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Indigenous Food Habit of Bodo Tribe

*¹Bhanumati Basumatary*¹Research Scholar, Department of History, Banaras Hindu University, Uttar Pradesh, India.

Abstract

The Bodo people are an ethnic group in the Indian state of Assam. Bodo have a rich cultural heritage and are recognized for their traditional dances, food, festival and vibrant handloom textile. The traditional food of the Bodo people reflects their agricultural lifestyle. Staple food include rice and various locally grown vegetable. Pork is a significant part of their diet. Bodo people have unique preparation like 'zou', a traditional Bodo rice beer. It is made from fermented rice. It is a popular traditional drink in Bodo culture. Offering rice beer to guests is a customary practice among the Bodo people. Bodo cuisine also feature a variety of traditional recipes using bamboo shoots, wild greens, wild coriander and herbs. Additionally Bodo people consume different types of meat, including fish and chicken, often prepared with local herbs and spices. The Bodo people use a variety of local herbs in their traditional practices, including medical and culinary applications. Kharwi or Khardwi is the essential ingredient in Bodo cuisine. Khardwi is an alkaline liquid made from the peel of a banana grown locally in Assam, Bhim kol. Traditional cooking methods, such as smoking and fermenting add distinct flavors to Bodo dishes. Meats are frequently smoked to add a distinct flavor. Fermented bamboo shoots and fish are staple, contributing unique taste to various Bodo dishes. Bodo cuisine includes a variety of curries, such as fish curry and pork curry, using a blend of spices for rich and flavorful outcomes. Sticky rice is a favorite, often prepared by steaming and enjoyed with various accompaniments. These cooking styles reflects the community's connection to nature and utilization of traditional culinary techniques passed down through generation. Food habits often undergo changes from generation to generation due to various factors, including cultural shifts, technological advancement, and evolving lifestyles. Younger generations may embrace modern influence, fostering an appreciation for the unique flavors, techniques and stories embedded in indigenous food helps ensure the contribution of culinary traditions. Preserving the rich heritage of indigenous food is crucial, and recognized the value of traditional cuisine is essential for maintaining cultural identity.

Keywords: Indigenous, food, Kharwi, Samo, bamboo-shoot, wild coriander, pork

Introduction

Human food habits are heavily influenced by the local availability of food commodities, climate, geography and cultural practice. This diversity contributes to the rich tapestry of global cuisine. Rice is a staple in the diet of the Bodo people, reflecting the significant of agriculture in their often play a central role in shaping the food culture and dietary patterns of communities. Bodo food is intimately connected to nature. The reliance on locally sourced ingredients such as rice, bamboo shoots, and indigenous vegetable reflects a harmonious relationship with the environment. The Bodo people's culinary traditions are deeply rooted in their surroundings, emphasizing sustainability and a close land with nature in both cultivation and consumption practice. Rice holds significant culture and economic importance in Bodo society. It is a staple food, and the cultivation of rice plays a central role in their agriculture practice. Rice is not only source of sustenance but also features in traditionally ceremonies and festivals, reflecting its cultural significant. The Bodo community's with rice extends beyond nutrition, encompassing social, religious and ritualistic dimension.

Bodo people consume rice thrice in a day. There are different types of rice cultivated by Bodo people. Those are-

- i). Sali (winter rice),
- ii). Ahu (autumn rice),
- iii). Boro (summer rice),
- iv). Bao (deep-water rice),
- v). Joha rice,
- vi). Aijung Rice.

Review of Literature

Bhanben Narji in his book 'Boro-Kacharini Somaj arw Harimu' points out that the Bodo cuisine varies across regions and communities within the larger Bodo community. Traditional Bodo cuisine emphasizes locally sourced, fresh, and seasonal ingredients, providing w well-rounded profile. Bodo people has different type of cooking style of Bodo women.

Binoy Kumar Brahma in his book 'Boroni Subung Harimu' mentions that the traditional Bodo foods incorporate various ingredients that provides essential vitamins. Specific vitamin content can vary based on factors such as cooking methods and regional variation in ingredients.

Binoy Kumar Brahma in his book 'Boro Subung Aadar arw Gannai Jwmnai' mentioned the different types of cuisine that are bamboo shoot, pork, leafy greens, rice etc. Pork and other meats contributes to vitamin D and Vitamin B.

The Objective of the Study

The objective of the study have been formulated in the following-

- To understand traditional Bodo food that can inspire culinary innovation.
- To understand the nutritional properties of traditional Bodo foods which can implicate for public health.

1. Samo Sobai (Snail with Black Lentils)

Bodo people catches snail from the fresh water. Then clean it with salt and lemon. Snail with black lentils is a very popular dish in the Bodo society. Snails are available from the month of July but Bodo people mostly consume it from the month of October to December. Sanil and black lentils are combined to create a flavorful and unique dish. Bodo women prepare it by sauteing snails with black lentils along with aromatic spices and herbs. The earthy taste of black lentils complements the subtle flavor of snails. Adding ingredients like garlic, onion and blend of spices such as cumin, wild coriander (kata masala) and paprika to enhance the overall taste. Bodo women cooks the lentils separately until they are tender, and then incorporate them into the snail preparation. This dish is being served with rice. People enjoy it so much.

