

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

The term *real food* refers to natural food, that is, food that is minimally processed or undergoes little processing, and contains no chemical additives such as colorings, preservatives, or artificial sweeteners (RRI, Ardila, N. W. I., 2024). According to the book *Real Food* by Nina Planck, *real food* can have two meanings. First, ancient foods, foods that have been consumed since ancient times, such as milk, vegetables, eggs, fish, meat, and grains that have existed for millions of years. Second, traditional foods, foods processed using natural methods, such as tofu or tempeh made from fermented soybeans, which are easily digestible.



Figure 1.1 Real food ingredients

(Source: <https://radarjabar.disway.id/gaya-hidup/read/680579/apa-itu-real-food-berikut-penjela-sannya>)

The development of increasingly sophisticated technology and modernization has led to a wide variety of dishes, such as fast food, *junk food*, and *ultra-processed foods*, along with the ease of access to consuming and purchasing them. This situation creates a disconnect or sense of alienation from the concept of *real food* or natural food. As stated by Gunawan, the rising standard of living among the public, accompanied by modernization has caused the public to

become increasingly alienated from natural foods (Sufa S.A. et al., 2017). This is further supported by data from the Central Statistics Agency (BPS), which shows that spending on fast food and beverages accounts for the highest percentage of total household consumption expenditure. This figure reached 32% in 2023 (WRI Indonesia, Simamora H., 2025).



Figure 1.2 An example of an Indonesian dish made with *real food* (*brongkos*)
(Source: <https://wisatapikota.id/brongkos-sajian-hitam-pekat-yang-penuh-rempah/>)

Dishes made with real food ingredients such as vegetables, fruits, grains, fish, and fresh meat are part of the daily diet of the Indonesian people. This is supported by a statement by Sri Owen in her book *Food and Identity in Indonesia*, which notes that Indonesian cuisine is always based on natural and fresh ingredients. Indonesian dishes such as *pecel*, *urap*, and *lontong sayur* are examples of Indonesian cuisine based on real food (Kompasiana, Agus, 2025)

The concept of real food can also be applied to the healthy eating guidelines promoted by the Ministry of Health of the Republic of Indonesia as a replacement for the “4 Sehat 5 Sempurna” concept. According to the Ministry of Health (2022), it is crucial to consume a diverse range of foods in appropriate portions using the “*Isi Piringku*” guidelines, where each meal must include staple foods, side dishes as sources of animal and plant-based proteins, as well as vegetables and fruits. The “*Isi Piringku*” concept has actually been present for a long time in daily Indonesian cuisine. For instance, a menu featuring rice and corn rice as staple

foods (carbohydrates); *tempe*, steamed fish in banana leaves, *rendang*, and tofu as side dishes (animal and plant-based proteins); and *sayur asem*, *urap*, fresh vegetable side dishes, spinach, and sambal as vegetables. This menu example is a practical application of the “My Plate” guidelines, which are based on natural ingredients and easily found in daily life.

The term *real food* itself has been widely discussed across various social media platforms, particularly among *healthy lifestyle* content creators and healthcare professionals driving this trend (Indonesian Food and Nutrition Network, Rosyida, L., 2025). Based on observations in the community over the past few months, the healthy lifestyle trend is booming; it can be seen that a significant portion of the Indonesian population is currently quite active and engaged in healthy living activities such as playing padel, tennis, cycling, running, and adopting healthy eating habits. The trend of eating healthy food is also becoming increasingly popular among those who wish to maintain their health and quality of life. This trend is spreading rapidly thanks to social media platforms (Rasyika F, 2024). Many people and content creators are sharing their healthy eating habits, one of which involves consuming *real food*.

Many people are familiar with the term “*real food*,” as evidenced by the fact that 90.5% of survey respondents knew what the term *real food* or “natural food” meant. The majority of respondents were aware of the concept of *real food* or “natural food.” This is supported by the fact that many respondents correctly defined “*real food*,” such as natural food being fresh food (fruits, vegetables, grains, and fresh meat), free from preservatives, free from MSG, and not heavily processed. However, these answers were only general explanations; very few respondents linked it to Indonesian cuisine.

