

Traditional Culinary Uses of Selected Rice Landraces of India

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Traditional Culinary Uses of Seleted Rice Landraces of India

Abstract

The thrust of the Green Revolution, begun in the 1960s, replaced thousands of indigenous rice varieties (also called landraces) with a handful of modern cultivars. The extinction of the thousands of rice landraces from farm fields entails the erosion of a vast body of folk knowledge pertaining to the distinctive properties of different varieties and derangement of local food cultures. Numerous culinary delicacies in different rice growing cultures have disappeared with the disappearance of special rice varieties throughout India. We present here an illustrative list of the rice landraces that were traditionally grown for making different spcial preparations of rice. This is the first data base of the folk rice varieties direclty linked to local food cultures of different States of India.

Introduction

The diversity of folk landraces shapes the food cultures in different States. Certain varieties were selected for their distinctive gastronomic and culinary qualities, and these varieties were traditionally used in preparing special foods. Thus, the famous rice sweet, *moa* of Jaynagar in the district of south 24 Parganas, West Bengal is characterised by the special aroma of Kanakchur, an indigenous landrace. The popped rice (*khoi*) of Kanakchur retains its mild aroma, which usually disappears from other rice grains after "popping" on fire. A drastic decline in land area sown to this variety has led to the marketing of fake "Jaynagarer moa", made from non-aromatic modern cultivars. Distribution of the seeds of Kanakchur from Vrihi rice seed bank from 1997 onwards, among several farmers and farmer organizations, has revived cultivation of this variety.

The aesthetic preference for aroma motivated many farmer-breeders to select and develop a range of aromatic varieties like Badshabhog, Bhim-sal, Kalojira, Khaskani, Olee, Rani kajal, Shiuli mukul, Tulsimanjari, etc. Gustatory quality is another important driver for selection of varieties. Farmers of Bankura, Puruliya, Jalpaiguri and South 24 Parganas grow Kelas, Dahar Nagra, Nalpai and Moul, respectively, for making particularly tasty crisped rice (*moori*) from those rice varieties. Sita-sal and Banshkathi are favoured in many villages of Paschim Medinipur district for short cooking time, rich taste and slender grains. Ajirman, Chandrakanta and Manik Kalma are preferred for making beaten rice (*chireh*). Aromatic rice can be bold grained (e.g. Bhim-sal), long grained (e.g. Dehradun Gandheswari) and small grained (e.g. Khudikhasa) – according to the preference of traditional farmers (Deb 2000, 2005).

In the absence of the specific folk rice varieties, many of the culinary delicacies also become divested of their original flavour, historical context and social meanings. As discussed above, with the disappearance of Kanakchur rice, the special flavor of the famous Jaynagarer *moa* is no longer found. *Sitabhog*, a famous sweetmeat of Bardhaman district was originally prepared from the eponymous rice variety, which is now extinct. Today's *sitabhog* is made with some modern rice variety (such as Swarna or IET-7029), yet bears the name of the rice that is now lost, and its flavour long forgotten. Similarly, various rice varieties traditionally considered to be appropriate for the taste and flavour of diverse rice dishes (Table 3) are either forgotten or extinct from

Bengal's food cultural landscape. The extinction of hundreds of rice landraces that were traditionally preferred for making diverse culinary delicacies in different districts of Bengal on both sides of the international border has led to a truncation of the diversity of food cultures. Some of the rice sweets, such as Chapra pithé and Shukchi pithé are now obsolescent in the districts of Sunamgunj in Bangladesh and Purba Medinipur in West Bengal, respectively, owing to the unavailability of the appropriate rice varieties, and no modern varieties can impart the desired texture and flavor of these rice cakes.

Modern HYVs have also replaced the sticky rice varieties with low amylose content, which are a necessary ingredient for some specific kinds of rice sweets; thus, those items of delicacies are no longer cooked in Bengali households. For instance, a special of *pati-saptah* that was once a delicacy of Paschim Dinajpur district of West Bengal is now forgotten, because the sticky rice Kalo dumrah is no longer available.

