

Traditional Food of Assam and its Benefits

Dipankar Das¹; Violina Devi²; Pallabi Das³

¹Assistant Professor in the Department of Political Science (HoD), N H College Patacharkuchi, Assam, India

²Guest Faculty in the Department of Political Science, N H College Patacharkuchi, Assam, India

³Guest Faculty in the Department of Political Science, Chaygaon College, Assam, India

Corresponding Author Email: dipankardipu12@gmail.com

Abstract—The majority of Assamese people work in agriculture. In Assam, there are numerous ethnic groups, and each has a unique diet. A particular place in the Assamese people's hearts is reserved for traditional foods. The needs for traditional foods are highly valued throughout the festival season. This paper tries to highlight the traditional food of Assamese and how it benefited for human bodies. Assam is naturally beautiful state in North- East India. The culture and their food habits diverse and ancient. Assamese food culture expresses the uniqueness and distinctive characteristics of a nation. In assam paddy is the main corps because of that reason Assamese people are depending on rice. However the various dishes served with rice and the indigenous styles of their varities have shown their characteristics.

Keywords: Agriculture, Traditional food, Assamese, Pitha , Medicinal food

I. INTRODUCTION

Naturally, Assam is very beautiful. In India, the state of Assam occupies 78,438 sq km. Because of its variety in altitude ranging from 42 to 1736 meters, it has 23,688 square kilometers of forest cover with extremely rich floral and faunal diversity, a temperature range of 60–360 °C, and an annual rainfall of 800-3200mm².¹Assamese culture has historically been a composite one created by the historical assimilation of numerous ethno-cultural groups. In addition to the main ethnic groups, Assam is home to a number of smaller tribes. Because of their particular socio-cultural patterns and customs, the majority of these communities rely on the forest ecosystem for their feeding habits. In addition to various veggies like *kuchu* (taro root), *dheki* (ferment), *kolposola* (planteria), and other medicinal herbs, rice is the main crop of Assam. To keep their mouths clean, Assamese people also consume betel nuts, or *tamul-pan*. Both the lowlands and the hillsides provide access to fresh and dry food. When there is a food shortage, the majority of the hill people cook food that has been stored and dried for a long period of time. Fish, meat, potatoes, and radish can all be kept in storage for an extended period of time. However, the people of the plains did not keep the dried seams in storage. Homemade soda, or "khar," is one of the most beloved dishes among Assamese people, so they are known as "*kharkhuwa Asomiya*." . Some of the Characteristics of Assamese foods are-

- The use of medicinal plants.
- Taste of *Pura-pitika* (potato)
- Extensive use of *Khar* (homemade soda)
- Use a smaller amount of masala and fats.

II. OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

- To Understand about traditional food of Assam.
- To examine the benefits of Assamese traditional food.

III. METHODOLOGY

¹ Baruah Snigdha Rani, Barua Utpal, Tripathi A.K “ Traditional Foods and Beverages of Assam” ICAR Research Complex for NEH Region.

The researcher has adopted both primary and secondary data sources. In the secondary data source, the researcher has taken books, journals, articles, etc., and in the primary data source, the researcher has collected data through an interview schedule and the snowballing process.

IV. DISSCUSSION

The state of Assam is incredibly diversified. The biggest celebration in Assam is called Bihu. Magh Bihu, Kati Bihu, and Bohag Bihu—also known as Rangali Bihu—are the three types of bihu that are celebrated in Assam. Assam offers a variety of types of food throughout the bihu season. Pitha is the most well-known and engaging dish, which is made from pithaguri. This nutritious dish has a significant place in Assamese culture. Breakfast is called jalpan in Assam. The majority of Assamese people are farmers, so rice is a staple in their diet. Both rice and paddy are used to make ja-jalpan. The people of Assam have so many dishes included in Ja-Jalpan (break fast), which are: *chira*, *muri*, *sandah*, *comal saul*, *pithaguri*, and *pitha*, which is the most popular jalpan in Assam. Jalpan is served with yogurt, sugar, jaggery, and cream. In Japan, people also include so many sweet dishes, such as "laddoos," which are like Narikol laddoos, Tilor laddoos, etc. There are different kinds of pithas added in Japan, which are—