In fact, as previously explained, Indonesian cuisine is generally natural food or “*real food*.” Despite this, 26.6% of the 72 respondents remained unsure about this statement; 68.4% of respondents answered that Indonesian cuisine falls under the *real food* category, and 5.1% of respondents answered that Indonesian cuisine does not fall under the *real food* category. This data indicates that while some respondents are familiar with the concept of *real food*, their understanding is not yet fully comprehensive, particularly regarding Indonesian cuisine.

Furthermore, the survey results revealed that a significant number of respondents stated that if they were to start a healthy diet by consuming *real food* and nutritious meals, they would begin with salads, *wraps*, steamed vegetables, protein, oats, and fruit, while very few indicated they would start with Indonesian cuisine. This indicates that few people currently view Indonesian cuisine as a viable option for a healthy diet. However, an interview with a graduate in Public Health and Nutrition explained that good food is *real food*, that is, food

that hasn't undergone extensive processing. According to her, Indonesian cuisine can certainly be a good choice for healthy eating because, in addition to being nutrient-rich, it also offers diverse flavors and aromas thanks to the use of distinctive spices.

There is a need for education that home-cooked meals or Indonesian cuisine, which are always part of our daily lives, also embody the concept of real food healthy and delicious. This statement is based on survey results, where 83.5% of respondents reported eating home-cooked or Indonesian meals more frequently than *junk food* or international cuisine. Additionally, 40.5% of respondents frequently consume Indonesian food in their daily lives, and 49.4% consume it fairly often.

The majority of respondents (89.9%) indicated a high frequency of consuming Indonesian cuisine in their daily lives, falling into categories 3 to 4 on a 1-4 scale (where 4 indicates "often"). Furthermore, the survey results also show that although the majority of respondents consume Indonesian cuisine fairly frequently in their daily lives, not all possess the skills to prepare it on their own. A total of 38% of respondents cook Indonesian dishes almost every day, and 35.4% do so several times a week. However, only 30.4% of respondents can actually cook, while 53.2% can only do so a little or have tried it, and 16.5% cannot cook at all. These data indicate that the majority of the public still relies on others to consume Indonesian cuisine, whether through purchasing or home-cooked meals. This situation reflects a shift in the public's role from active participants to passive consumers within the Indonesian culinary chain.

Buying and preparing ingredients yourself is also a good practice in applying the concept of *real food*. As nutrition graduates point out, the food we consume is better when we understand the preparation process and the ingredients used. Therefore, it is recommended to buy fresh ingredients and prepare meals yourself.

Indonesian cuisine has unique characteristics stemming from its diverse cooking methods and the spices used. This serves as a distinct appeal, and the use of natural ingredients aligned with the *real food* concept makes Indonesian cuisine a healthy dietary option worth consuming.

However, the data above indicates that a significant number of respondents do not choose Indonesian cuisine based on *the real food concept* as a starting point for a healthy diet. Most respondents do frequently consume Indonesian food, but not with the awareness that it is a healthy *real food* concept, and few respondents can actually cook Indonesian dishes. Given this situation, there is a need for educational media capable of promoting the real

food"concept through Indonesian cuisine, while also educating people on how to prepare healthy Indonesian dishes using the *real food* concept.

In today's modern era, it is very easy for us to access information from various media, whether through print or digital channels. Since the advent of the internet, the medium that now dominates the dissemination of information worldwide is social media. The use of conventional media as a platform for information dissemination such as television, newspapers, magazines, and radio is now beginning to decline. The public is increasingly turning to the internet and social media as platforms for information dissemination and communication (Putra I. M. D. D et al., 2025). However, if the habit of constantly browsing and reading information on social media continues, it can lead to feelings of stress and discomfort (Rosenberg et al., 2020, in Syakira M. R. et al., 2025).

