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# Create a Local Food Card and Tell a "Tasteful" China Story: Take Hainan Qing Bu Liang as an Example

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Abstract: This paper focuses on Hainan Qing Bu Liang, delving into how to create a distinctive local culinary brand and tell the "flavorful" China story. Through research on the historical origins, ingredient characteristics, production techniques, cultural connotations, and market promotion of Hainan Qing Bu Liang, this study reveals its unique charm and value. The findings indicate that Hainan Qing Bu Liang, with its abundant ingredients, distinctive production methods, and profound cultural heritage, possesses the potential to become a highly influential regional culinary brand. By innovating marketing strategies, strengthening brand building, and promoting cultural dissemination, Hainan Qing Bu Liang can better reach the national market and even the global stage, effectively telling China's culinary stories and spreading its excellent food culture.

Keywords: Hainan Qing Bu Liang; Local specialty cuisine; Culinary landmark; China story

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#### 1. Introduction

#### 1.1. Research background and significance

In today's globalized and culturally diverse world, regional specialty cuisines serve as vital carriers of local culture. More than just satisfying our taste buds, they act as dynamic windows showcasing regional heritage and preserving historical memory. Each dish embodies the unique customs, traditions, and cultural essence of its origin, serving as a vivid manifestation of local culture and emotional bonds that connect communities [1]. Creating a distinctive local culinary identity not only helps boost regional economic development and promote tourism prosperity but also promotes local culture, strengthens national cultural confidence, and allows the world to better understand China's rich and diverse culinary culture [2].

Hainan Qing Bu Liang, a quintessential local delicacy in Hainan, has become a beloved choice for both locals and travelers alike with its unique flavors, diverse ingredients, and rich cultural heritage. More than just a

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traditional thirst-quenching snack, it stands as a shining symbol of Hainan's culinary culture. However, the dish still faces challenges in brand development, market expansion, and cultural promotion, leaving its full potential as a regional culinary icon unrealized <sup>[3]</sup>. Therefore, in-depth research on Hainan's Qing Bu Liang cuisine and exploring effective approaches to establish its culinary identity hold significant practical importance for inheriting and promoting Hainan's food culture, advancing the development of Hainan's tourism industry, and telling the "flavorful" China story well.

#### 1.2. Domestic and international research status

International research on regional specialty cuisines primarily focuses on three key areas: culinary culture, the integration of tourism with food culture, and food brand development. Scholars widely recognize the vital role of culinary traditions in fostering cultural identity and enhancing tourist appeal. Through studying distinctive dishes across different countries and regions, researchers analyze the cultural significance and social value embedded in these culinary practices. Regarding brand-building strategies, foreign studies emphasize brand positioning, communication approaches, and marketing tactics, offering valuable insights for the branding development of local specialty foods [4–5].

In recent years, domestic research on regional specialty cuisines has been increasing significantly, covering multiple fields such as culinary culture, culinary geography, culinary tourism, and the development of the culinary industry. Some studies delve into the origins, evolution, and development of regional specialty cuisines from a historical and cultural perspective, revealing their cultural heritage and historical value. Other research focuses on the integration of cuisine and tourism, exploring how culinary tourism can promote local economic development and cultural dissemination. In terms of culinary industry development, studies mainly concentrate on the current status, issues, and countermeasures of the culinary industry, as well as brand building and market promotion. However, research specifically targeting Hainan Qing Bu Liang (a traditional herbal cold dish) remains relatively limited, with most studies focusing on its preparation techniques and flavor characteristics. There is insufficient in-depth and systematic research on how to establish Hainan Qing Bu Liang as a culinary brand and effectively communicate the stories behind it.

#### 1.3. Research methods and innovations

This study employs a literature review methodology, compiling extensive research on Hainan Qing Bu Liang (a traditional herbal tonic soup), regional culinary traditions, and food culture to establish theoretical foundations. Through fieldwork at local Qing Bu Liang shops, markets, and production facilities, researchers documented the preparation process, tracked ingredient sourcing and market distribution patterns, while conducting in-depth interviews with local residents and vendors to gather firsthand data. By applying case analysis techniques and referencing successful models of regional culinary branding from both domestic and international contexts, the study identifies replicable strategies for enhancing the brand recognition and market promotion of Hainan's distinctive Qing Bu Liang cuisine.

