



TAUCO AND SOY SAUCE AS INDONESIAN HALAL CULINARY HERITAGE: ACCULTURATION, FERMENTATION, AND MUSLIM- FRIENDLY FOOD PRACTICES

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Abstract: *This article revises the discussion of tauco and soy sauce by placing them within the field of Indonesian halal culinary studies. Rather than treating tauco and soy sauce merely as traces of Chinese-Indonesian acculturation, this article asks how fermented soybean condiments can be understood as halal culinary heritage, how their production and use intersect with halal assurance, and why tauco remains less visible than sweet soy sauce in Muslim-friendly food narratives. This study uses a qualitative literature review by combining food history, food anthropology, fermentation studies, and Indonesian halal product assurance literature. The analysis shows that tauco and sweet soy sauce share a genealogy of soybean fermentation but follow different cultural trajectories: sweet soy sauce has been nationalized as an everyday Indonesian condiment, whereas tauco remains attached to particular regional and Peranakan kitchens. From a halal culinary perspective, both condiments have strong potential because their main ingredients are plant based; however, halal certainty is not determined by ingredients alone but also by microbial cultures, additives, processing aids, equipment, storage, and serving practices. The article argues that tauco should not be marginalized as an ethnic seasoning, but repositioned as Indonesian halal culinary heritage through transparent ingredient information, halal-certified production, Muslim-friendly recipe adaptation, and culinary education that acknowledges its cross-cultural origins.*

Keywords: *tauco; soy sauce; halal culinary; fermented food; culinary heritage; Muslim-friendly cuisine*

Abstract: *Artikel ini merevisi pembahasan tentang tauco dan kecap dengan menempatkannya dalam kajian kuliner halal Indonesia. Alih-alih hanya memandang tauco dan kecap sebagai jejak akulturasi Tionghoa-Indonesia, artikel ini mempertanyakan bagaimana bumbu fermentasi kedelai dapat dipahami sebagai warisan kuliner halal, bagaimana produksi dan penggunaannya bersinggungan dengan jaminan kehalalan, serta mengapa tauco masih kurang*

terlihat dibandingkan kecap manis dalam narasi makanan ramah Muslim. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode tinjauan pustaka kualitatif dengan menggabungkan kajian sejarah makanan, antropologi pangan, studi fermentasi, dan literatur jaminan produk halal di Indonesia. Analisis menunjukkan bahwa tauco dan kecap manis memiliki genealogi yang sama dalam tradisi fermentasi kedelai, tetapi menempuh lintasan budaya yang berbeda: kecap manis telah ternasionalisasi sebagai bumbu harian masyarakat Indonesia, sedangkan tauco masih melekat pada dapur regional dan peranakan tertentu. Dalam perspektif kuliner halal, keduanya memiliki potensi kuat karena bahan utamanya berbasis nabati; namun kepastian halal tidak hanya ditentukan oleh bahan, melainkan juga kultur mikroba, bahan tambahan, bahan penolong, peralatan, penyimpanan, dan praktik penyajian. Artikel ini berargumen bahwa tauco tidak semestinya dimarginalkan sebagai bumbu etnik, tetapi diposisikan ulang sebagai warisan kuliner halal Indonesia melalui transparansi informasi bahan, produksi bersertifikat halal, adaptasi resep ramah Muslim, dan edukasi kuliner yang tetap mengakui asal-usul lintas budayanya.

Keywords: *tauco; kecap; kuliner halal; makanan fermentasi; warisan kuliner; masakan ramah muslim*

BACKGROUND

Tauco and soy sauce occupy a special position in Indonesian food culture. Both are made from soybeans and both are historically connected to the movement of Chinese traders, migrants, and culinary knowledge into the Indonesian archipelago. Yet the two condiments have not received equal treatment in everyday language, recipe books, restaurant menus, or national culinary narratives. Sweet soy sauce, especially kecap manis, is widely accepted as a common Indonesian condiment. Tauco, by contrast, is often treated as a more limited seasoning associated with particular regional kitchens such as Cianjur, Medan, Lasem, Pontianak, or other Chinese-Indonesian and coastal foodways.