Therefore, alternative media in the form of a printed zine can serve as an effective solution for educating the public about the concept of real food through Indonesian cuisine, as well as serving as an archive of Indonesian cuisine based on real food. This zine not only introduces the concept of healthy real food through Indonesian cuisine but also showcases examples of dishes and explains how to prepare healthy and wholesome Indonesian meals using the real food concept. Zines are not only educational media but can also serve as a medium for cultural heritage or an archive that is engaging, flexible, collectible, and easily accessible to various groups, particularly the younger generation.

The zine is an alternative medium the author will use to convey educational information in a light and casual writing style, packaged as engaging, visually rich, and playful reading material. Zines are not merely fleeting media like social media posts but possess their own unique appeal. As stated by Hilmy Ubaidillah Imanu (2025), zines are currently one of the most popular media for self-expression. Supported by data from the questionnaire, 31.6% of respondents have heard of or read a zine, while 68.4% of respondents are not yet familiar with this medium. Even so, 64.6% of respondents are interested in reading one and 32.9% are still unsure, but are interested in trying to read zines that discuss Indonesian cuisine as real food for healthy eating education and the preservation of Indonesian cuisine.

As reported on the Medium website by Fachrozi M. F (2022), a zine is a simple, enjoyable, and authentic alternative medium that can be created by anyone at any time. This makes zines distinct from other media, as authors are given the freedom to express their ideas freely whether through writing, visuals, or the media used without being bound by specific rules. It is this principle of freedom that drives the author to design the zine as an educational and

archival medium that is collectible, unique, and experimental by exploring visual elements, typography, and light-hearted narratives with a personal touch. This approach makes substantive information easy to read, emotionally resonant with readers, playful, unique, and *collectible*. This approach also sets zines apart from other media, which tend to convey information solely through text with minimal visual elements and are bound by strict rules.



Gambar 1.3 Dingklik Pedes #01 Revised Edition

(Source: author's personal data)

Currently, there are quite a few zine designs used as educational media, both in the fields of health and Indonesian cuisine. Some examples include “Zine Design as an Educational Medium on Stigma and Discrimination Against People Living with HIV/AIDS in Semarang Regency” by Bayu E. P. (2023), as well as “Designing a Zine as a Medium for Information on Betawi Culinary Traditions for the Younger Generation” by Apsari A. L. et al. (2025), and several other zine designs. Based on these various studies, the author concludes that zines can serve as an effective educational platform and archive through print and visual media. The author believes that by combining these two aspects of health and Indonesian cuisine a fresh and engaging approach can be created, as it educates about the concept of real food through Indonesian cuisine in a way that is more easily accepted by the younger generation. This is also in line with recommendations from previous research, which suggest that zines can make complex topics easier to understand, while also emphasizing the need to consider key design aspects, such as a proportional page count and the use of clear, audience-appropriate language.

The choice of a zine as the primary medium is based on the consideration of the target audience segment aged 18-27. This segment is familiar with healthy eating trends and alternative print media, which are the main focus. This audience is characterized by an interest in healthy lifestyles, Indonesian cuisine, art, and unique, experimental, and anti-mainstream elements. Specifically, the target includes individuals who enjoy reading or collecting zines, as well as those who appreciate creative works and local culture.

Through a layout that prioritizes visuals over text, this zine is intended to be easily enjoyed and understood. Its unique design makes it not only aesthetically appealing but also collectible, aligning with the growing trend of interest in collectible items across various age groups. This age group is considered to have a good level of visual literacy and openness to alternative media such as zines, thus having the potential to build an emotional connection between the message conveyed and its readers.