2. Owa Meoyai (Bamboo Shoot)

Bamboo shoots or bamboo sprouts are the edible shoots of many bamboo species which are available in Northeast India. Bamboo shoots are a low-calorie and nutrition addition to diet, offering vitamins, minerals and dietary fiber. First remove the sheaths and then cut them into small pieces. Bodo women boils or soaks it to remove the bitterness. There are a lot of ways to cook it. After frying it with some garlic Bodo women simply add kharwi without using oil. Adding fresh wild coriander leaves, turmeric, salt, paprika for the taste is essential. It is a very easy way to keep the original taste of it. Another way to cook bamboo shoot is adding rice powder to thickness the gravy. Bodo women also cook bamboo shoot with chicken or fish. It is served with steamed rice for a delightful and tangy addition to Bodo meals. People also make pickle from bamboo shoot. After removing the bitterness, heat mustard oil in a pan, then let it cool slightly. Bodo women adds vinegar, salt, red chilli powder according to taste, Then stir in the bamboo shoot and mix well with the spices. Let the pickle sit for few days to allow the flavor to meld. Bodo people enjoy it on a condiment with rice or any other dishes ^[1].

3. Oma Jwng Narjwi (Pork with Dry Jute Leave):

Oma jwng narjwi is the most popular in Bodo community. Jute leaves are rich in vitamin E, A and C. Jute leaves are green leafy vegetable that has a host of benefits can be eaten in so many different ways. It is available in rainy season. Drying jute leaves in sunlight helps preserve them and can enhance their flavor for culinary purpose. Cooking jute leaves with pork is a common practice among Bodo women, creating a flavorful dish that combines the unique taste of jute leaves with the richness of pork. Adding salt, turmeric, ginger, garlic, paprika, onion, wild coriander adds a variety of flavor and enhance the overall taste of the dish with jute leaves with pork. Bodo women boils or soaks the dry jute leaves to

remove the bitterness. Kharwi plays a very important role in this dish. Some people cook the dry jute leaves with fish or chicken. It also taste awesome.

4. Oma Bedor (Pork Meat)

In Bodo community, pork is a commonly consumed meal. It's often prepared in various traditional ways, reflecting the culinary practices of the Bodo people. Pork dishes might included a mix of local vegetable, spices, herbs. Methods of preparation of pork are distinctive to the cultural heritage of the Bodo community. Rosting the pork and have it with zou (rice beer) is very common in Bodo society. Pork with potato makes a delicious combination. It is very simple and easy dish. Pork with lai mwigong (green mustard) is also very popular dish. Dried pork is a popular preservation method for pork, creating flavorful and long lasting products. Dried pork is likely enjoyed by the Bodo people in various traditional dishes. Bodo people also make pork pickle. Mixing pork the salt turmeric and heat mustard oil. Add mustard seeds, cumin seeds, garlic, ginger, green chilies. cooked the combined mixture until the oil separates. Bodo people enjoy this pickle with rice ^[2].

5. Mwitha Na (Roselle Leaf with Fish)

Roselle leaf green leafy vegetable which are available in every Bodo house during the rainy season. It is very tasty and easy to make. Roselle leaves contain high dietary fiber and vitamin. Bodo women cooks roselle leaves with fish. Specially with wild small fish. Cooking roselle leaves with leaves with wild fish enhance the overall flavor, as the natural, slightly tart taste of roselle complements the delicate flavors of the fish. It adds a unique and tangy twist to the dish. Some Bodo women cook it with oil or without oil. Some women cooks it with kharwi also. It is consider as a tasty meal in Bodo family during rainy season.

6. Napham Bathwn (Fermented Fish Chutney)

Fishing is a significant activity among the Bodo people. The rainy season often enhance fishing opportunities. Drying fish is a common practice in in Bodo community. Fermented fish chutney is a pungent condition made by fermenting fish with vegetable and various spices. It's a popular dish in Bodo community. Fermented fish is a preservation method, and it is often contained in a jar during and after the fermenting process. The airtight seal of the glass jar helps maintain the condition necessary for fermentation while keeping the fish protected from external contaminants. This method allows the fish to undergo the fermentation process, developing unique flavor and preserving it for an extended period. After about a month the fermented fish is ready to be cooked and eaten. It is cook by adding salt, wild coriander, kharwi, paprika ^[3].

7. Khangkhrai Bathwn (Crab Chutney)

Crab chutney is the longtime favorite of Bodo people. It typically involves a blend of crab meat with locally sourced spices and herbs, creating a unique and flavorful chutney. Crabs are often found in lakes and ponds in Assam, specially during the rainy season. The increased water levels create a suitable environment for crabs to thrive. Many communities in Assam, including Bodo communities engage in crab hunting and incorporate these fresh catches into varies traditional dishes like crab chutney. Some Bodo women also cook crabs with roselle leaves.

8. Emphu Latha (Silk Worm)

The Bodo people consume silkworm as part of their diet. Silkworm are a good source of protein and other nutrient. In Bodo culture silkworm is considered a delicacy and it is prepared in different ways, such as frying or gravy with rice curry. Bodo people serves it with rice and zou.

9. Zou (Rice Beer)

Rice beer holds a special role in Bodo community. Bodo people often use rice beer in rituals and celebration. It's traditionally brewed by fermenting rice with local ingredients, reflecting the community's rich cultural practices. In Bodo community rice beer is often served alongside chicken, pork or fish during festive occasion and communal gatherings, enhancing the overall experience of traditional celebration⁴.

Conclusion

Bodo food is characterized by a minimal use of spices, and yet Bodo meals are full of flavor, drawn from indigenous vegetable, herbs, wild coriander holds a special place in Bodo cuisine. The use of locally available and indigenous ingredients, like wild coriander, contributes to the unique flavor and identity of Bodo dishes. The aromatic and citrusy notes of wild coriander can enhance the taste of traditional Bodo recipes, making it an essential ingredients in the culinary heritage. Culinary traditions are deeply rooted in cultural identity, and every community has its unique identity, and every community has its unique set of ingredients, cooking, techniques, and flavors. The use of locally practices all contribute to the distinctiveness of each cuisine.

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