The earlier framing of tauco and soy sauce as a meeting in a local kitchen is useful but still too general for a journal whose scope includes halal food. A stronger framing is needed: tauco and soy sauce should be read as halal culinary heritage. This does not mean forcing every aspect of Islamic tourism or the creative economy into the article. Rather, the article focuses on one relevant scope only, namely halal culinary studies. The question is not simply where tauco and soy sauce came from, but how these condiments can be interpreted, produced, communicated, and served in ways that meet Muslim consumers' expectations of halal and thayyib food.

In Indonesia, halal is not only a theological category but also a public assurance system. Law No. 33 of 2014 concerning Halal Product Assurance defines halal product assurance as legal certainty regarding the halalness of a product as proven by a halal certificate. Government

Regulation No. 39 of 2021 further elaborates the scope of halal product processes, including processing, storage, packaging, distribution, sales, and serving. Therefore, a halal culinary reading cannot stop at the question of whether soybeans, salt, sugar, and water are halal. It must also address the status of microbial cultures, additives, processing aids, shared equipment, packaging, restaurant utensils, and recipe combinations.

This point is particularly important for fermented foods. Fermentation is central to many Asian food cultures and should not be automatically suspected as non-halal. Tempeh, tape, vinegar, soy sauce, tauco, miso, and many other foods show that controlled microbial transformation can produce desirable flavor, aroma, texture, and preservation effects. However, fermentation also requires literacy: what microorganisms are used, what substrate is fermented, whether alcohol is intentionally added, whether non-halal enzymes or media are used, and whether the final product is handled in a clean and permissible production chain. This makes tauco and soy sauce ideal objects for halal culinary analysis.

The historical background of tauco and soy sauce is inseparable from Chinese migration and maritime exchange. Lombard (1996) emphasizes that Java and the wider archipelago have long been shaped by Asian networks of trade, migration, and cultural circulation. Chinese communities who came to the archipelago were not homogeneous; they included Hokkien, Hakka, Teochew, Cantonese, and other groups, each bringing different food memories and techniques. Over time, these techniques were not simply copied but were translated into local ingredients, tastes, and social contexts. Soy sauce became sweeter through the use of palm sugar or coconut sugar, while tauco developed regional profiles according to local climate, soybean quality, brine, drying methods, and household recipes.

The problem is that the existing narrative of harmonious acculturation often hides important questions. Why did kecap manis become a national condiment, while tauco remained peripheral? Why is sweet soy sauce widely perceived as compatible with Indonesian Muslim kitchens, while tauco is still sometimes marked as “Chinese” and therefore less visible in halal culinary promotion? How can the cultural memory of tauco be preserved without erasing its Chinese-Indonesian genealogy, and how can that memory be connected with the needs of Muslim consumers for halal assurance?

These questions reveal several research gaps. First, previous discussions often emphasize historical acculturation but rarely analyze halal culinary implications. Second, food heritage studies often celebrate taste, memory, and identity but do not always examine material halal assurance. Third, halal food studies often focus on meat, slaughtering, restaurants, certification, or supply chains, while fermented condiments are treated as minor ingredients



even though they determine the character of many dishes. Fourth, tauco has been discussed as a marginalized seasoning, but its potential as halal culinary heritage has not been sufficiently developed.

Based on those gaps, this article addresses three questions: (1) how can tauco and soy sauce be reread as Indonesian halal culinary heritage? (2) What halal critical points arise in the production and use of fermented soybean condiments? (3) How can tauco be repositioned from an ethnic and regional seasoning into a Muslim-friendly culinary ingredient without denying its cross-cultural origin?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Foodways, Culinary Heritage, and Identity

Food is not only a biological need but also a cultural sign system. Douglas (1972) shows that meals contain social grammar: the arrangement of dishes, categories of clean and unclean, and rules of commensality communicate social order. Fischler (1988) similarly argues that food is incorporated into the body and therefore becomes part of self-identity. In this sense, tauco and soy sauce are not merely condiments. They are edible records of migration, memory, household practice, and social belonging.