The choice of the zine as the primary medium is not merely due to its unique and authentic appearance, but because its essence aligns with the concept of the work to be created namely, the freedom to argue and express visually without being bound by rules or commercial formats. Through the zine, the author aims to present a print medium focused on educating about the concept of *real food* through diverse Indonesian cuisine. It will not only feature education on *real food*, healthy Indonesian dishes, and recipes but also serve as a unique, beautiful, and collectible visual archive that re-articulates healthy eating patterns rooted in Indonesian cuisine in a personal and aesthetic manner. Although rooted in an independent and DIY spirit, this zine is designed in consultation with experienced individuals who understand the issues addressed, ensuring the information presented remains accurate and relevant.

As an alternative print medium, the zine offers a more personal and intimate reading experience compared to conventional cookbooks or other traditional media. Readers can interact directly with the physical and visual elements, which are crafted independently and freely without format constraints. It is this principle of freedom and exploratory nature that makes the message about *real food* and Indonesia's culinary local wisdom feel warmer and more authentic. In addition to conveying an exclusive feel, this print medium also holds collectible value that aligns with the creative lifestyle of today's young generation.

In this design, the author employs the Design Thinking methodology, a problem-solving approach that prioritizes empathy, collaboration, and creativity. The process within this methodology focuses on understanding individual needs referred to as the "*empathize*" stage. During this stage, the author collected data using a *mixed-methods approach*, which included

questionnaires, literature reviews, interviews, and observations. After the data was collected, the author analyzed the findings to facilitate the problem identification process (*define*). From this analysis, ideas for problem-solving (*ideate*) were developed through *brainstorming* to identify the zine concept that best aligns with the audience, ensuring the message is conveyed effectively and accurately. The next stage is *prototyping*, which involves creating a model or initial representation of the generated ideas. At this stage, the author began designing and creating a physical version of the zine in the form of *a dummy*, which would then undergo a process of evaluation and continuous refinement until reaching the finalization stage.

Through this design, it is hoped that this zine can serve as an educational medium for the concept of real food through Indonesian cuisine, encouraging the public to re-examine and understand that the concept of healthy *real food* can be applied in daily life by consuming Indonesian dishes based on healthy, delicious, and sustainable *real food*. The author also hopes that this zine, in addition to serving as an educational medium, can become a visual archive that not only reintroduces the fact that Indonesian cuisine in daily life incorporates the concept of healthy real food but also provides a guide to preparing Indonesian dishes based on *real food*.

1.2 Problem Identification

Based on the background explanation above, the following issues can be identified:

1. The public's understanding of the concept of *real food* or natural food remains general and has not yet been fully linked to the context of Indonesian cuisine. Approximately 89.9% of survey respondents are aware of the term *real food* or natural food. However, many still do not understand that Indonesian cuisine is fundamentally also included in the category of *real food*. Based on the survey results, 68.4% of respondents answered that Indonesian cuisine falls under the *real food* category, 26.6% were still unsure, and 5.1% stated it does not. This data indicates that the public is familiar with the term "*real food*," but their understanding remains limited to a general definition and does not yet encompass the concept of *real food* within the context of Indonesian cuisine.
2. Low public awareness regarding adopting a healthy diet by consuming *real food* and nutritious meals through Indonesian cuisine. In the questionnaire, most respondents indicated they would start with vegetable salads, oats, vegetables, or steamed foods and fruits; while this response is not incorrect, it reveals that few respondents wish to begin consuming Indonesian cuisine as a healthy dietary option.

3. Low proficiency in preparing Indonesian cuisine. Questionnaire data indicates that 38% of respondents cook Indonesian dishes almost every day, 35.4% several times a week, yet only 30.4% are actually capable of cooking them. This situation indicates that more people frequently consume ready-made meals or home-cooked dishes without directly participating in the cooking process, leading to a decline in knowledge and skills regarding the preparation of Indonesian cuisine. It is known that processing raw ingredients oneself is also a beneficial practice in applying the concept of *real food*.
4. There is a need for engaging educational media on the concept of *real food* through Indonesian cuisine. Education regarding Indonesian cuisine based on *the real food* concept has not been effectively communicated to the public. Yet, Indonesian cuisine has long embraced *the real food* concept and can be applied to the “Isi Piringku” guidelines.