An illustrative list of rice landraces that are traditionally used for preparing different kinds of food items is given in Table 1 below. This list is by no means comprehensive, but serves to reflect the enormous wealth of India's rice genetic diversity that engendered and enriched diverse culinary arts in local food cultures, in which specific landraces were preferred for specific delicacies.

Table 1: A List of Rice Varieties Traditionally Considered to be Appropriate/ Auspicious for Preparing Different Food Items and the Indian States where they are in Use.

Food Item	Brief Description	Favoured Rice Varieties	State of Origin
Bhat/ Bhatta/ Chowal	Cooked rice	<i>Non-aromatic</i> All varieties	All States
		<i>Aromatic</i> Garó joha Heerai joha Kola joha Kon joha Sada joha Tulsi joha	Assam
		Lohondi Pitti hidsk Vishnubhog	Chattisgarh
		Deepika rani Jeeraga samba Kumkum kesari Mysore mallige	Karnataka
		Garam masala Kala bhat Tulsa Zeeni	Maharashtra
		Betguti xali Gazep xali Kala xali Kola bora Tulsi xali	Meghalaya
		Atma shitala Bashabhog Bhalu dubraj Gangabali Jagannathbhog Lalu Kolamalli Maccha kanta Samudrabali Thakurbhog Tulasi Tulsibas	Odisha
		Badshabhog Dehradun gandheswari	West Bengal

Table 1, contd...

Food Item	Brief Description	Favoured Rice Varieties	State of Origin
Bhat/ Bhatta/ Chowal		<i>Aromatic</i> Gobindabhog Jirasari Kalojira Kalonuniya Kaminibhog Kataribhog Kharishabhog Khaskani Lilabati Marichmukul Mohanmala Radhuni pagal Rambok Rani kajal Shiulimukul Sitabhog Swarnakanti Tulsimukul Tulsimanjari	West Bengal
		<i>Sticky rice</i> Sirguti habe Sirguti tikbe Teneng tikbe	Nagaland
		Kalo dumrah	West Bengal
Muri	Crisped rice	Rajabhog	Odisha
		Taniye	Nagaland
		Bahurupi Benaphool Bhutmuri Jatakalma Jhinge-sal Lalaush Malsira Mallick-sal Megi Mugi mansara Mukhi balam Nata Noichi Raghu-sal Rup-sal	West Bengal

Table 1, contd...

Food Item	Brief Description	Favoured Rice Varieties	State of Origin
Khoi/ Poha	Puffed rice	Nal bonni Pura bonni	Assam
		Ludka	Maharashtra
		Lai pawa	Meghalaya
		Ashabali Ghotia Guruji Jhulki suna Para	Odisha
		Akshay rani Balam Balaram-sal Hansguji Lakhai Kalo nuniya Kanakchur Kashia binni Kaya Lakshmi kajal Majhi-jhulur Nagra-sal Palo	West Bengal
Chireh	Beaten rice	Agniban Ajirman Ashwin jharia Balam Bardhaman nagra Chandrakanta JataLeta-sal Kaya Lakshmi jata Megi Mugi mansara Majhi-sal Nara hasoi Nata Raghu-sal Saban-sal Shal keleh	West Bengal

Table 1, contd...

Food Item	Brief Description	Favoured Rice Varieties	State of Origin
Murki	Sweetened khoi (mixed with palm jaggery or sugar)	Sada balam Rajlakshmi Hatichampa Kanakchur	West Bengal
		Kalo gorah	Jharkhand
Moá	Flavoured ball of Murkhi	Kanakchur	West Bengal
Pánta	Steamed rice soaked overnight in cold water, semi-fermented	Bali bhajna Hati dhan	Jharkhand
		Dadkhani Meghna Nabanna-sal Rangi Tengra-sal	West Bengal
Khichuri/ Khichri/ Masale bhat	A porridge of rice, beans and vegetables, sometimes egg and minced meat (cf. pasticcio)	Ara baihar Bhuri-sal Hende baba Jhulpo Tatu dhan Tupru	Jharkhand
		Kolpi Luchai Raybhog	Maharashtra
		Bochigondri Boloigenti Chengarangi Dadkhani Durga Gentu Haldiguri Kantarangi Khira-sal Mlabati Mota dhusuri	West Bengal

Table 1, contd...