The innovation of this paper lies in placing Hainan Qing Bu Liang within the broader context of telling a "flavorful" China story, exploring how to build its culinary brand from the perspective of cultural dissemination. It not only focuses on the culinary attributes of Qing Bu Liang but also emphasizes uncovering its cultural connotations and values. Through innovative marketing strategies and cultural communication methods, Hainan Qing Bu Liang becomes an important vehicle for spreading China's culinary culture. Additionally, this paper

proposes targeted and actionable development strategies aligned with modern market demands and consumption trends, providing new approaches and methodologies for the industrialization of Hainan Qing Bu Liang.

#### 2. Overview of Hainan Qing Bu Liang

#### 2.1. Historical origin of Hainan Qing Bu Liang

The history of Hainan Qing Bu Liang (a traditional herbal remedy) dates back over two millennia. Legend has it that after Emperor Qin Shi Huang unified China, he dispatched generals Tu Sui and Zhao Tuo with 500,000 troops to pacify the Baiyue Kingdom in Lingnan. However, the humid climate of Lingnan caused soldiers to suffer from severe water-related illnesses and frequent outbreaks of disease, which significantly weakened their combat effectiveness [7-9]. After research with military physicians, Zhao Tuo developed a medicinal congee using traditional ingredients like lotus seeds, lilies, radix scrophulariae, water chestnuts, Solomon's seal, Chinese yam, and coix seeds. The soldiers who consumed it saw rapid reductions in illness rates and regained combat effectiveness. Recognizing its "heat-clearing and energy-replenishing" properties, Zhao Tuo named the congee "Qing Bu Liang" (Cooling and Replenishing), ordering each soldier to consume a bowl daily. This became the precursor to Qing Bu Liang, initially serving as military provisions that played a crucial role in soldiers' health and battlefield victories.

Over time, Qing Bu Liang (a traditional Hainanese cold-nourishing dessert) gradually spread from military provisions to civilian households. Local residents continuously refined their ingredients and preparation methods based on regional climate conditions and local produce. Initially featuring a sweetened broth, the dessert evolved into a coconut milk-based version. The menu now incorporates distinctive Hainan specialties like fresh coconut flesh, coconut water, mangoes, and pineapples, creating a richer flavor profile and balanced nutrition. This culinary tradition has become a beloved snack cherished by Hainanese people [10].

#### 2.2. Ingredients and production process of Hainan Qing Bu Liang

Hainan Qing Bu Liang (cooling herbal soup) boasts a diverse array of ingredients, typically containing over 10 varieties and sometimes more than 20. Key components include: mung beans and red beans—rich in protein and vitamins that clear heat, detoxify, and strengthen the spleen and stomach, resulting in a tender, sweet texture when cooked; coix seeds, which help eliminate dampness and support digestion in Hainan's hot and humid climate, offering plump grains with refreshing flavors; dried sago, which becomes translucent and chewy when boiled, absorbing other ingredients aromas to enhance complexity; taro, steamed into small pieces that deliver velvety sweetness with distinctive local fragrance; glutinous rice, pre-soaked and steamed for its soft yet chewy texture that provides filling comfort; seasonal fruits like mangoes, pineapples, watermelons, and dragon fruit infused with vibrant vitality and vitamin-rich juices; along with ingredients such as pasta, jelly blocks, red dates, raisins, quail eggs, corn kernels, peanuts, lily bulbs, tremella fungus, longan pulp, and lotus seeds. Each element uniquely contributes to the soup's rich flavor profile and nutritional balance through its harmonious combination [11].

The preparation of Hainan Qing Bu Liang appears simple but is actually quite sophisticated. Taking the traditional coconut milk version as an example, the process goes like this: First, prepare all ingredients. Soak mung beans, red beans, coix seeds, glutinous rice, and other grains for several hours before cooking them in a pot. Once cooked, drain and set aside. Clean yams and sweet potatoes, peel them, cut into small pieces, and steam until cooled. Blanch dried fish in boiling water until translucent, stirring constantly to prevent sticking. After cooling,

rinse with cold water to achieve a chewy texture. Wash fruits and cut into small chunks. Boil quail eggs until cooked, then shell them. Next, make the coconut milk. Select plump, ripe coconuts, open the shells, pour out the coconut water (some shops add coconut water to enhance the refreshing taste), remove the coconut meat, cut into small pieces, and blend with an appropriate amount of water (or coconut water). After blending, strain through a gauze cloth to remove the residue, yielding smooth and creamy fresh coconut milk. Some shops may add a small amount of sugar or condensed milk for flavoring. Finally, assemble the Qing Bu Liang. Place it in a clean bowl, add all ingredients according to preference, then pour in fresh coconut milk until fully covered. For a richer texture, you can also mix in some ice cream or shaved ice [12].

