

Abstract

The exquisite taste and colorful appearances of desserts have long been a familiarity of both western and Thai palates since the old days. Like foods, they have called attentions from the scholars to study them in various aspects, including their history or their roles and meanings in the rituals and societies.

However, in Thailand, how Thai desserts are consumed by modern Thais or to be specific, how the desserts have been 'culturally' consumed today, has yet sufficiently been studied, including what are their meanings in the eyes of the consumers or even do they have any meaning at all. Such inadequacy stems from the general view that the desserts are just the accompaniment of the main courses and man can survive if without the formers but not the latter. The importance of Thai desserts is underscored when they are placed in the context of the traditional rituals.

But my study has found that Thai desserts for the visitors in Don Wai marketplace are so rich in meaning, given to them by both the visitors themselves and the dessert vendors. One of the meanings is its genuine-ness, antique, or the famous word 'authenticity' in sum. The search for such meaning prevails among the visitors of Don Wai, of which the majority of them are the middle-class people. To consume the genuine Thai desserts make them feel they 'really arrive' at the market place.

I have also founded that the healthy concern is one among the influential consuming factors of Don Wai visitors, the idea so alien in our forefathers' time. They will select the desserts with minimum sweet taste and they should be wrapped in the natural packages, including the banana leaf, not a plastic bag, to be in line with their environmental-friendly-awareness and their healthy concern.

Learning what are their customers' preferences, the vendors in the marketplace have promoted their products to suit their palates and their ideologies by branding themselves as inheriting the genuine receipts of Thai desserts.

As a result, from the locally-produced sweets, Thai desserts are transformed to be the symbol of Don Wai. The place and its desserts are also made well-known among the metropolitan visitors by the media and later by words of mouths of the visitors.

Therefore, amid the tide of modernization, Thai desserts have yet lose its values and meanings or their importance is not limited only within the context of the traditional rituals but have still been served along with or after the meals. But what is changed is the way they are consumed, which have continued to alter in parallel with the ever-changing society.