Food Item	Brief Description	Favoured Rice Varieties	State of Origin
Payes/ Kheer	Rice pudding	Garo joha Kola joha Tulsi joha	Assam
		Rambhog Til kasturi	Chhattisgarh
		Dhundhuni Kalamdani Kashiphul Lakhan-sal Rani kajal Raschora	Jharkhand
		Deepika rani Jeeraga samba Sharbati	Karnataka
		Dubraj Garam masala Hiranakhi Kali kamod Tivshya Tulsa Velchi	Maharashtra
		Chak haw Chak haw poireithon	Manipur
		Tulsi xali	Meghalaya
		Pokkali	Kerala
		Higgi bhatta Kanak champa Kuyer kuling Lalu Maccha kanta Samudra bali	Odisha
		Basmati Kala namak Tilakchandan	Uttarakhand

Table 1, contd...

Food Item	Brief Description	Favoured Rice Varieties	State of Origin
Payes	Rice pudding	Gandamalati Gandheswari Gobindabhog Jirasari Kalo nuniya Khudi khasa Lilabati Olee Radha tilak Sada nuniya Shiuli mukul Tulsi manjari Tulsi mukul	West Bengal
Patisaptah	Rice pancake	Kalajira Kalaturi Danaguri Dar-sal Jhinge-sal Chhoto nuniya Kalijira Kalo dumra	West Bengal
Aské pithé	Steamed rice sweet	Kaya, Lathi-sal (West Bengal)	
Shukchi pithé	Rice pancake	Mugai	West Bengal
Puli pithé	Fried rice cake, stuffed with coconut and jaggery	Bakulphool Dar-sal Kamalbhog Mugai	West Bengal
Gokul pithé	Fried rice cake, stuffed with coconut and cheese, soaked in sugar syrup	Kalo tulsi Mohan mala Moul Radha kalma Raja-sail Shiuli	West Bengal
Pur pithé	Steamed cake, stuffed with coconur and jaggery	Lata-sal	West Bengal

Table 1, contd...

Food Item	Brief Description	Favoured Rice Varieties	State of Origin
Bhapa pithé	Steamed rice cake	Rambhog	Assam
		Safed ras Tupru	Jharkhand
		Tepthe Lha Thevürü Lha	Nagaland
		Bhonda dhan Ranga dhan Tike churi Tumuru churi	Odisha
		Chini-sail Gobindabhog Halud ganthi Jamai nadu	West Bengal
Taruak	Rice cake, mixed with fruits	Teneng habe	Nagaland
Sitabhog	A sweet made of rice and sweet cheese, cooked in ghee	Sitabhog	West Bengal
Polao	A sweet pilaff, cooked with saffron and raisins, usually without meat.	Badshabhog Banshkathi Gandhamalati	West Bengal
Biriyani	A rich saffronated meal made of rice and meat (traditionally beef or mutton)	Basmati, Karnal Basmati, Pakistani	Punjab & Haryana
		Basmati, Taraori	Uttar Pradesh
Idli	Steamed rice cake, usually served with smabar	Gandhasale Kayamé Kulthi kayamé	Karnataka
		Chuvanna chennellu Palthondi vella Palveliyan Veluthan	Kerala

Table 1, contd...

Food Item	Brief Description	Favoured Rice Varieties	State of Origin
Idli		Garudan samba Kattuyanam Kullakar Poongar	Tamil Nadu
Dosa	Crispy pan cake, made of rice flour and fround pulses,susally served with spicy vegetable filling	Gulvady Sanna	Karnataka
		Palthondi vella Vella chennellu Vellari	Kerala
		Karun kuruvai Kullakar Poongar Mappillai samba Valaan	Tamil Nadu
Bhakri/ Ghavan	Dosa like preparation, usually with no filling	Tamkudai	Maharashtra
Rice beer	Wet riceFermented with herbs	Ghasraiz	Jharkhand
		Chong loi man	Nagaland
		Chipti, Gadaba	Odisha
		Chenga Dhusuri Kalo mota Mukhi balam Ora meteh	West Bengal
Herbal tea		Chikia mnie	Nagaland
Roti	Flat bread like tortilla	Mahadi	Maharashtra

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