#### 2.3. Taste classification and characteristics of Hainan Qing Bu Liang

There are many common flavors of Hainan Qing Bu Liang, such as coconut milk Qing Bu Liang, coconut water Qing Bu Liang, sugar water Qing Bu Liang, fried ice Qing Bu Liang, and ice cream Qing Bu Liang. Each flavor has its own unique characteristics.

Coconut milk's refreshing and cooling flavor stands as one of the most popular and beloved tastes. Built on a rich, velvety coconut milk base, it harmoniously blends the sweet essence with diverse ingredients, creating a fragrant, silky-smooth experience. The fresh coconut milk infuses this drink with a distinctive island-inspired flavor, transporting drinkers to tropical paradises where coconut groves and sandy beaches come alive, immersing them in the vibrant rhythm of tropical vibes.

Coconut water serves as the refreshing base, offering a sweet and tangy taste that highlights the coconut's natural essence. Packed with minerals and vitamins, it effectively cools the body and quenches thirst during hot summer days. A bowl of this refreshing drink instantly brings relief from heat and thirst, leaving one feeling both cool and rejuvenated.

Sweet and Refreshing Cold Nourishment is a traditional flavor of Qing Bu Liang (Cold Nourishing Soup), featuring a broth made from brown sugar water or white sugar water. This version delivers a richly sweet taste where the sweetness of the syrup harmonizes with the flavors of its ingredients, allowing diners to savor the timeless essence of traditional Chinese cuisine.

Hot Ice Qing Bu Liang (a traditional cooling tonic drink) has been innovatively upgraded. Blending coconut milk or other juices with various ingredients in a blender creates a smooth, velvety ice cream-like texture that delivers refreshing coolness. Combining the rich flavor of traditional cooling tonics with the unique mouthfeel of smoothies, this creation has become a crowd favorite among young consumers.

Ice Cream Qing Bu Liang (a traditional Chinese herbal tonic) combines ice cream with herbal cooling properties. The preparation involves placing various ingredients in a bowl, then topping it with scoops of chilled ice cream. The sweet essence of ice cream interacts with the refreshing properties of Qing Bu Liang, creating a unique sensory experience that delivers a dual delight of sweetness and herbal refreshment.

### 3. The cultural connotation of Hainan Qing Bu Liang

#### 3.1. Integration of Hainan Qing Bu Liang with Hainan regional culture

Hainan Qing Bu Liang, deeply rooted in the region's cultural heritage, embodies the wisdom of the Hainanese people. Located in a tropical zone with a hot and humid climate, this traditional cooling food effectively addresses heatstroke prevention and summer relief needs. More than just a culinary delight, Qing Bu Liang represents a

distinctive lifestyle that helps locals cope with the intense heat [13].

Along the streets of Hainan, Qing Bu Liang stalls dotting every corner can be found. These humble setups typically feature just a few tables, an ice cabinet stocked with ingredients, and a busy vendor — creating a unique urban landscape. On summer evenings, locals flock to these stalls, ordering their favorite Qing Bu Liang bowls. They sit amidst the cool breeze, savoring the refreshing drink while beaming with contentment. Here, Qing Bu Liang transcends being a mere snack; it is a social hotspot where people gather to share meals and chat about life, radiating authentic island vibes. As a cultural symbol of Hainan, Qing Bu Liang embodies the locals' laid-back lifestyle and warm hospitality, showcasing their optimistic spirit and hospitality that defines their island heritage.

#### 3.2. Folk customs and traditions behind Hainan Qing Bu Liang

Throughout its long evolution, Hainan Qing Bu Liang has become deeply intertwined with the region's folk traditions. This traditional drink plays a vital role in major festivals and celebrations. During the Spring Festival, families gather for reunion dinners where they enjoy not only sumptuous New Year's Eve feasts but also a bowl of Qing Bu Liang, symbolizing the cleansing of internal heat and vitality for the new year. Similarly, during the Dragon Boat Festival, while enjoying zongzi (sticky rice dumplings) and dragon boat races, people consume this refreshing drink to dispel summer's sweltering heat.

