Food Cuisine Authenticity and its Implementation Barriers in Lahore - Pakistan

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Abstract: The main research area Lahore - Pakistan, is one of the country's leading food hubs offering a variety of food to its domestic customers and international tourists. That does not only cause economic gains but also incorporate with different food cultures in one place. It is not easier to incorporate culture and offer the very best food for its origin. Throughout the process, the question arises whether the food served is authentic or has changed over time into fusion food due to the greater travel distance. In the city of Lahore, research was done from Eighty-Seven food establishments. Serving Authenticity is a daunting task, with only twenty-one of these eighty-seven serving the authentic food. But they are again facing a lot of trouble throughout the process that in some places they are forced to use local ingredients or some nearby fusion food. This is not due to a lack of skills ability, but food organizations face various food problems because of low food shelf life or other issues such as import costs or customer affordability. The nearest solution has also been discussed, which can ensure food authenticity more than ever.

Keywords: Food authenticity, Customers perception, Food Marketing, Value.

1 Introduction

The author of this article has been working in the hospitality industry for several years, so he has a keen eye on the industry's problems, especially the issue of food authenticity. It seems that very few people have serious concerns about authenticity, and no customer mind developing occurred relevant to food authenticity.

Food is something that not only satisfies the desire of human appetite, but it represents the culture, lifestyle, organic productivity, environment, and likes/dislikes of any region. Each region has its food with its specific food. With the advancement of technology, people from different regions are now getting closer. Still, they began to adopt many values and practices from other regions. Eating is necessary. Food is the basic need of every human being. So the adoption of values also affects the adoption of food. People are now starting to enjoy other regional cuisines after the advancement of knowledge, and regional food demand is getting super high.

In the past several years, a major problem was raised by tourists who traveled abroad as they were offered fusion food rather than the food they were told or studied before visiting the place. The food was like a mixture of different foods. And they were confused about the authentic taste. The authenticity of the food is a great challenge for quality control assessment. Publications on food
authentication are scattered across more than 150 journals! Food authentication papers are published by various journals, although preferences for specific journals have been noted.

In the twentieth century, a different department was introduced as the hospitality sector, and regional cuisine was called Cuisine. Now customers are more interested in these other cuisines. But over time, these cuisines began to interconnect, and a new term "fusion food" was introduced, but this fusion process also marked the Authenticity of foods. Many reasons for its accumulation led to problems in Authenticity. Food represents culture and values, and culture is the most important part of human life, so no change in food is acceptable, this does not deny the importance of Authenticity. Especially in developing countries like Pakistan, the Authenticity of food is the biggest problem. And to preserve the Authenticity of the Cuisine, it needs a proper framework.

Food authenticity is a term that describes the real taste and quality of food in some other region, which serves the tourists or for the locals on the high demand. Food authentication is a multi-disciplinary phenomenon that is not easy to understand. But an important issue of food media. Verification of food is a long-term process that underscores the importance of food and its production.

Over time, globalization has rapidly increased the importance of food authentication. Awareness about food quality and standards is also one of the reasons for its increase in value. That it became an important factor for every kind of person, whether he is an importer, an exporter, a food producer, or even a tourist, it has become a major concern to ensure food safety and avoid the deception of food. There has been a lot of research in recent years, but there is still a great need to find and solve this problem. This process complies with the food labeled explanation.

In this article, the issues related to the Authenticity of food cuisine in Lahore-Pakistan is well mentioned. All information is collected from data-based and authentic resources. To date, no proper work has been done on the Authenticity of food cuisine in Lahore, so this research paper can be a great step towards setting up a proper channel that can highlight this issue and its solution for other researchers encourage them to conduct the research.

2 Literature Review

False description can happen in many shapes, from unverified additions of water or other cheap materials, or from the false declaration of the quantity of a particular ingredient in a product to making false statements about the source of the ingredient. (kvasnicka). Food is essential to our health and well-being and is deeply impeding our cultural identity, so it makes sense to focus on our awareness of its cultural and social significance. (Chiaro, Rossato)

Food is a specific set of cooking traditions and practices, often associated with a particular culture or area. A meal is primarily influenced by ingredients that are available locally or by trade. With the combination of Authenticity, authentic food is a meal (or drink) that matches its description. The authenticity of the food is an attempt to serve the origin of the food. The Authenticity of food is a solution that speaks of value by proving that food is what it deserves. In the long run, the level of information about the product of the user must be taken into account, and this variable should not be ignored. (Suchanek, Kralova). The Authenticity of food enables consumers to get what they pay for, and their overall level of food confidence increases.