Culinary heritage studies further emphasize that traditional foods can become carriers of local knowledge. Bessiere (1998) argues that cuisine can become a resource for local development and cultural recognition because it condenses place, history, and technique. Long (2004) uses the idea of culinary tourism to show that food allows people to encounter difference. However, the relevance for this article is not tourism promotion; it is the way food becomes a medium through which people recognize, negotiate, and sometimes domesticate cultural difference.

Cultural Hybridity and Chinese-Indonesian Culinary Traces

The formation of Indonesian cuisine cannot be separated from long processes of trade and migration. Lombard (1996) describes Java as a crossroads of Asian networks, while studies of Peranakan and Nyonya cuisines show how Chinese, Malay, local, and colonial elements were combined in household practices (Ng and Ab. Karim, 2016). In this perspective, tauco and soy sauce are best understood as hybrid objects: their techniques may be connected to Chinese fermented soybean traditions, but their Indonesian forms are shaped by local raw materials, local sugar, regional cooking habits, and Muslim-majority food environments.



The concept of hybridity is useful only if it avoids two extremes. The first extreme is pure origin thinking, which assumes that a food remains permanently “foreign” because its genealogy is not indigenous. The second extreme is total nationalization, which erases minority contributions once a food becomes widely consumed. A better approach recognizes layered belonging: tauco and soy sauce can be Chinese-Indonesian, regional, national, and halal culinary objects at the same time.

Halal Culinary Studies: From Ingredient Status to Process Assurance

Halal culinary studies are broader than the avoidance of pork and alcohol. Riaz and Chaudry (2004) explain that halal food production requires attention to raw materials, processing aids, hygiene, storage, and separation from non-halal contamination. Tieman (2011) and Tieman, van der Vorst, and Ghazali (2012) extend this logic into supply-chain management, showing that halal integrity depends on the movement of materials across procurement, production, logistics, and retail. Wilson and Liu (2010) also note that halal has become not only a legal or religious marker but also a trust-based consumer sign.

For culinary products, this means that halalness must be read materially and practically. Materially, ingredients and additives must be permissible. Practically, the food must be prepared, stored, and served without contamination from non-halal substances. This is crucial for Chinese-Indonesian dishes because the same culinary repertoire may include halal-friendly preparations as well as recipes using pork, lard, angciu, mirin, or other non-halal ingredients. A halal culinary analysis should therefore distinguish between a condiment, a recipe, and a serving environment.

Fermented Soybean Condiments and Halal Literacy

Fermented soybean foods are common across Asia. Steinkraus (1996), Aidoo, Nout, and Sarkar (2006), and Tamang, Watanabe, and Holzapfel (2016) show that fermentation involves complex interactions of molds, yeasts, and bacteria that create flavor compounds, amino acids, acids, and aroma. Soybean fermentation often involves molds such as *Aspergillus* species and yeasts that contribute to umami, salt tolerance, and aroma. Tauco and soy sauce belong to this broad family of fermented soybean condiments, although their Indonesian variations have distinctive textures, sweetness, saltiness, and regional uses.

From a halal perspective, fermentation requires a careful but balanced approach. Fermentation itself is not prohibited; what matters is the permissibility of the substrate, starter culture, processing aids, additives, and final use. Halal literacy is needed because consumers



may either over-suspect fermented foods or, conversely, assume every plant-based fermented product is automatically halal. The more accurate position is to examine critical points in the product chain.

Taste, Power, and Marginalization

Bourdieu (1984) argues that taste is social; what appears natural is often shaped by class, education, and power. In culinary classification, some ingredients are elevated as “national,” while others remain “regional,” “ethnic,” or “minor.” Sweet soy sauce has been successfully absorbed into the category of national seasoning, while tauco remains located in pockets of regional and Chinese-Indonesian food culture. This distinction is not only about flavor preference. It is also about industrial visibility, restaurant labeling, recipe standardization, and the ability of an ingredient to appear safe, familiar, and Muslim-friendly to a broad consumer base.

The literature review section is written not too long and prioritizes theories related to the variables used. This section can also provide relevant previous research results. The main content in the literature review is the theory that is the basis/foundation of the research/ideas in this article.

