Traditional recipes of district Kangra of Himachal Pradesh

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Himachal Pradesh, a hilly state, has lot of variation in recipes prepared by local people. The communication deals with traditional recipes of district Kangra as per seasonal availability of plant material. Although food habits of local people have changed these days, still they relish the local preparations. Participatory Rural Appraisal techniques were used for documentation of required information. The plant material used by the people for recipes included its leaves, flowers, stem, fruits and root. The period of availability of raw material ranged from 1-3 months approximately. Various traditional recipes prepared especially from leaves of plants, viz. Colocasia, fig, basil, pigweed, buck wheat, and water cress are very good source of calcium, phosphorous and iron. These recipes are loosing its sheen in the fast-food culture. So, there is a need to conserve our traditional food recipes as the plant material used for these is completely organic thus nutritious and healthy /safe to eat.

Keywords: Traditional recipes, Traditional food, Himachal Pradesh

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Diversity can be found in India's culture, geography as well as its climate and same is true with its food also. Fermented recipes, bhaturu, marchu, siddu, babru, seera, and others like ambua, khatti bhujji, khoru, redu are some of the famous traditional dishes of Himachal Pradesh. Besides source of nutrition, the fermented food, bhaturu constitute staple food in larger part of rural areas of Kangra Kullu, Mandi and Lahaul & Spiti districts of the state, while others are consumed during local festivals, marriages and special occasions1. The everyday meal in Himachal Pradesh is usually rice, lentil broth, dish of vegetables and chapati, and special dishes are cooked during festive occasions. In areas with a pastoral tradition, milk and its products are liberally used in cooking. It is rightly said that each cook stirs the cook pot in his/her manner. The traditional cook was and is mother and her knowledge and capabilities are handed down to the next female generation. Earlier, when hilly state did not have well developed communication and transport means, people were more or less dependent on food materials grown/available locally as well as seasonally thus preparing traditional recipes. However, during last 2-3 decades, fresh fruits, vegetables and herbs have been available all year round either grown locally or imported from outside districts or states. But these traditional recipes are still in vogue among local people and can be seen prepared in all the homes during that particular period of availability of plant material. The preferred taste in Himachal varies from region to region, but food with a generous dose of spices like cardamom, cinnamon, cloves and chillies, is very much in the norm. Although food habits of the people have been changed these days but those who have their roots in the villages, still relish the traditional recipes prepared from seasonal plant materials. In the paper, an effort has been made to elaborate some of the traditional recipes of the study area.

Methodology

The study was carried out in Kangra district of Himachal Pradesh. Participatory Rural Appraisal Techniques were used for collection of information which consisted of discussion with key informants and focused group discussion with the groups chosen randomly from different communities of the study areas2. Personal experiences were also helpful in compiling the required information.

Results and discussion

A number of selected food materials (leaves, flowers, stem, fruits and root) available seasonally

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were identified and the traditional methods of preparing them were documented. The traditional recipes prepared by the local people are generally associated either with festivals or with the season. And in the paper, popular seasonal recipes have been explained. Besides method of cooking nutritive value of the main ingredients used in the recipes are also reported. Names of traditional recipes along with part of the plant used as well as time of availability of the plant/part of the plant are given (Table 1). The preparation of traditional recipes include not only fruit or leaves of the plant but buds, flowers, stem and roots also. The availability of raw material for maximum traditional recipes is for one to one and a half months and for few ones it is for 3-4 months. Plant names and families of the ingredients used in various recipes are also given (Table 2). Common terms used for cooking operations and local preparations include dhuni, bhuju, sag, pakode and chutney.

**Dhuni**
It is a cooking practice whereby few drops of mustard oil are pored over burning coal which is immediately put in the preparation and container covered with lid, so that the fumes are absorbed properly. Burnt coal is taken out at the time of serving. Dhuni is a very common practice in traditional cooking.

