

Indigenous food and beverages of Tripura

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Article Info

Abstract

Received: 13 Oct 2024,

Received in revised form: 12 Nov 2024,

Accepted: 19 Nov 2024,

Available online: 27 Nov 2024

Keywords— Traditional, Bodo-Garo, Tiprasa, Tibeto-burman,

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Humans are dependent on food in order to survive. If there would be no food, the human race would not have existed. Humans grow and cook their food according to their habitat, need and taste. The crops found in one region may not be found in another region. Therefore, people living in different regions of Tripura have their own traditional dishes. The people of Tripura know very well how to make good use of forest produces and prepare delicious dishes out of those. We can see the similarity in Tripura's food culture with Bodo-Garo communities as our community itself has branched out of it. Tiprasas like to have their food boiled, cooked without less to no oil which is certainly a healthier way of eating to keep diseases at bay.

I. INTRODUCTION

Kokborok originated from Tibeto-Burman speaking community. Kokborok speakers are only found in the small state of Tripura. Although, the number of Kokborok native speakers is less, the people have their own culture, heritage, tradition and attires. Kokborok speaking community can also be found in some parts of Bangladesh as well.

The food and cuisines of a community is also an important aspect as it is a necessity for survival and it also talks about the cultural heritage of a community. The traditional dishes and beverages of Tripura will be discussed below.

i. Data & Methodology

To know and collect information on traditional dishes and beverages of Tripura, I believe Primary data is sufficient as these have not yet been documented in any book so far. We can see several beautiful indigenous dishes in the village and hilly areas of the state. The materials required to collect primary data are pen, paper, voice recorder, microphone, mobile phone etc.

ii. Indigenous dishes of Tripura:

Since earlier times, the Borok people or the indigenous people of Tripura indulged in farming in order to survive on their own. They used to grow crops through Jhum cultivation.

iii. Crops grown in Jhum fields in Tripura

The crops grown in the Jhum fields in Tripura includes Guriya (sticky rice), Mami variety of rice, Maisui (Polenta), Thaichumu (Muskmelons), Dorompai (Sour cucumber), Khakulu (Ash gourd), Chakumura (Pumpkins), Khul (cotton), Siping (sesame), Sobao (snake beans), Muimasing (Pigeon Pea), Masinga, Khundrupui (Asian parsley), Muiching, Turmeric, Lobia (flat beans), Orail, Mogodam (Maize), Banta (Wild Basil), Wsundwi etc.

1: Methods of cooking

Here, I would mention few popular traditional dishes of Tripura. Most of the indigenous dishes are prepared or cooked inside a hollow bamboo called Wasung. The ingredients of the dish are stuffed inside the cavity of the bamboo and then closed using any kind of leaves. This kind of cooking does not require oil and has

been practised by our forefathers. There are different types of Wasung dishes such as Wasung Godok, Wasung Pengmani, Wasung mai songmani (cooking rice inside the Wasung).

We can say that indigenous tribes of Tripura have great connection with bamboo since old days, as bamboo were abundantly available in the forests. Our forefathers have been using bamboo for almost all household purposes, even using bamboo as utensils for cooking food.

Chakhwi: Chakhwi is said to be the main dish of the Tiprasas. Chakhwi is first served as the main dish in weddings. Chakhwi is liked by all and is cooked along with lots of vegetables. While the vegetables are still cooking and bubbling on the stove, little bit of homemade soda and rice flour slurry is added to the ingredients with a dash of lime leaves making the dish very appetizing to smell.

Gudok: Gudok is another popular dish of Tripura and loved by other communities as well. That is how this dish slowly gained popularity. This dish includes all kinds of vegetables of choice and can be cooked with or without fermented fish. There are variations of Gudok such as Swtwi (turmeric) Gudok, Muya (bamboo shoot) Gudok, Laiphang (banana stem) Gudok etc.

Hangmani: The Tiprasas also like to grill their food by sewing meat pieces onto sticks and char grilling them using minimum spices.

Chatang: The process of preparing Chakhwi and Chatang is pretty much the same using all ingredients including homemade soda. Its gravy is dried and the dish usually includes air dried or dry vegetables.

Awandru: Awandru is another prominent dish prepared by the Borok people or the Tiprasas. It can be prepared using different ingredients such as yellow peas, bamboo shoots, mushrooms, snails etc. It is cooked using the main ingredient which are rice powder slurry and crushed garlic which is added just few seconds before turning the stove off.