Some combine the food cuisine with the food culture, but they both have different meanings because the difference between food cuisine and food cultures is that food cuisine is a characteristic way of cooking, which is often an original recipe affiliated with the place. Food culture refers to
practices, attitudes, beliefs, and the networks and organizations that surround food production, distribution, and consumption.

Understanding consumer perceptions and attitudes toward food fraud, Authenticity, and trust will facilitate industry and government priorities regarding food validation strategies and communication with the public. However, this research is needed to confirm the association of consumer perceptions and attitudes across regions. In recent years, there has been an attempt to innovate the taste of food to attract more tourists to the region. But in traditional foods, this development is not always in line with consumer acceptance. (Kendall, Clark, Rhymer, Kuznesof, Hajslova, Tomniova, Brereton, Frewer)

Costumers, food industries, and authorities are getting a lot of attention. Numerous studies focus on this topic not only to prevent food fraud but also to protect consumers from the risks of unauthorized components or mislabel. Determining the accuracy of the food depends on the suspected fraudulent behavior, including access to a large number of items. This process of food verification and food quality assurance will certainly shape the future of food dishes. This testing process involves the analysis of components, determination of geographical origin, and testing of production methods. It is confirmed that the product is consistent with the statements on the label and follows what is established by these rules. (Vinci, Preti, Tieri, Vieri)

3 Methodology of Research

Different food service providers were approached directly to conduct the research results. According to their response, results bring under discussion to conclude. The service providers were asked to share their observations, their struggles to keep the food authentic, and customer satisfaction.

The nature of the study was quantitative, and the survey method was adopted. Data achieved has been processed through the following software: SPSS (Statistical Packages for the Social Sciences) and Microsoft Office Excel. A precise description of the population is important for educational research. The population of the study was comprised of all.

Table 3.1: Population

| No. of Food Providers | Retrieved from |
|-----------------------|----------------|
| 87                    | Lahore – Pakistan |

Random sampling using Yamane (1967) formula was used to determine the sample size from the population. The study conducted to highlight the availability of the Authenticity of food, the problems related to maintaining the Authenticity to find out the best approaches to solve the issues.

3.1 Sampling Method

Random sampling using Yamane (1967) formula was used to determine the sample size from the population.

\[ n = \frac{NT}{1 + NT(e)^2} \]

Where “n” is sample size, “NT” represents size of population and “e” shows margin of error.
3.2 Sample of the Study

The total sample size was determined by using Yamane (1967) formula. Therefore, the detailed description of the sample was calculated as.

Population of study was 90, the margin of error was determined at 2%.

\[ n = \frac{90}{1 + 90(0.02)^2} = 87 \]

4 Results & Discussion:

Purpose of this study was to identify:

i. Importance of food authentication

ii. Authentication barriers, issues and problems

iii. Struggles of service providers to handle authenticity

**Table 4.1: Skill Practices**

| S. No | Item                                                        | Frequency | Percentage |
|-------|-------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|------------|
| 1     | Did you practice your skills into relative origin or relevant trainer? | 10        | 77%        |
|       |                                                             | Yes       | No         |
|       |                                                             | 12%       | 88%        |

It is a dark fact that various cuisines are serving here, but most of the employees are not trained from the relevant trainers. They learned just like those values & cultures that deliver from ancestors to the next generation, but unfortunately, our past trainers were not also many experts in the field.

Now in the era of globalization, the staff is still not interested in getting to know the Authenticity of what they are serving. Even though now it is much easier to find anything & technology, digitalization makes the research much convenient. There are various reasons for not struggling for it as the staff has a lot of burdens to work that they don't have the time to do something new. Secondly, the literacy rate in Pakistan is sixty-five percent only, and unfortunately, the public mind concern relevant to foodservice is that it is a place to cook food. So generally those people who are not interested in getting an education joined the food industry.

