (2016) also highlighted that stainless steel is a more stable and safer material for food contact due to its non-porous surface. The third indicator shows concern about acidic ingredients interacting with plastic, which is supported by Abu Almaaly (2019) who noted that acidic foods may promote migration of substances from packaging materials. The findings imply that container selection is guided by both perceived safety and situational needs. While there is a strong preference for stainless steel, plastic is still used when necessary, showing a balance between ideal practices and real conditions.

Table 9. Level of Adherence to Food Preparation Myths and Beliefs in terms of Traditional Cooking Practices

	Indicators	Weighted Mean	Verbal Interpretation	Rank
1.	Uses banana leaves to cover or wrap food to improve cooking quality.	3.52	Often Practiced	2
2.	Adds herbs or leaves (e.g., mango leaves) during cooking to improve tenderness or flavor.	3.55	Often Practiced	1
3.	Believes hanging or aging meat improves tenderness.	3.40	Sometimes Practiced	4
4.	Adds vinegar during frying to improve crispiness of fried foods.	3.48	Often Practiced	3
5.	Uses non-standard materials or methods in cooking based on tradition.	2.95	Sometimes Practiced	5
	Total	3.38	Sometimes Practiced	

Table 9 presents the level of adherence to food preparation myths and beliefs in terms of traditional cooking practices among carinderia owners. The data shows that adding herbs or leaves such as mango leaves during cooking to improve tenderness or flavor obtained the highest weighted mean of 3.55 and ranked first. Use of banana leaves to cover or wrap food to improve cooking quality followed with 3.52 and ranked second. Adding vinegar during frying to improve crispiness ranked third with 3.48. Belief that hanging or aging meat improves tenderness ranked fourth with 3.40. Use of non-standard materials or methods in cooking based on tradition ranked fifth with 2.95. The overall mean is 3.38 with a verbal interpretation of sometimes practiced. The findings indicate that traditional cooking practices remain strongly embedded in daily food preparation. The highest ranked indicator shows reliance on plant-based materials such as herbs and leaves, which reflects long-standing culinary knowledge. Kusumawati et al. (2020) explained that banana leaves help retain moisture and improve heat distribution during cooking.

Santos et al. (2021) also noted that plant-based coverings may contribute to food quality through moisture retention and oxidation control. The use of mango leaves and herbs aligns with findings of Yusuf et al. (2019) who reported that plant extracts contain compounds that may slightly influence meat tenderness. The results suggest that traditional cooking practices are maintained because of perceived effectiveness and cultural value.

Table 10. Level of Adherence to Food Preparation Myths and Beliefs in terms of Food Rituals and Superstitions

Indicators	Weighted Mean	Verbal Interpretation	Rank
6. Prays over food before cooking or serving to ensure good sales.	3.60	Often Practiced	1
7. Makes religious signs (e.g., cross) over food before serving.	3.45	Often Practiced	2
8. Believes rituals influence food sales and customer demand.	3.50	Often Practiced	3
9. Uses symbolic practices to prevent food spoilage or increase shelf life.	2.85	Sometimes Practiced	5
10. Performs traditional beliefs passed from elders during food preparation.	3.40	Sometimes Practiced	4
Total	3.36	Sometimes Practiced	

Table 10 presents the level of adherence to food preparation myths and beliefs in terms of food rituals and superstitions among carinderia owners. The data shows that praying over food before cooking or serving to ensure good sales obtained the highest weighted mean of 3.60 and ranked first. Belief that rituals influence food sales and customer demand followed with 3.50 and ranked third. Making religious signs such as the cross before serving ranked second with 3.45. Performing traditional beliefs passed from elders ranked fourth with 3.40. Using symbolic practices to prevent food spoilage or increase shelf life ranked fifth with 2.85. The overall mean is 3.36 with a verbal interpretation of sometimes practiced. The findings show that prayer and religious expressions are the most dominant practices among respondents. The highest ranked indicator reflects the strong belief that spiritual actions can influence business outcomes such as sales and customer demand. This aligns with Rozin and Nemeroff (2002) who explained that symbolic behaviors in food contexts are often linked to perceived control over uncertain results. Veeck (2019) also found that street food vendors commonly use prayer as part of their daily routine to manage business uncertainty. The second and third indicators further support the presence of culturally driven beliefs where success is associated with ritual practices rather than economic or operational factors. The result imply that these practices do not directly affect food quality or safety, they contribute to confidence and psychological assurance in business operations.

Table 11. Summary of the level of adherence or practice of carinderia owners to food preparation myths and beliefs

Indicators	Weighted Mean	Verbal Interpretation	Rank
Cleanliness and Food safety	3.46	Often Practiced	1
Meat Tenderization and Practices	3.25	Sometimes Practiced	5
Container and Storage Practices	3.45	Often Practiced	2
Traditional Practices	3.38	Sometimes Practiced	3
Food Rituals and Superstitions	3.36	Sometimes Practiced	4
Total	3.38	Sometimes Practiced	