1.3 Problem Statement

How can we design a zine as an alternative print medium to educate the 18-27 age group about the concept of *real food* through Indonesian cuisine?

1.4 Scope Of The Problem

1. This design focuses on creating a design that utilizes an alternative print medium, specifically a zine as an educational tool for the concept of real food through Indonesian cuisine. The zine will serve as the primary medium and is designed with a unique, communicative, experimental, and collectible approach. However, the use of other media as supplementary tools is not ruled out.
2. The discussion in this zine design focuses on educating about the concept of *real food* through Indonesian cuisine. Topics in this zine include an understanding of the definition of “*real food*,” how Indonesian cuisine aligns with *the real food* concept, its application in Indonesian cuisine, and teaching readers how to prepare dishes using *the real food* concept through Indonesian cuisine. *It* also covers interesting facts and information about Indonesian cuisine, as well as recommendations for healthy Indonesian dishes. The discussion in this zine does not cover medical or clinical nutritional aspects from a scientific perspective.

3. The selection of Indonesian recipes featured in the zine is limited to 5 recipes and does not cover the entire Indonesian archipelago, as the focus is solely on introducing the concept of *real food* through Indonesian cuisine. The selection of dishes is based on foods that are commonly consumed and popular, the diversity of natural ingredients and preparation methods, visual aesthetic appeal, and their relevance to the concept of *real food* in daily life.
4. This design targets people aged 18- 27 as the primary audience. Specifically, it targets audiences who need educational information about Indonesian cuisine based on *real food* to start a healthy diet, as well as those interested in anti-mainstream media, collectible works, local culture, healthy food, and visual art.
5. The language used to convey information in the zine is communicative and informal, with a greater emphasis on visuals than text. This approach was chosen to make it easier for readers to understand the information provided and is tailored to the target age group of this design.
6. This design does not comprehensively discuss or introduce the full range of Indonesian *real-food-based* cuisine; rather, it is limited to the author's personal home-cooked dishes, which are predominantly rice-based. The selection of food visuals is based on the diversity of natural ingredients and their preparation methods, visual aesthetic aspects, the author's personal significance behind the dishes, and their relevance to the concept of *real food* in daily life.

1.5 Objectives

1. To present information regarding the understanding of the *real food* concept through Indonesian cuisine. To explain the connection between the *real food* concept and Indonesian cuisine, provide interesting facts or stories contained within each presented dish image, and reintroduce the concept of *real food* within the realm of healthy Indonesian cuisine to the younger generation
2. Presenting Indonesian cuisine through education on healthy cooking methods. By including simple guidelines, this zine aims to raise awareness so that the younger generation not only consumes Balikpapan cuisine but also understands how to prepare it properly and healthily.

3. Presenting an alternative print medium in the form of a zine that offers aesthetic value and collectibility, while also serving as an engaging educational tool and visual archive a valuable resource on Indonesian cuisine for its readers.

1.6 Benefits

1.6.1 Benefits for the Author

1. Striving to develop creativity in designing visual communication media in the form of a zine that is effective, educational, and imbued with cultural values.
2. Contributing to the creation of print media that serves as an educational tool and visual archive on healthy Indonesian cuisine, while assisting health professionals in promoting healthy eating habits.
3. To create a space for creative exploration in combining ideas, design elements, illustrations, photography, print media, and narrative so that educational messages can be conveyed in an engaging and effective manner.