**Table 4.2: Authenticating and Innovations**

| S. No | Item                                                        | Frequency | Percentage |
|-------|-------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|------------|
| 2     | Did you struggle to find out that the food you're serving is authentic? | 81        | 93%        |
|       |                                                             | Yes       | No         |
|       |                                                             | 07%       |            |
| 3     | Did you ever try to learn new things & to offer it to customers? | 37        | 43%        |
|       |                                                             | Yes       | No         |
|       |                                                             | 57%       |            |

Food literacy recognizes the impact of external factors on human development and application of the knowledge, skills, and behaviors required for healthy eating. (Malan MSPH. Tyler. Watson, MPH. Slusser MD. GLik ScD, Amy. Rowat. Prelip DPA). There are no proper motivation activities by the concerned organizations to urge the employee to learn something new. Staff is just repeating their task in old styles & with old techniques till now. The main issue that was found during the search was the literacy issue.

All the above mentioned issues created because of unawareness or low qualifications. Information & ideas were never delivered to lower employees through a good medium.
But still, there is a lot of workforces who want to learn something new & to increase their lifestyle & are doing it on their own. But it is impossible to learn a hundred percent without the concerned trainers. Secondly, a single person cannot afford heavy utensils and expensive ingredients. And there is also not a class of people who accepts expensive food.

Although there are many food service providers in Lahore – Pakistan, who offer the most authentic food to customers, they are only two to three in number. And again, no general customer has its approach. This is not getting approach is not only because of expensive food but also because it is a dark side from the food providers that they do not agree to open their doors for every person. It is almost unbelievable that even those food providers are not advertising their business, and only a few customers know them.

### Table 4.3: Type of Ingredients Being Used

| S. No | Item                                      | Frequency | Percentage |
|-------|-------------------------------------------|-----------|------------|
| 4     | Do you use the original ingredients or locally made ingredients? | Yes: 18, No: 69 | Original: 21%, Local: 79% |

During the research, it was shocking that many restaurants are serving international cuisines, but they are using local ingredients. It cannot be possible to maintain the original taste by using local ingredients because of the impact of environmental & hydrological effects on ingredients quality & taste. Secondly, some ingredients are unable to grow in all kinds of weather conditions. They only need a specific environment. So substitutes of these ingredients are being used that rarely meet the authentic taste, & this one is not a healthy choice. It is changing the theme of food cuisine and developing negativity about Authenticity in the customer's mind.

The issue is not only the use of local ingredients, but many food providers are using the ingredients that are dangerous to health. For example, most food providers are using vegetable oil that is unhealthy and even banned by the food authorities. Although food authority is taking strict actions on this, it still needs a lot of time to handle it.

The religious aspect is also an issue in offering authentic food. Many international cuisines cannot be served with proper ingredients because of the Halal/Haram concept in Islam. Religion Islam does not allow his follower to use many ingredients like Pork or Alcohol. While different cuisines, especially English cuisines, are a mixture of these ingredients. So when the food providers use the alternative ingredients, food taste change, and food authenticity again become a question mark. But as per religious rules and international rules, every human is free in his belief, and no one can force them against it. So for this kind of issue, no solution can find out.

Regarding customer satisfaction, a high number of customers were satisfied with the food. It was surprisingly shocking, so the little discussion was made up of customers during the research. It was clear that those customers are satisfied with the food authenticity who never visited the origin or never had a different taste then they were always served. Or even they never tried to get in the know about Authenticity. The word "Authenticity" was the new word for some customers. In the customer concept of Authenticity, they include interactions between (the things), society (others), and the individual who is considering this whole idea of Authenticity, especially concerning food (Beer).

### Table 4.4: Customer Satisfaction

| S. No | Item | Frequency | Percentage |
|-------|------|-----------|------------|
|       |      | Yes | No | Ave | Yes | No | Ave |
4.1 Customer Perception about Food

Simply many customers didn’t have the idea of authentic taste. & the customers who had foreign tours or had the knowledge of Authenticity was not satisfied with it. But they made themselves agree with that because there is no proper channel in the area wherefrom they get the Authenticity. The bad thing is that those few numbers of customers never have the motivation to do something for this.

4.2 Perception of Food Providers and Handlers

It is clear that if a business in the food industry wants to improve its competitiveness, it must increase its product quality and its product (Suchanek & Kralova).