RESEARCH METHODS

This article uses a qualitative literature review method with descriptive-analytical interpretation. The data consist of books, journal articles, food history writings, halal product assurance regulations, and studies on fermented foods. The sources are grouped into four clusters: (1) Chinese-Indonesian food history and Peranakan culinary culture; (2) foodways, heritage, identity, and taste; (3) halal food production and halal supply-chain assurance; and (4) fermentation studies related to soybean condiments.

The analysis is conducted in three stages. First, source criticism is used to separate historical claims, popular narratives, and analytical interpretations. Claims such as the origin of a condiment, the route of its spread, or the meaning of a culinary term are treated cautiously when they appear only in popular sources. Second, the article compares the cultural trajectories of tauco and soy sauce by examining taste, usage, regional distribution, industrial visibility, and consumer perception. Third, the article maps halal critical points in the production and use of tauco and soy sauce, including ingredients, microbial cultures, additives, equipment, storage, and serving practices.

Because this study is literature-based, it does not claim to measure the actual halal status of particular brands of tauco or soy sauce. Brand-level halal status requires direct document verification and certification checks. The purpose of this study is conceptual and analytical: to construct a halal culinary framework for reading fermented soybean condiments as Indonesian food heritage.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

From Soybean Fermentation to Indonesian Halal Culinary Heritage

Tauco and soy sauce can be placed within the broader history of soybean fermentation. Their basic logic is simple: soybeans are transformed through microbial activity, salt, time, and environmental control into a condiment with deeper umami, aroma, and preservation value. Yet this simplicity hides a complex cultural process. When Chinese migrants and traders brought soybean-based food knowledge into the archipelago, the knowledge entered local kitchens that already had their own spices, sugars, cooking oils, and religious food boundaries.

In the Indonesian context, soy sauce developed into several forms, but kecap manis became the most culturally dominant. The addition of palm sugar or coconut sugar made the condiment sweeter, thicker, and closer to the local preference for sweet-savory flavor, especially in many Javanese dishes. Tauco, on the other hand, preserved more of the paste-like character of fermented soybeans. It is salty, savory, sometimes pungent, and often requires cooking with aromatics before its flavor becomes balanced. This difference in sensory accessibility partly explains why sweet soy sauce became easier to nationalize than tauco.

From the perspective of halal culinary heritage, however, both condiments are important. They show that halal cuisine in Indonesia is not limited to foods with Arab, Middle Eastern, or explicitly Islamic symbols. Indonesian halal cuisine is also formed through acculturation: Chinese techniques, Javanese sugar, coastal trade, local vegetables, Muslim dietary rules, and regional taste memory can meet in one dish. This is the main contribution of the revised framing: tauco and soy sauce are not merely “Chinese condiments in a local kitchen,” but fermented heritage ingredients that can be understood within Muslim-friendly culinary practice.

Divergent Trajectories: Why Soy Sauce Became National While Tauco Remained Local

Tauco and sweet soy sauce are “culinary siblings” because both are linked to fermented soybean knowledge. Nevertheless, they experienced different social trajectories. Sweet soy sauce entered everyday Indonesian eating more easily because it can be used without technical



cooking knowledge. It can be poured on fried rice, satay, soto, fried noodles, tofu, tempeh, or grilled fish. It functions as sauce, marinade, dipping condiment, seasoning, and table condiment. Its sweetness also fits broad taste preferences and is acceptable to children and adults across many regions.

Tauco requires more culinary literacy. It is rarely consumed directly. It usually needs to be sautéed with garlic, shallots, chilies, ginger, galangal, tomato, or other aromatics before being mixed with tofu, vegetables, fish, shrimp, chicken, or other ingredients. It has a stronger aroma and a more specific taste profile. This makes tauco valuable but less immediately accessible. Its use is often transmitted through households, regional kitchens, or specific communities rather than national mass advertising.

