



Traditional Food of Sartangs of Arunachal Pradesh

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Abstract

Traditional food occupy a significant place among the tribal communities, it holds great importance not only for its divine taste and nutritional values but also because this indigenous knowledge of food have been passed down from generations to generations which has become a part of their culture and tradition. In many parts of the world, indigenous food have become a parameter for distinguishing one tribe from the other as the food provides a deeper insight about the culture of a tribe. For many tribal communities their traditional food is a medium for them to connect themselves with nature, god and their forefathers as many of such food hold many great tales and songs about their tribe. Among the tribes of Arunachal Pradesh, Sartang is a small tribe primarily settled near the beautiful mountains of West Kameng district, the tribe of Sartang is immensely blessed with their traditional verities of food which have passed down from one generation to other, and their traditional food is a reflection of their way of living and their closeness towards Mother Nature which holds great socio cultural importance to them. Therefore an attempt has been made in this present paper to discuss some of the traditional food prepared and consumed by the Sartangs in their day to day life and on special occasions.

Keywords: Traditional Food, Arunachal Pradesh, Sartangs.

Introduction:

Known for its cultural diversity, the country of India is a home for over 10.43 Crore scheduled tribe people constituting 8.6% of the total Indian population, making our country, the world's leader in terms of tribal population. This enormous population is spread across 15% of the country's geographical area which includes mountains, plains, forest and other areas. It has been observed that the indigenous people are majorly concentrated in two distinct geographical areas namely central India and North East, India (Brahmanandam & Babu, 2016). More than half of the scheduled tribe population is found in the areas of Central India; Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra, Orissa, Gujarat and Rajasthan. The other half of the tribal population is concentrated in the North East India; Assam, Nagaland, Mizoram, Manipur,

Meghalaya, Tripura, Sikkim and Arunachal Pradesh. A total of 8.55 % of the total tribal population is found in the North East India. Among the North Eastern states, Arunachal Pradesh is the largest in terms of the land area, the state is known for its breath taking sceneries and rich biodiversity, besides its scenic beauty and the biodiversity, the state is also known for its rich traditional heritage, Arunachal Pradesh is a home to diverse ethnic groups having diverse social cultural religious practices spread across more than 26 major and over 110 sub tribes. These tribes despite being living in the same state for centuries are unique and distinctive; each tribe is different from the other in terms of their culture, language, style of houses, dressing, food etc. Food habit is one of the factors which make a particular tribe unique from the other. Indigenous food occupies a significant place in the tribal communities, not only because of its nutritional values but also because the indigenous food reflects the culture of a particular tribe which is passed down from generation to generation. For ages, the tribal communities of Arunachal Pradesh are dependent on their forests and rivers for their survival depicting their strong bond with Mother Nature; the source of gathering the resources might be the same, however every tribe has their own specific set of skills and knowledge required in the preparation of food. Among the tribes of Arunachal Pradesh, the Sartangs is a small tribe primarily settled in the West Kameng district of Arunachal Pradesh. The Sartang is a culturally rich tribe in which food occupies a very prominent place, for the Sartangs their indigenous food is a part of their tradition which has certain socio cultural importance attached to them. Therefore, an attempt has been made in this paper to discuss some selected traditional food of the Sartangs.

Traditional Food of Sartangs of Arunachal Pradesh:

The tribe of Sartangs are the inhabitants of West Kameng district of Arunachal Pradesh and are primarily settled in four villages namely Rahung, Salari, Jerigaon and Khoina. The Sartangs have a rich variety of traditional foods/dishes which they consume on a daily basis or in the events of celebration and someone's demise:

- **Machey Haan:** Machey Haan is a mixture of maize rice and maize flour, which is boiled on a pot over the fire; it is consumed on a daily basis by the Sartangs and is usually served with boiled pumpkin leaves, beans, potato, lettuce etc. Machey Haan is the most common meal which is prepared in every Sartang family and can be served during breakfast, lunch and dinner.
- **Gichan Haan:** It is a type of Chapati which is made from Kodo Millet flour, at first the millet is finely crushed into smooth powder form with the help of traditional mortar and pestle usually made of stone or wood. Once the powder is ready it is mixed with water to turn it into smooth dough and in the final process it is given the shape of chapatti with the help of rolling pin and is cooked on a pan usually without adding any oil.
- **Phuk Haan & Zaam Nefa :** are forms of chapati made from wheat flour and Buckwheat flour, the process of making Phuk Haan & Zaam Nefa is similar to Gichan Haan, the difference between Phuk

Haan & Zaam Nefa is the former is made with wheat flour while the later is made with Buckwheat. Both the dishes are usually prepared for breakfast and are commonly served with potatoes and beans.

- **Maleychamploe:** Maleychamploe is a kind of steamed buns made from Buckwheat. At first the buckwheat flour is used to make the dough, then the dough is cut into small triangular shapes, once the triangular shapes are ready it is cooked in boiling water. Maleychamploe is a Sacred food for the Sartangs as it is only prepared at the time of someone's death in the family.
- **Haan Dang Boiy:** is a dish similar to Thukpa, Haan Dang Boiy is a dish comprised of boiled maize noodles and vegetables; sometimes meat is also added as per the likes of the person. At first the vegetables such as cabbage, beans, carrots etc are boiled, once the vegetables are boiled, noodles prepared from maize are added and then served hot.
- **Mothtengken/Mohthempo:** Mothengken or Mohthempo is served as a side dish; it is a type of Chutney or Relish which is served with the above mentioned food. Mothengken or Mohthempo is a mixture of spices and leafs collected from the forests.

Conclusion:

The tribe of Sartang is traditionally very rich in terms of their knowledge of indigenous food, out of hundreds of varieties, the food mentioned here except for Maleychamploe, which is particularly prepared at the time of someone's death in the family; the rest are prepared and consumed by the Sartangs in their day to day life and also during special occasions such as weddings, house opening ceremonies, rituals and celebrations. The Sartangs are very close to the nature and are mostly dependent on their agriculture and forest products; therefore all the materials required in the preparation of the mentioned dishes are harvested by themselves or are taken directly from the forest. However it is worthy to mention here that the process of globalization have influenced the food habits of the Sartangs, due to which there have been certain alterations in their traditional methods of preparing their food which varies from village to village.

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