Furthermore, Qing Bu Liang (a traditional Hainanese dish) holds deep cultural significance tied to the island's wedding customs. In Hainan, when a groom visits his prospective bride's family to propose, the bride's household prepares this dish as a welcoming gesture. If the groom finds her attractive, he will finish the dish in one sitting; if not, he might just take a symbolic bite. This unique tradition has given Qing Bu Liang a special cultural meaning, making it a heartfelt way to convey affection and express intentions.

#### 3.3. Health preservation concept embodied in Hainan Qing Bu Liang

The ingredients selected by Hainan Qing Bu Liang mostly possess certain medicinal value and health-preserving effects, reflecting the traditional Chinese health preservation philosophy. Ingredients such as mung beans and coix seeds have the functions of clearing heat, detoxifying, removing dampness, and promoting diuresis, effectively alleviating summer heat and dampness; ingredients like lily bulbs and tremella fungus have the benefits of moistening the lungs, relieving coughs, and enhancing skin beauty; while ingredients including red dates and longan meat can nourish qi and blood, strengthen the spleen, and benefit the stomach. When combined, these ingredients not only offer a rich flavor profile but also provide balanced nutrition, supplying the body with essential nutrients to achieve health-preserving effects such as clearing heat, relieving summer heat, strengthening the spleen, and boosting energy, nourishing yin, and replenishing kidney essence [14].

In today's health-conscious society, people increasingly prioritize balanced diets. Hainan Qing Bu Liang (a traditional herbal tonic) has gained popularity for its natural ingredients and unique health benefits, perfectly aligning with modern consumers' pursuit of wholesome indulgence. More than just a tasty snack, this wellness-focused delicacy offers a perfect balance between culinary enjoyment and holistic nourishment — allowing people to enjoy delicious meals while achieving their health goals.

## 4. Strategies for building the food name card of Hainan Qing Bu Liang

#### 4.1. Brand building and positioning

To establish Hainan Qing Bu Liang as a culinary icon, the priority lies in strengthening brand development and

strategic positioning. This requires clearly defining the brand's core values while highlighting its distinctive regional cultural identity, diverse ingredients, and holistic wellness philosophy <sup>[15]</sup>. People can create distinctive brand identities showcasing Hainan's unique elements like coconut trees, ocean waves, and sandy beaches, embodying the tropical charm of Hainan's refreshing "Qing Bu Liang" (cooling tradition). Simultaneously, people should focus on building a cohesive brand image through standardized store decor, packaging designs, and service protocols to enhance brand recognition and reputation <sup>[16]</sup>.

In brand positioning, it is crucial to segment and target different consumer groups. For instance, for local residents, people can emphasize the emotional value and nostalgic memories of Qing Bu Liang as a traditional delicacy, building an approachable and affordable brand image. For tourists, highlight its regional characteristics and commemorative significance, positioning it as a representative culinary experience in Hainan tourism. For health-conscious consumers, emphasize its healthy ingredients and wellness benefits, positioning it as a premium health-focused gourmet. Through precise brand positioning that caters to diverse consumer needs, brands can enhance their market competitiveness [17].

#### 4.2. Product innovation and quality improvement

While preserving Hainan's traditional Qing Bu Liang flavor, continuous product innovation should be pursued to meet modern consumers' taste preferences and consumption trends. By integrating contemporary culinary concepts and technologies, new flavors and varieties can be developed. For instance, introducing low-sugar and low-fat versions of Qing Bu Liang catfish soup to cater to health-conscious consumers, or creating creative combo flavors like chocolate Qing Bu Liang and matcha Qing Bu Liang to attract younger demographics. Additionally, blending Qing Bu Liang with other Hainan specialties could create innovative experiences such as Qing Bu Liang cakes and Qing Bu Liang ice cream.

Quality is the lifeblood of a brand, and enhancing the quality of Hainan Qing Bu Liang is crucial. People must strictly control ingredient procurement channels to ensure freshness and safety. Establish standardized production processes and quality control systems to regulate Qing Bu Liangs preparation techniques, guaranteeing every bowl meets uniform standards in taste and quality. Strengthen staff training to improve production skills and service standards, delivering premium products and services to consumers [18].

#### 4.3. Marketing and promotion strategy

Using social media platforms for online promotion is one of the key marketing strategies today. Platforms such as TikTok, Xiaohongshu, and Weibo can be utilized to publish the production process, food images, and videos of Hainan Qing Bu Liang, share its cultural stories and culinary experiences, attracting user attention and sharing. Inviting food bloggers and influencers to explore and check in at stores can leverage their influence and fan base to enhance the visibility and reputation of Qing Bu Liang. Conducting online interactive activities like food contests and lotteries can increase user engagement and retention [19].