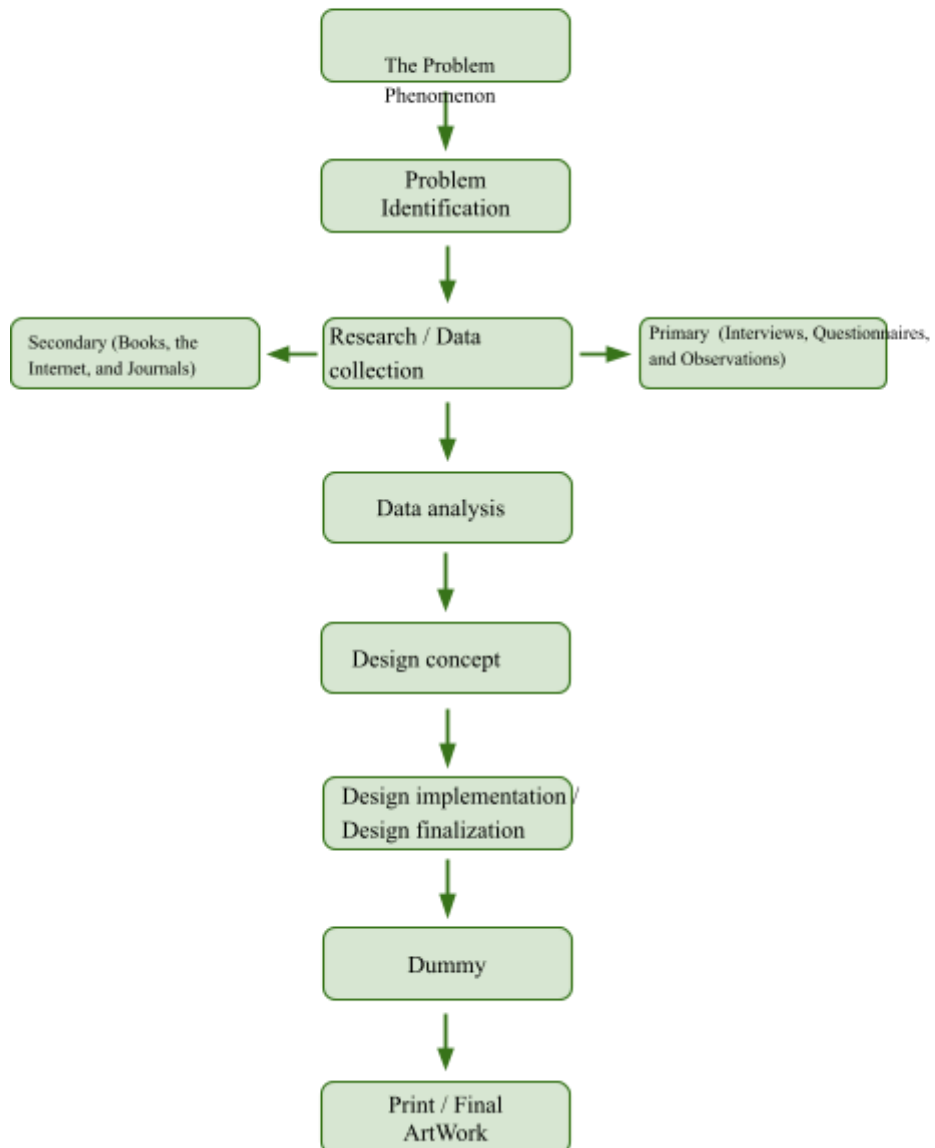
1.6.2 Benefits for the Audience

1. To gain new knowledge and perspectives on the concept of *real food* within the context of Indonesian cuisine, which some people may not yet be aware of.
2. To encourage the audience's interest in getting to know, appreciate, and preserve Indonesian cuisine by learning to prepare it in a healthy and proper way.
3. To foster awareness of adopting a healthy diet by consuming Indonesian cuisine based on *real food*.

1.6.2 Benefits for the University

1. To serve as a visual reference for students, particularly in the field of Visual Communication Design, in combining visual, cultural, and educational approaches through alternative print media such as zines.
2. To enhance the university's image as an educational institution that supports creative innovation, the preservation of local culture, and the application of design relevant to current social and cultural issues.
3. As a form of academic contribution in the field of Visual Communication Design through the use of alternative print media such as zines as an educational tool.

1.7 Writing Framework



Gambar 1.4 Writing Framework
(Source: Author's own data)