- **Chunga Pitha:** To make the pitha, put some dough in a pot with milk, jaggery, and barjaha or bora rice. Cover the pot's mouth with palm leaves and cook over a fire. It's referred to as chungcha chaul when prepared with rice. Skim milk and jaggery go well with it.
- **Paat Pitha:** Muthia Pitha's recipe is comparable to this one. Similar to Muthia pitha, the dough is combined with water or milk and kneaded with sesame or coconut seeds. After that, these muthia laddoos are cooked in boiling hot water while wrapped in palm leaves.
- **Sutuli Pitha:** Its resemblance to the instrument of sutuli is the reason this pitha is called sutuli pitha. Laddoos are made by first combining brown rice dough with water. After hand-flattening, it is fried in oil with jaggery and sesame seeds.
- **Ghila Pitha:** Ghila Pitha looks like a ghila. The traditional method for making ghila pitha is to combine rice flour and brown rice flour, soak it in water, roll it, and fry it in mustard oil.
- **Khola Chapari Pitha:** This pitha is known as the *Hazarmukhi pitha*. Any rice is enough for this pitha. It is customary to soak the rice in water for a while, then stir it and drain it with water, sprinkle it with water, burn it in an iron pan or potter's vessel. This pitha is good for eating because it is spicy.

Apart from Jalpan, Assamese people also used various varieties of rice, which are black rice, sticky rice, bora rice, and joha rice. Each and every rice has its own different kinds of benefits. Those who benefit from rice are mentioned below:

- **Black Rice:** Assam's weather conditions and soil are suitable for black rice. It also carries a huge opportunity for Assam's commercial production. In ancient China, black rice was referred to as forbidden rice. The Goalpara district of Assam is well-known for producing black rice. It contains antioxidants that prevent the harmful effects of aging, improve healthy brain function, lower inflammation, and aid in weight loss, Black rice is beneficial to humans.
- **Bora Rice:** Bora rice also known as sticky rice is a glutinous rice with a low amylose content. It is widely cultivated and consumed in the north-eastern region, mainly in Assam. Bora rice has a high nutritional value due to its unique sticky texture, ease of preparation, and quick starch digestion, which causes a significant release of sugars. Different varieties of Bora Rice are found in Assam, which are: Aghoni Bora, Aijung Bora, Nol Bora, Malbhog Bora, etc.
- **Boka Rice (saul):** Assam in the northeastern region of the country, grows the ancient and indigenous rice variety known as boka saul. Boka saul is often referred to as "red rice" or "brown rice." Boka saul is particularly nutrient-dense and has a high "zero fuel requirement" ranking on its unique quotient. According to the study by the Gauhati University Department of Biotechnology "Boka saul contains 10.73% fiber and 6.8% protein. Although boka saul is not a staple cuisine in Assam, it is a representation of heritage and cultural identity."²

Apart from these Assamese people also used lots of vegetables and dishes. Because rice is the staple food of Assam. Which are-

² Mishra Pratikshya "The Magic Rice of Assam: Boka Saul" JUST AGRICULTURE multidisciplinary e-newsletter, e-ISSN: 2582-8223
www.ijsssr.com