The nationalization of sweet soy sauce and the localization of tauco also reflect the politics of classification. Sweet soy sauce is rarely identified as Chinese in everyday consumption; it is simply kecap. Tauco still carries the marker of Chinese-Indonesian or regional food. In a Muslim-majority society, such a marker can create ambiguity, not because tauco itself is non-halal, but because some Chinese-Indonesian dishes may also be associated with pork, lard, or cooking wine. As a result, tauco may be overlooked in halal culinary promotion even when a tauco product or tauco-based dish can be fully halal.

Halal Critical Points in Tauco And Soy Sauce

A halal culinary analysis must distinguish between potential, risk, and assurance. Tauco and soy sauce have strong halal potential because their main ingredients are usually soybeans, salt, water, and sugar. However, halal assurance requires attention to the entire production and serving chain. The following table summarizes the main critical points.

This mapping shows that halal culinary analysis is neither suspicious nor permissive in a simplistic way. It does not reject tauco because of its Chinese-Indonesian association, and it does not accept every product automatically because the main ingredient is soybean. The more precise approach is verification: what is used, how it is processed, where it is stored, and how it is served.

Table 1. Halal Critical Point Analysis Across the Production and Serving Stages

Stage	Halal potential	Halal critical point	Implication
Raw materials	Soybeans, salt, water, and palm or coconut sugar are generally plant-based and permissible.	Contamination or mixing with non-halal additives, flavor enhancers, coloring agents, or non-halal animal derivatives.	Ingredient lists and supplier documentation are necessary, especially for packaged products.

Stage	Halal potential	Halal critical point	Implication
Microbial culture and fermentation	Microbial transformation can improve taste, preservation, and digestibility.	Starter cultures, growth media, enzymes, or processing aids may require verification if derived from doubtful sources.	Fermentation is not automatically non-halal; the substrate, culture, and process must be assessed.
Processing equipment	Traditional and modern facilities can produce halal condiments if dedicated or properly cleaned.	Shared equipment with non-halal products may create cross-contamination.	Halal production requires separation, sanitation, and documented process control.
Additives and formulation	Sweet soy sauce can use palm sugar or coconut sugar, while tauco can remain simple as fermented soybean paste.	Caramel coloring, preservatives, flavorings, or alcohol-based solvents may raise questions depending on source and use.	Transparent labeling and halal certification increase consumer trust.
Storage, packaging, and distribution	Packaged condiments can be controlled through labeling, batch records, and sealed containers.	Contact with non-halal products during storage or transport can undermine trust.	Halal integrity continues after production; distribution is part of assurance.
Culinary serving	Tauco and soy sauce can be used in tofu, vegetables, chicken, fish, seafood, tempeh, and other halal ingredients.	Recipes may include pork, lard, non-halal meat, angciu, mirin, or shared utensils in restaurants.	The halal status of a dish depends on the whole recipe and kitchen practice, not only the condiment.

(Primary Data Processing, 2026)

Fermentation, alcohol anxiety, and the need for balanced halal literacy

One of the most important issues in halal culinary discussion is the anxiety around fermentation. Many consumers associate fermentation with alcohol, while in food science fermentation is a broad process that includes lactic acid fermentation, mold fermentation, yeast fermentation, acetic fermentation, and other microbial transformations. Not all fermentation produces intoxicating substances, and not every fermented food is religiously doubtful. Tempeh, vinegar, yogurt, bread, tape, soy sauce, and tauco all demonstrate the diversity of fermented foods.

A balanced halal position should focus on intention, ingredient source, process, and final use. If alcohol is intentionally added as liquor, cooking wine, or flavoring in a dish, this creates a different issue from trace compounds that may naturally arise in fermentation. In the

context of tauco and soy sauce, the important questions are whether the starter culture and processing aids are permissible, whether the product is mixed with non-halal materials, whether the production line is free from contamination, and whether the condiment is later cooked with halal ingredients.

This literacy has practical importance for restaurants and households. A Muslim consumer may avoid a Chinese-style dish because of uncertainty, even when the dish could be prepared halal. Conversely, a consumer may use a condiment without checking the label. Culinary education can bridge this gap by explaining which parts of a dish require attention: the condiment brand, the oil, the protein source, the use or avoidance of angciu or mirin, the stock, and the utensils.