Table 11 presents the level of adherence to food preparation myths and beliefs among carinderia owners. Cleanliness and food safety obtained the highest weighted mean of 3.46, interpreted as often practiced, followed by container and storage practices with 3.45, also often practiced. Traditional cooking practices registered a weighted mean of 3.38, while food rituals and superstitions obtained 3.36; both were interpreted as sometimes practiced. Meat tenderization myths and practices obtained the lowest weighted mean of 3.25, likewise interpreted as sometimes practiced. The overall mean of 3.38 indicates that adherence to food preparation myths and beliefs is sometimes practiced. The relatively higher ratings in cleanliness and food storage align with the findings of Blanca et al. (2025) and Babor et al. (2024), who reported strong adherence to proper hygiene and sanitation practices among food handlers. These studies suggest that basic food safety practices are more consistently observed because they are reinforced through training, regulation, and direct public health messaging. This supports the result that cleanliness and storage-related practices are more frequently applied compared to culturally rooted food beliefs. The

findings also correspond with Whitworth (2022), who noted that food safety myths remain influential in everyday food handling, particularly when reinforced through generational transmission and personal experience. In this context, meat tenderization practices and food rituals may continue to be observed despite increasing awareness of proper food safety standards. Furthermore, the overall mean of 3.38 supports the idea presented by Zanin et al. (2017) and Insfran-Rivarola et al. (2020) that while training and awareness improve food safety behavior, the translation of knowledge into consistent practice remains gradual. This indicates that food handlers may simultaneously adopt scientific practices while still retaining selected traditional beliefs.

Research Question 4: Based on the findings, what guidebook on food preparation myths and practices may be developed to promote scientifically sound and safe food handling practices?

Based on the findings of the study, the guidebook was developed to promote scientifically sound and safe food handling practices among carinderia owners is titled "Kusina Serye Comics." This guidebook is designed in a comic-style format to make food safety concepts more accessible, engaging, and easy to understand, especially for food handlers who rely heavily on experience-based and traditional practices. It aims to address common food preparation myths identified in the study, such as repeated washing of food until water becomes clear, the belief that visual cleanliness ensures safety, misconceptions in meat tenderization methods, and the use of non-scientific container and storage practices. It also integrates explanations that clarify the difference between culturally inherited food beliefs and evidence-based food safety principles, while still respecting local traditions. The "Kusina Serye Comics" guidebook is organized into thematic sections that reflect the major findings of the study, including cleanliness and food safety myths, meat tenderization practices, container and storage practices, traditional cooking methods, and food rituals and superstitions. Each section presents real-life kitchen scenarios commonly experienced by carinderia owners and contrasts food myths with correct scientific practices. Through visual storytelling, the guidebook simplifies complex food safety concepts such as proper hygiene, temperature control, safe storage, and contamination prevention.

Ethical Considerations

This study strictly adhered to ethical standards in research and ensured full compliance with the Data Privacy Act of 2012 (Republic Act No. 10173). All information gathered from the participants was treated with utmost confidentiality. Respondents' identities were anonymized, and all data were securely stored in password-protected files accessible only to the principal researcher. No personal identifiers were disclosed in any part of the study to protect the privacy and rights of the participants. Prior to data collection, written permissions and approvals were secured from the Municipal Mayor's Office and the respective Barangay Captains of Mandaon, Masbate. This ensured that proper protocols were followed and that the study was conducted with the full cooperation and awareness of local authorities. Participation in the study was voluntary, and respondents were informed of the purpose of the research before their inclusion. They were also assured that they could withdraw from participation at any point without any consequence.

Conclusion

The study concludes that the Carinderia owners in Mandaon, Masbate are mostly middle to late adults, predominantly female, college graduates, Roman Catholic, and long-term business operators. Their profile reflects experienced food handlers with a stable background in small-scale food enterprises. The findings revealed that, food preparation practices are largely shaped by tradition, experience, and partial understanding of food safety concepts. Many beliefs are based on visual cleanliness and inherited knowledge, with only some practices showing alignment with scientific food handling standards. The level of adherence of the food myths and practices was generally moderate, with cleanliness and storage practices more frequently observed than traditional cooking beliefs, rituals, and meat tenderization myths. This indicates a gradual shift from traditional practices toward more practical and safety-oriented food handling. As a result, the "Kusina Serye Comics" guidebook was developed based on the results of the findings. It provides a practical and accessible tool to address common food preparation myths and promote safe, science-based food handling practices while respecting existing cultural beliefs among carinderia owners.

Recommendations

Based on the conclusions of the study, several key recommendations are proposed to enhance food safety practices among carinderia owners. The Municipal Agriculture Office, Municipal Health Office, and

Barangay Local Government Units are encouraged to implement targeted food safety training programs specifically designed for middle-aged, female, and long-term carinderia operators, focusing on strengthening their existing culinary experience while addressing unsafe practices through simple, practical, and hands-on approaches tailored to their profile. In addition, the Department of Health, together with Municipal Health Offices and community extension workers, should conduct continuous, community-based food safety education campaigns to address persistent food preparation myths and bridge traditional beliefs with scientifically validated practices using clear, culturally sensitive, and relatable instructional methods. Strengthening monitoring mechanisms is also recommended, wherein Local Government Units, food safety inspectors, and Barangay Health Workers collaborate to ensure consistent adherence to proper hygiene and food storage standards, alongside regular orientation and follow-up education to gradually eliminate unsafe traditional handling practices. Furthermore, the integration and distribution of the "Kusina Serye Comics" guidebook by the Municipal Health Office, TESDA, DepEd, and local livelihood training centers should be prioritized to provide an accessible, engaging, and culturally responsive learning resource that enhances food safety knowledge while respecting local traditions. Lastly, future researchers are encouraged to conduct similar studies across various provinces and urban settings in the Philippines to examine regional variations in food-related myths, hazardous practices, and the effectiveness of diverse intervention strategies.

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