**Bhuju**
It is a type of preparation in which mainly leaves are used which are chopped before cooking.

**Sag**
It is a type of preparation in which leaves are ground to paste after boiling and then cooked.

**Chutney**
It is a paste type preparation.

**Pakode**
It is a type of snacks. Pakode are served as snacks whereas bhuju, sabji and sag are served as main dish

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Local name of the recipe</th>
<th>Raw material used/Common name/Plant name/Family</th>
<th>Parts used</th>
<th>Time of availability</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Kalan ke pakode</strong></td>
<td>Kesari dal Grass pea Lathyrus sativus Linn. Leguminosae</td>
<td>Whole grain</td>
<td>January- March</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Dhuri</strong></td>
<td>Dhuri/ Fig Ficus carica Linn. Moraceae</td>
<td>Tender leaves</td>
<td>Feb-March</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Karalen</strong></td>
<td>Karalen/ Kachnar Bauhinia variegata Linn. Leguminosae</td>
<td>Buds, flowers</td>
<td>March-April</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Barah ki chatni</strong></td>
<td>Barah/ Rhododendron Rhododendron arboreum Sm. Ericaceae</td>
<td>Flowers</td>
<td>March-May</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Seera</strong></td>
<td>Kanak/ Wheat Triticum aestivum Linn. Poaceae</td>
<td>Whole grain</td>
<td>April-May</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Chhachha</strong></td>
<td>Aam/ Raw mangoes Mangifera indica Linn. Anacardiaceae</td>
<td>Fruit</td>
<td>May-June</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tremble ki sabji</strong></td>
<td>Tremble/ Java fig Ficus benjamina Linn. Moraceae</td>
<td>Fruit</td>
<td>May-June</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Phafru ka sag</strong></td>
<td>Phafru/ Buckwheat Fagopyrum esculentum Moench Polygonaceae</td>
<td>Leaves</td>
<td>May-June</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Lungru</strong></td>
<td>Lungru/ Vegetable fern/ Paco fern Diplazium esculentum (Retz.) Sw Athyriaceae</td>
<td>Stems</td>
<td>May-June</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Lasiade ki sabji</strong></td>
<td>Lasiade/ Sebesten plum Cordia dichotoma Forst. Boraginaceae</td>
<td>Fruits</td>
<td>May-June</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ambua</strong></td>
<td>Amb/ Raw mangoes Mangifera indica Linn. Anacardiaceae</td>
<td>Raw or ripened fruits</td>
<td>May-mid July</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Contd.
Traditional recipes according to seasonal availability of raw material

**Kalan ke pakode**

*Kalan* is a local name for grass pea (*Lathyrus sativus* Linn.). To prepare, break the grains of grass pea coarsely and remove the outer covering by winnowing. Soak overnight and ground well. Add finely chopped onion and paste of garlic, basil leaves, coriander leaves and mint leaves to paste of pulse, along with spices and salt and mix properly. Now, heat oil in an open pan and shallow fry in the form of flat, small, round shape. Serve these snacks with curd or tamarind chutney.

**Bhruni**

*Bhruni* is the dish made from tender leaves of fig (*Ficus carica* Linn.). For its preparation, tender leaves are boiled in an earthen pot for 10-15 minutes till soft and then ground well. Add salt and green chillies according to taste. Take a burning coal and pour few drops of mustard oil over it then put burning coal into ground leaves and cover the pot immediately for some time till all the fumes are absorbed in the preparation. This process is called *dhuni* and it is practiced in many local preparations including pickles.

**Karalen**

Boil the buds of *kachnar/Karalen* (*Bauhinia variegata* Linn.) for 10-15 minutes till they become soft. Heat mustard oil in a pan. Add coriander seeds, cumin seeds, red chilies, asafoetida and turmeric powder, heat till brown and put boiled buds to it. Add salt and spices according to taste. Cook it on slow fire for 5 minutes and serve along with chapati.
Barah ki chutney

Rhododendron (Rhododendron arboreum Sm.) locally known as brah is a flower present in the hilly areas of Himachal Pradesh. It is red to maroon in colour and slightly sour to taste. For making chutney, paste of fresh flowers of barah, onion, mint leaves, basil leaves, green chillies, salt and spices is prepared. It can accompany the main meal which is appetizing in nature.