Mosodeng: One side dish that is a must in every Tiprasa meal is Mosodeng. It is basically a spicy salad side dish which usually includes onions, garlic, roasted chillies and fermented fish. Earlier, Mosodeng used to be consumed with warm Maidul (rice balls made of leftover rice). There are variations of Mosodeng such as Mosodeng Kelwa, Tohan (Chicken) Mosodeng, Wahan (Pork) Mosodeng, Phantok (Aubergine) Mosodeng etc.

Mui Pengmani: This form of cooking food is basically cooking without oil with minimum spices. This technique of cooking is very healthy and is ideal food to cure sick people and gain back strength. Usually proteins like fish and chicken are cooked in this dish.

Ik: The process of slow roasting fish, especially small fish wrapped inside turmeric leaves or banana leaves or lairu leaves. The fish is seasoned and wrapped inside the leaves and then slow roasted on stove. This type of cooking also does not require oil.

Bangwi: Bangwi is liked by all and has gained popularity among other communities as well. People love to eat Bangwi with some Mosodeng. It is one of the most sought after street foods in Tripura. Mami variety of rice or Guriya (sticky rice) or Maisui (Polenta) can be used to make Bangwi.

Maidul: The Tiprasas are fond of eating and hence unique ways of cooking food were invented. One such unique technique is Maidul. The leftover rice are shaped into rice balls the other day and then is chargrilled and eaten for breakfast with Mosodeng.

2: Beverages of the Tiprasas:

Gora: This alcoholic drink is mainly made of cooked rice. It helps relax the body and is one of the traditional drinks of Tripura which is drunk during get togethers or any occasion.

Bwtwk: It is yet another alcoholic drink and is served in a small earthen pot mixed with chuan.

It is sipped using a bamboo straw and usually consumed during celebrations or mornings.

Chuak: It is alcohol made of cooked rice which is cooked again and is made through tedious traditional distillation process.

Dapa: It is a kind of beverage popular in villages. This drink is consumed using a bamboo container.

3: Foods obtained from the Jhum fields

Mami- It is a variety of rice much loved by the Tiprasas for its appetizing scent. It can be of different types such as Mami koromo, Mami hangar, Mami rare etc.

Guriya- It is the sticky rice grown in Tripura. It can be of different types such as Guriya mereng, Guriya koroma etc. It can be prepared in different ways as Awan bangwi, Awan sokwrang, Awan belep and Awan bati etc.

Maisa- The normal kind of rice we consume daily is Maisa rice. It can be of different types such as Garu kwchak, Garu kuphur, Garu chikon, Garu kiting, Belong gumpui and Sunajoli etc.

Maisui (Polenta)- It is also cooked in the same way Guriya is cooked. These are grown in the Jhum fields.

Masinga- It is a type of crop grown in the Jhum fields. Just like sugarcane, its edible part is the stem which oozes out lots of juice. Its fruit is dry roasted and then consumed.

Mogodam (Maize)- Maize are also grown in the Jhum fields. Some people also grow these in their vegetable garden near their house.

Bojwra/Bodwla (Bajra)- Bajra is grown in the Jhum fields. However, its cultivation is getting lesser and is hardly found in markets nowadays. It is dry roasted and consumed just

like popcorns as it is or by adding melted jaggery to it.

Thaichumu (Muskmelon)- These fruits are popular in local markets and are organically grown in Jhum fields. These taste as good as it smells making them excellent food to beat the heat during summer time.

Dorompai- These are one kind of cucumbers which are grown in Jhum fields. These are big in size and rounder in shape and sour in taste. These are eaten as instant pickles or salads.

Kusumai- These are small fruits that grow in bunches. Its outer cover is not edible and its flesh tastes sweet when ripe. These are one of the favourite indigenous fruits found in Tripura.

Thaicherem- These are berry like small fruits which are reddish or magenta in colour. These are consumed as instant pickle or salad. It is also said to be good for the body.

Jwram- It is a kind of fruit which looks just like jackfruits but is much smaller in size. Back in the old days, it used to be seen in villages. However, now it is very hard to find one. Its seeds also look like jackfruit seeds which are roasted and consumed.

II. CONCLUSION

To conclude, we can say that there are many indigenous dishes of Tripura, about which I have tried to discuss in this journal. These indigenous dishes may be similar with other communities. However, the way of cooking or the names of the dishes may differ.

In beverages, unfortunately we have all alcohol based drinks. However, these have been part of our culture since the old days.

Among fruits, the above mentioned fruits also may be found in other regions. However, they are well known among the indigenous group of people in Tripura.

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