Many food providers are those who are serving the food with the label of Authenticity, but surprisingly sometimes the dish doesn't have the main ingredient on which the food is base. Guacamole is an example of it. Guacamole is a sauce made with Avocados. Avocado does not cultivate in Pakistan and has to import directly from Kenya that increases the cost. So many food handlers are not using Avocado for making Guacamole. They are using the other cheap ingredients like Zucchini, Raw Papayas only, that are less in price and similar in color. Chipotle Seeds also an example of it. They are again not available in the local market and have to import. Many food handlers are using local Kashmiri Mirch to minimize the cost. These ingredients are not against public health, but the negative thing is that they are being served with the label of some other ingredient. It is also pointed out that the problem of eating food ingredients is difficult. The cost of the food ingredients makes it difficult to cope with imported food (Angelopoulos, Schulp & Menezez)

![Figure 1: Representing How Hospitality Providers Putting their Best for not only Serving Food but also for Innovating New Ideas](image)

Table 4.5: Approach to the Ingredients

| S. No | Item                                                                 | Frequency | Percentage |
|-------|----------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|------------|
|       | Are customers satisfied with the food you're serving?                 | 81 06 23 | 93% 07% 26%|
| 6     | Did you ever face any difficulty in getting the authentic ingredients? (Only 21% use) | 15 6 | 73% 27% |
But some food organizations understand the value of cuisine authenticity, so they always try to get authentic food ingredients. Still, according to them, it is a hard task to collect the ingredients because a few numbers of food organizations are using them. Hence, the availability of these ingredients is so rare because of the low rate demand. Glaze Smokey BBQ Sauce is the best example of it. This sauce is directly imported from Dubai. Import expenses and currency conversion increase the price. So most of the time, this product has to face a shortage of local market availability.

These few organizations are a total of twenty-one percent of the whole food industry. That is extremely poor. & the following problems have to face by this twenty-one percent.

*Table 4.6: Cost Maintaining for Imported Ingredients*

| S. No | Item                                             | Frequency | Percentage |
|-------|--------------------------------------------------|-----------|------------|
| 7     | Did you ever need to import the ingredients? (Only 21% use) | 11 Yes    | 53%        |
|       |                                                  | 10 No     | 47%        |
| 8     | Does import increase the food cost? (Only 21% use) | 21 Yes    | 100%       |
|       |                                                  | 0 No      | 0%         |

Most often, they directly import the ingredients from different countries or origins. Nowadays, some vendors are doing this for the food organizations in bulk quantity, but still, food organizations have to face much trouble. Sometimes the ingredients are getting shorter due to some legislation problem or high cost. Secondly, vendors import the ingredients only when they have enough demand to at least fill their expenses. So the issue of ingredient shortage mostly occurs.

The growing competitiveness of the global food market and domestic consumers expecting high-quality products at low prices means new tools are needed to monitor food quality (Forstel). Importing the ingredients requires a lot of paper money. Taxes, transportation, tolls, huge storage are the reasons for the high cost. But the main issue is a currency conversion. Ingredients have to purchase into U.S dollars. When it converts into local currency, the cost of the ingredients gets super high & become difficult to afford. & the majority of guest here do not accept the expensive food

*Figure 2: Representing the Employee Royalty throughout Quality Ingredients Availability*