- **Khar** : "*Khar dish*" is the first course in a typical meal. They are made with ingredients such as raw papaya, mustard leaves, fish, lentils, and different vegetables. The greatest for the purpose is usually thought to be "*kolakhar*," which is made from the banana peels of "*Athia kol*" (*musa balbisiana*). After being sun-dried and reduced to ashes, filtered through the water is known as "*kolakhar*." It has been used traditionally as an antacid and aids in the normalization of stomach and digestive disorders.
 - **Kharoli**: Another traditional dish made from fermented mustard seeds is called *kharoli*. The clay pot cover plate, grinder, and black mustard seeds are the basic ingredients. Mustard seeds are first cleaned, dried and then ground in a *dheki* (a traditional grinder). Ground mustard seeds are added to *Koloh*, and *khar* is combined with this mixture as well. Subsequently, the mixture is appropriately compressed, and a plate is placed over its mouth. It was manufactured after a period of either one month or fifteen days.
 - **Khoricha**: The Assamese community prepares the bamboo shoot product used in its creation. Bamboo shoots, hollowed-out adult bamboo stems split open at one end, earthen pots, bamboo trays, *dheki*, and banana leaves are among the raw materials used to make *khoricha*. Transferring the ground bamboo shoots into a hollow bamboo cylinder and sealing the mouth with a piece of wood is the first step in *khoricha* preparation. The ground bamboo shoots are transferred into a hollow bamboo cylinder, and its mouth is sealed with a piece of wood or bamboo. This is done in preparation for *khoricha*, and the cylinder is then securely placed beneath a pond or spring for 6-7 days to ferment. It is prepared to be eaten after a few days.³
- In addition to these, there are additional foods that are well-liked in Assam, such as *masor tenga*, which is eaten with souring agents like tomatoes, *thekera*, or *outenga*. This dish is incredibly light and refreshing throughout the summer months, thanks to its high vitamin C and protein content. *Haanhor mangxo*, or duck meat cooked with ash guard, is another staple meal in Assam. In Assam, pigeon meat is also prepared with plantains, such as *posola*, or plantains, flowers, called *koldil*. Made by steaming over boiling water, *sewa diya bhaat* is also well-known in Assam. It usually comes with some sort of non-vegetable dish, such as *haanhor mangxo* and the People of Assam consume various green herbs for food and medicinal purposes. These medicinal foods are
- **Manimuni** (*Centella asiatica*): It is usually consumed raw as adding chutney or juice. It is a blood purifier and helps relieve menstrual pain. It is mainly useful in the treatment of stomach ulcers and cough. It also helps to improve memory.
 - **Tengesi Tenga** (Indian salt herb) : It contains a lot of vitamin C. It improves memory and strengthens the nervous system. It also helps treat lower back and urinary tract pain.
 - **Bhedai Lota/Bhebeli Lota**(Stink Vine):It is very popular in Assamese society. Usually the young leaves and shoots are boiled and the tender leaves and stems are made into a paste and then cooked with fish .it helps in digestive disorders including ulcers.
 - **Dhekia** (fiddlehead fern) : *Dhekia-shaak*, also known as fiddlehead ferns, are distinctive in both appearance and flavor. They also have an excellent nutritional profile that includes numerous elements that are beneficial to health, such as vitamins, antioxidants, flavonoids like carotenes, and vitamins omega-3 and omega-6 fatty acids. This *shaak* is mostly popular in the North-eastern states of India.
 - **Kochu**(Taro root): Rich in nutritional fiber and nutritious carbs, taro root helps to promote healthy weight loss and enhances the efficiency of the digestive system. A healthy immune system and the potential removal of free radicals are further benefits of its high vitamin C, vitamin B6, and vitamin E content.

V. CONCLUSION

Mostly Assamese food is tasty and healthy. Assamese food is incomplete without *pitikas*. Different kinds of *pitikas* (mashed) are made from vegetables as well as fish, etc. The food habits of ethnic people reveal a strong correlation between these people and nature. In Assamese society, drinks also play an important role in the socio-cultural life in various ethnic groups of Assam, which are *Zau*, *Chako*, *Xaj* or *Lau-Pani*, *Sujen*, *Sai Mod* etc. In Assamese society, *Tamul-pan* is used as a symbol of respect. Traditionally, Assamese meals are concluded with a *Tamul-pan* (betel nut). In today's scenario, Assamese tradition has been changing. The people of Assam need to be aware of it.

³ Baruah Snigdha Rani, Barua Utpal, Tripathi A.K " Traditional Foods and Beverages of Assam" ICAR Research Complex for NEH Region.

REFERENCE

1. Baruah, rani Snigdha, Barua Utpal, Tripathi A.K “ Traditional Foods and Beverages of Assam” ICAR Research Complex for NEH Region, Umiam, Meghalaya
2. Mishra Pratikshya “ The Magic Rice of Assam: Boka Saul” JUST AGRICULTURE multidisciplinary e-newsletter , e-ISSN: 2582-8223
3. Gogoi Dr. Monoj , “ TRADITIONAL FOOD SYSTEM AND DIET INTAKE PATTERN OF THE BOKO KACHARI TRIBE OF ASSAM, INDIA” 2019 JETIR January , Volume 6
4. Issue 1 , ISSN- 2349-5162
5. Kalita, Dr. Hirumani ,”Traditional food of Assam and Nutrition” IJFANS INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF FOOD NUTRITIONAL SCIENCES , ISSN ONLINE 2320 7876
6. Das Monika , “ Food Stock in Assamese Culture” IJARSCT , ISSN(Online) 2581-9429