Tauco as Marginalized Halal Culinary Heritage

Tauco's marginalization is usually explained through taste and ethnicity: it is stronger, saltier, more aromatic, and more closely associated with Chinese-Indonesian or regional kitchens. This explanation is correct but incomplete. From a halal culinary perspective, tauco is also marginalized because its halal potential is not clearly communicated. Many traditional tauco products are sold in simple packaging, sometimes without detailed ingredient information, production narratives, or halal labels. In restaurant contexts, tauco dishes may be listed without explaining whether they are prepared with halal ingredients and utensils.

This lack of communication creates symbolic distance. Sweet soy sauce appears safe because it is familiar, branded, widely certified, and present in Muslim households. Tauco appears uncertain because it is less familiar and more often linked with ethnic restaurants. The result is not necessarily rejection, but hesitation. In halal food culture, hesitation matters because consumer trust is central to consumption decisions.

Repositioning tauco as halal culinary heritage therefore requires more than nostalgia. It requires three forms of work. First, genealogical work: tauco should be narrated as a cross-cultural Indonesian condiment without erasing its Chinese-Indonesian contribution. Second, material work: producers need transparent ingredients, clean processing, and halal certification when possible. Third, culinary work: cooks and educators need to present halal-friendly tauco recipes that are accessible to Muslim households.

Muslim-friendly Recipe Adaptation Without Erasing Cultural Origin

A major strength of tauco is its adaptability. Tauco can be used in stir-fried water spinach, tofu tauco, chicken tauco, shrimp tauco, fish tauco, eggplant tauco, and vegetable-



based dishes. These dishes can be Muslim-friendly when the protein source is halal, the oil is vegetable-based, alcohol-containing cooking wine is omitted, and utensils are separated from non-halal preparations. The same is true for soy sauce: kecap manis can be halal-friendly in satay, semur, grilled fish, tofu, tempeh, and fried rice when the whole recipe complies with halal requirements.

Adaptation should not be understood as purification that removes history. A halal version of a Chinese-Indonesian dish does not need to deny its origin. It can acknowledge that a recipe comes from Peranakan or coastal acculturation while explaining how it is prepared for Muslim consumers. For example, a restaurant may describe a dish as “ayam tauco halal-style” or “tahu tauco ramah Muslim,” with a note that it uses halal-certified condiments, vegetable oil, and no cooking wine. Such labeling does not weaken authenticity; it creates trust and expands access.

At the household level, the most practical approach is to develop simple recipe literacy. Cooks can learn to sauté tauco first until fragrant, balance saltiness with tomato or sugar, and combine it with tofu, tempeh, vegetables, fish, or chicken. This technique preserves tauco’s characteristic flavor while making it easier to enter Muslim family kitchens. If tauco remains limited to nostalgic ethnic restaurants, its future will be narrow. If it enters everyday halal cooking, it can become a living heritage.

A Halal Culinary Heritage Framework for Tauco and Soy Sauce

Table 2. Analytical Framework for Halal Assessment of Tauco and Soy Sauce

Dimension	Core question	Application to tauco and soy sauce
Genealogy	Where does the food knowledge come from and how did it travel?	Acknowledge Chinese-Indonesian, regional, and local household contributions to soybean fermentation and condiment use.
Material halal assurance	Are the ingredients, cultures, additives, equipment, and logistics halal-compliant?	Check soybeans, salt, sugar, cultures, preservatives, processing aids, packaging, and halal certificates when available.
Culinary practice	How is the condiment cooked and served in actual dishes?	Use halal proteins, vegetable oil, no cooking wine, clean utensils, and clear kitchen separation.
Public narrative	How is the food communicated to consumers?	Present tauco and soy sauce as Indonesian halal culinary heritage while still recognizing cross-cultural origin.

(Primary Data Processing, 2026)

Based on the discussion above, this article proposes a halal culinary heritage framework consisting of four connected dimensions. The framework is intended to help scholars, producers, cooks, and culinary educators discuss tauco and soy sauce without reducing them to either ethnic nostalgia or certification paperwork alone.