*Tariff Ratio on Importing Food or Ingredients:*
| No. | Ingredients                                                                 | Duty % |
|-----|------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------|
| 1   | Meat of Bovine Animals                                                       | 3      |
| 2   | Meat of Swine (Carcases, Hams, Shoulders, Cuts)                              | 20     |
| 3   | Meats of Sheep, Goat                                                        | 3      |
| 4   | Edible offal of Bovine Animals (Tongues, Liver etc. Fresh)                   | 20     |
| 5   | Fish: Alpacas, Swordfish, Cod, Hake, Alaska, Catfish (Pangasius), Livers, Others. | 11     |
| 6   | Frozen Fish: Red Salmon, Pacific Salmon, Atlantic Salmon, Trout, Catfish (Pangasius), Flat Fish, Sole, Turbots, Tuna, Anchovies, Jack, Cobia, Swordfish, Cod, Others. | 20     |
| 7   | Fish Fillet / Meat: Hake, Coalfish, Cod, Alaska Pollack, Pacific Salmon, Trout, Flat Fish, Swordfish, Others. | 20     |
| 8   | Crustaceans: Rock Lobster, Crabs, Norway Lobsters, Shrimps, Prawns, Craw Fish | 11     |
| 9   | Natural Honey                                                               | 3      |
| 10  | Milk & Cream, Butter, Yogurt, Dairy Spreads, Cheese All Kind, Curd.          | 20     |
| 11  | Fresh Eggs                                                                  | 3      |
| 12  | Fowl of Species                                                             | 3      |
| 13  | Bird’s Egg, Egg Yolks, Moulded Frozen                                       | 16     |
| 14  | Natural Honey                                                               | 20     |
| 15  | Foliage, Branches, & Other Parts of Plants                                  | 16     |
| 16  | Onion, Shallots, Garlic                                                     | 3      |
| 17  | Leeks & Alliaceous                                                          | 11     |
| 18  | Cabbage, Cauliflower, Kohlrabi, Kale, Lettuce, Carrots, Turnips, Salad Beetroot, Salsify, Celeriac, Radish, Cucumber, Gherkin, Leguminous Vegetables, Asparagus, Artichokes | 3      |
| 19  | Mushroom                                                                    | 11     |
| 20  | Vegetables (uncooked or cooked by steam or boiling in water), Frozen:        | 16     |
| 21  | Preserved Vegetables: Olives, Cucumber, Mushrooms, Truffles                 | 16     |
| 22  | Dried Vegetables, Whole, Cut, Sliced, Broken: Onion, Mushroom, Wood Ears, Jelly Fungi | 16     |
| 23  | Dried Leguminous Vegetables: Peas, Chickpeas, Beans, Cow Beans, Lentils      | 3      |
| 24  | Manioc, Sweet potatoes, Yams, Taro, Yautia                                  | 3      |
| 25  | Coconut in Shell                                                            | 11     |
| 26  | Coconut (Desiccated)                                                        | 3      |
| 27  | Brazil Nuts, Hazelnuts, Walnuts, Chestnuts, Macadamia                       | 11     |
| 28  | Cashew nuts, Pistachios                                                     | 3      |
| 29  | Almond in shells                                                            | 16     |
| 30  | Almond (Shelled), Areca nuts, Plantains, Dates, Figs, Pineapples, Avocados, Guavas, Mangosteen, Oranges, Mandarin, Clementines, Kino, Grapefruit, Lemon, Lime, Grapes, Melon, Watermelons, Papayas, Apples, Pears, Quinces, Apricots, Cherries, Peaches, Plums, Sloes, Strawberries, Raspberries, Blackberries, Mulberries, Loganberries, Gooseberries, Kiwi, Durians, Persimmons, Pomegranates, Prunes, Pine nuts, Lichis, Raisins | 20     |
| 31  | Tea/Coffee                                                                  | 11     |
| 32  | Whole Spices, Saffron                                                       | 3      |
| 33  | Turmeric, Ginger                                                            | 16     |
| 34  | Wheat & Meslin                                                              | 11     |
| 35  | Barley, Oats, Maize, Rice                                                  | 3      |
| 36  | Buckwheat, Millet and Canary Seeds                                         | 3      |
| 37  | Cereal Groats, Meal & Pellets                                               | 16     |
| 38  | Flour, Meal, Powder, Flakes, Granules, Pellets                              | 20     |
| 39  | Malt                                                                        | 11     |
| 40  | Starches (Wheat, Maize, Potato, Manioc, Inulin)                              | 16     |
| 41  | Soya beans Seeds                                                            | 3      |
| 42  | Copra                                                                       | 11     |
This tariff ratio is not only, but Importers also have to pay 4% Fix Sales Tax & 4% National Tax Number Surcharge. After paying all taxes, Transportation, Labor, Storage charges & then profit margins increase the cost. & when finally, food organizations purchase these ingredients and sell it to the customer, then customer again have to pay 17% Value Added Tax/General Sales Tax, which heavily increase the price of food items.

**Table 4.7: Controlling Demand & Supply and Implementing FISO**

| S. No | Item                                                                 | Frequency | Percentage |
|-------|----------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|------------|
|       | Some ingredients have very low shelf life, how do you get & manage them? | Made Locally: 2 Use Local Ingredients: 19 Made Locally: 11% Use Local Ingredients: 89% |

Some of the ingredients have a much lower shelf life that they cannot be imported. So food employees are making these ingredients locally or using the local substitute & their food authenticity again becomes a question mark.