Hosting food festivals and cultural events can effectively showcase the unique charm of Hainan's Qing Bu Liang cuisine, attracting more consumers. Local Hainan could host a Qing Bu Liang Food Festival, inviting vendors from across the region to display diverse flavors and specialties. The event would include culinary competitions and cultural exhibitions to create a vibrant food culture atmosphere. Furthermore, integrating Qing Bu Liang promotion with Hainan's tourism festivals, folk celebrations, and other popular events would leverage these platforms' visibility to boost the popularity of Hainan's traditional delicacy.

Enhance collaboration with the tourism industry by integrating Hainan Qing Bu Liang (traditional herbal tonic) into travel itineraries and culinary recommendations. Establish dedicated stores or kiosks for Qing Bu Liang at tourist attractions, hotels, airports, and other locations to facilitate purchases and tastings. Offer hands-on workshops where visitors can experience the preparation process and cultural significance of Qing Bu Liang firsthand, adding fun and interactivity to their travels. By blending tourism with culinary culture, people aim to boost Qing Bu Liang's visibility and influence, making it a shining hallmark of Hainan's tourism offerings [20].

# 5. The practice and prospect of Hainan Qing Bu Liang to tell China's story well 5.1. The dissemination status of Hainan Qing Bu Liang at home and abroad

With the development of Hainan's tourism and increasingly frequent international exchanges, Hainan Qing Bu Liang has gradually expanded beyond Hainan to reach the whole country and even the world. In Hainan-themed restaurants and dessert shops across major Chinese cities, Qing Bu Liang can often be seen, as more and more people begin to learn about and savor this distinctive culinary delicacy from Hainan. Abroad, in Chinese communities and international food festivals, Hainan Qing Bu Liang has also garnered attention and affection. Many foreign friends, after tasting Qing Bu Liang, have praised its unique flavor and rich cultural connotations, making Hainan Qing Bu Liang a messenger spreading China's culinary culture.

However, Hainan Qing Bu Liang currently faces limitations in its global reach. Its popularity remains concentrated in tourist cities and Chinese communities, with room for greater recognition and cultural impact. The cultural significance behind Qing Bu Liang has not been sufficiently explored or promoted, leading many consumers to view it merely as a dessert without fully appreciating its profound cultural heritage.

#### 5.2. How to tell a "flavorful" China story in Hainan Qing Bu Liang

To tell the "flavorful" stories of China through Hainan Qing Bu Liang, people must start by exploring and disseminating its cultural connotations. By promoting the historical origins of Qing Bu Liang, its integration with Hainan's regional culture, and the folk traditions behind it, consumers can understand that Qing Bu Liang is not merely a delicacy but also a carrier of traditional Chinese culture. People can produce promotional documentaries and cultural books to detail the cultural narratives of Qing Bu Liang, spreading them through various channels.

In international communication, it is crucial to consider cultural differences and audience needs while adopting globalized expressions and communication methods. By blending Qing Bu Liang's cultural elements with international pop culture, people can create visually appealing promotional posters and videos to promote through global social media platforms and tourism marketing channels.

#### 6. Conclusion

As a representative delicacy of the free trade port, Hainan Qing Bu Liang is not only a microcosm of regional culinary culture but also a vibrant medium for telling China's story. With coconut milk as its base and complemented by over ten ingredients, including red beans, taro balls, and jelly, it preserves the traditional health wisdom of "clearing heat and relieving summer heat" while integrating the distinctive local products of tropical islands, becoming a taste symbol of Hainan's "slow life" culture. In recent years, Hainan has upgraded Qing Bu Liang from street snacks to a cultural icon through standardized production, youthful innovation, and scenario-based communication: establishing ingredient ratios and production standards to ensure quality stability;

introducing new flavors such as coconut-flavored Qing Bu Liang and ice cream Qing Bu Liang to meet the needs of young consumers; integrating tourism scenarios by setting up specialty stores in duty-free shops and scenic areas, and showcasing the "freshly made and sold" process through short video platforms, allowing tourists to experience Hainan's charm through tasting.

In the future, it is possible to further explore the "coconut culture" and "health preservation culture" behind Qing Bu Liang, develop souvenirs and cultural products, promote its nationwide and overseas expansion, and use "small delicacies" to carry "great culture", enabling the world to understand China's regional characteristics and life wisdom through culinary experiences.

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