This framework makes the article more suitable for halal culinary studies because it connects culture, production, and practice. It does not merely add the word “halal” to an old cultural history. Instead, it changes the analytical question: how can an acculturated fermented condiment become trustworthy, meaningful, and usable in Muslim food life?

Re-reading Soy Sauce and Tauco Through Halal and Thayyib Values

The concept of thayyib adds another layer to the discussion. Halal refers to permissibility, while thayyib refers to goodness, cleanliness, safety, quality, and benefit. In fermented soybean condiments, thayyib values can be developed through hygienic fermentation, safe salt levels, proper storage, clear expiration dates, responsible packaging, and consumer education about usage. This is important because a product may be technically made from halal ingredients but still fail to communicate safety and quality.

For soy sauce, the thayyib dimension may include reducing excessive sugar or sodium, providing clear nutrition information, and maintaining consistent quality. For tauco, it may include standardized fermentation hygiene, better packaging, clearer labels, and instructions for use. These improvements should not remove local character. Rather, they help local fermented condiments survive in contemporary food systems where consumers need information and assurance.

The halal and thayyib reading also prevents the article from falling into a purely identity-based argument. The aim is not only to say that tauco deserves recognition because it is marginalized. The stronger argument is that tauco deserves recognition because it contains culinary knowledge, fermentation technique, regional identity, and halal potential that can be made visible through proper assurance and education.

Implications for Halal Culinary Scholarship

This study contributes to halal culinary scholarship in three ways. First, it expands the object of halal food studies from meat and restaurants to condiments and fermented ingredients. Condiments may appear small, but they structure taste and determine whether a dish is acceptable to Muslim consumers. Second, it shows that acculturation and halal assurance should be studied together. A cross-cultural food does not become less halal because of its

genealogy; it becomes halal or doubtful through its materials, process, and use. Third, it offers a way to preserve minority culinary heritage without erasure. Tauco can be Muslim-friendly while remaining Chinese-Indonesian and regional.

The practical implication is also clear. Producers should document ingredients and pursue halal certification when possible. Restaurants should state whether tauco-based dishes are prepared without non-halal ingredients and with separated utensils. Culinary educators should teach tauco techniques as part of Indonesian halal cooking, not only as Chinese or Peranakan cuisine. Researchers should conduct future fieldwork on tauco producers in Cianjur, Medan, Lasem, Pontianak, and other regions to document variations in fermentation methods, halal certification status, and consumer perception.

CONCLUSION

This article has revised the discussion of tauco and soy sauce by placing it in the more precise scope of halal culinary studies. The revised argument does not force all elements of Ar Rehla's journal scope into the article. Instead, it focuses on one relevant area: halal food and halal culinary heritage. Tauco and soy sauce are important because they are fermented soybean condiments with long histories of cultural encounter and wide possibilities for Muslim-friendly cooking.

The analysis shows that tauco and sweet soy sauce share a genealogy of soybean fermentation but have different cultural destinies. Sweet soy sauce has become national, familiar, and widely accepted in Muslim households. Tauco remains regional, ethnicized, and less visible, even though it can be fully compatible with halal culinary practice when produced and served properly. The marginalization of tauco is therefore not only a matter of taste but also a matter of narrative, packaging, certification visibility, recipe literacy, and consumer trust.

From a halal perspective, tauco and soy sauce should be assessed through the entire culinary chain: raw materials, microbial culture, processing aids, additives, equipment, storage, distribution, and serving. Fermentation itself should not be treated as a source of automatic suspicion. The more accurate approach is halal literacy: understanding which elements are permissible, which require verification, and which practices may create contamination or uncertainty.

The article proposes a halal culinary heritage framework consisting of genealogy, material halal assurance, culinary practice, and public narrative. Through this framework, tauco can be repositioned not as a marginal Chinese ethnic seasoning but as Indonesian halal culinary heritage born from cultural encounter. This repositioning requires transparent ingredient



information, halal-certified production when possible, Muslim-friendly recipe adaptation, and culinary education that preserves history while building trust for contemporary Muslim consumers.

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