A solution for that is to import raw ingredients & form them according to requirement. But according to food organizations, this practice increases the cost of most intense two or three times. Or on the other way, if they import them, then again there is no availability of skilled staff who can handle the imported ingredients. & hiring those skilled staff from some other region again increases the cost.

During the data collection, it was also observed that customers are also interested in west culture & west culture became a dominant culture for them. So they try to copy everything from the west, but due to unawareness and no proper guiding, they are not properly following the culture. It becomes a mixture of two cultures that introduced the term Fusion Food. And here a more thing is fusion in services. Even fast food or quick service food organizations serve food in fine dining means that increase the cost.

The solution to all these problems cannot be sought until the authenticity image can be clear in the customer's mind. & customer starts accepting the high-cost food. Too aware of the customer with Authenticity & to urge them for it, a wide number of marketing agencies are offering their services. These agencies are not only advertising food organizations but also delivering broad information about food cuisine authenticity.

In the twenty-first century, when the broadcasting means got more advanced, and people became more social. Now it is easier to approach the customers. Now it is about seventy-three percent of customer who likes the outside food gathering. But about Authenticity, the number of customers are in their initial stage. As of now, they started to demand authentic food.

Sales Support Marketing Tool Recommended (Taste in Food Products). Product tasting allows customers to interact directly with the product, knowing all the product parameters, which enhances the product's knowledge of the competition. Because more and more product knowledge increases competitiveness and consumer expectations, there is also the possibility of adjusting prices accordingly. (Suchanek, kralova). Food organizations are also offering different offers and discount packages to bring the customers into the market with an authenticity concept. Food Panda, Pizzeria, ERS are some social media marketing groups that are specifically working on to highlight the food cuisine, its Authenticity & also the food organization.
But this is again not enough because when marketing agencies build up the customer’s mind, then it became also necessary to train the staff with food authenticity on behalf of the latest trends. A few brilliant minds should be chosen from the industry to send them in the food origins to get training about Authenticity, so after completing the training, they can come back to train other staff, as well as the literacy rate, is needed to increase because the latest technologies cannot be operated without proper educational skills.

Figure 3: Representing Staff Skills in Maintaining Demand & Supply through FIFO

5 Conclusion

It is concluded that customers' visits to restaurants to achieve authentic and ethnic food experiences are dwindling. This is because the unauthenticity of the food is having a decisive impact on their overall satisfaction. It can be concluded that the overall satisfaction of these customers is unsatisfactory due to poor food offerings in the name of Authenticity. By consulting the international literature in the hospitality industry and continuing the research done at Food & Beverages facilities in Lahore, we can conclude that the offering of dishes in the entire market contains many international and national dishes. Many of the food establishments are offering fusion foods that are quite dangerous to the overall food culture. By studying and following authentic dining venues and trends from developed destinations worldwide, we can see that by actively promoting hospitality development by observing the local market, which is enriched with more authentic resources. The food establishments are expected to introduce authentic dishes prepared with local ingredients whose combination of spices will lead the industry to successful development. Food establishments in the Lahore area are requested to introduce local, authentic regional dishes to achieve the right level of authentic food at least.

The research is limited because its focus is on only one sector (food industry), which means that the results of all sectors of the manufacturing industry and all manufacturing sectors are difficult to generalize. This limitation can provide us with further research articles. It will be useful for researchers to focus on other areas of the manufacturing industry, while it will also be useful for research if respondents focus on more than one product, ideally on a product that includes a company's revenue.
5.1 Limitations and barriers of the Study

In analyzing the food authentication problem, food providers were much cooperative, but due to a lack of technology use. All have the manual base data, and it was become necessary to make personal visits and convert all data from hard to soft. Although many food providers are importing food ingredients from different regions, it was also an issue, but they still have no proper channel to manage the system.

The sample size was also an issue in collecting data because hundreds of restaurants are working in the region Lahore – Pakistan. But only eighty-seven of them take the food offering as a serious concern, for all other, food offering as just a business to earn. Only these eighty-seven were included in the research because they offered the standard food with a struggle to serve authentication.

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