Seera

Seera is the preparation of wheat (Triticum aestivum Linn.) grains (Fig. 8). Wheat grains are soaked in water for one week, and care is taken to change the water of soaked grains regularly to avoid off-flavour. Soaked grains are ground properly; water is added to it and then strained to leave white colored fluid. The fluid is put in a muslin cloth and tied in hanging position so that water is removed and white semi-solid is left which is made to dry in open under sunlight in small pieces till dries completely and becomes solid. This is known as seera. Store seera in an air tight container for better shelf life. Whenever needed, dissolve required amount of seera and equal amount of sugar in water and prepare batter of flowing consistency. Heat good amount of ghee in a pan, add batter to it and whisk it properly so that it does not stick to the base of the container. It is cooked till turned light brown in colour and leaves sides of the pan. It can be served at breakfast or supper time as sweet dish. It is especially taken during winters or when there is heavy work in the fields. It is not only considered nutritious but a very good source of calories also.

Chhachha

Raw mangoes (Mangifera indica Linn.) are used for making chhachha. Onion and raw mangoes are taken in equal amount, peeled and grind together coarsely. Chillies, salt and sugar are added to taste.

Tremble ki sabji

Raw fruits of Java fig (Ficus benjamina Linn.) are washed, cut into slices and boiled for 10-15 minutes. Heat oil in a pan, add cumin seeds, coriander seeds and red chillies to taste, heat till browning, add turmeric powder, onion and garlic paste to it. Heat for some time, then add boiled slices of Java fig to the pan, cook for 5 minutes and add small amount of mango powder to this preparation (Fig. 3).

Phafru ka sag

Buckwheat (Fagopyrum esculentum Moench.) leaves locally known as Phafru are available in the hilly areas. For making sag, buckwheat leaves are washed, cut into fine shreds and then boiled by adding salt till soft. After boiling make its paste. Mustard oil is heated in a pan; coriander seeds and red chillies are added to the heated oil and then paste of buckwheat leaves is added. Cook for some time and serve hot with rice or chapattis; it tastes a bit sour.

Lungru ki sabji

Vegetable fern/paco fern [Diplazium esculentum (Retz.) Sw.] available in hilly areas of Himachal Pradesh look like stems with curled top and with hairy growth over it (Fig. 4). For its preparation, remove hair of lungru stems with the help of cotton cloth and then cut into small pieces after washing. It is fried in an open pan with slightly more amount of mustard oil. Add a pinch of asaefida also along with other spices. Curd can also be added at the time of frying.

Lasiade ki sabji

Sebesten plum (Cordia dichotoma Forst.) are green in colour and contain gum like sticky material in it. For its preparation, first of all break the fruit in to two pieces and remove its stone. Now, boil the fruit for 5-10 minutes. While boiling, slices of one medium sized raw mango are also added to reduce the sticky effect. Fry the boiled fruits along with spices till soft, add mango powder or paste of tamarind and cook for few minutes more and serve hot.

Ambua

It is a dish prepared from ripened or half ripened mangoes (Mangifera indica Linn.). Mash and peel the mangoes. Heat mustard oil in a pan and add coriander seeds, cumin seeds, red chilies, omum seeds, fenugreek seeds, turmeric powder, sliced onion, ginger paste and garlic paste in a sequence. Now put peeled mangoes, cook for some time till soft, add sugar and salt according to taste. It accompanies the main dish.

Nashpati ki sabji

Peel and cut pears/nashpati (Pyrus communis Bartlett) into small slices. Make the paste of garlic and ginger. Heat mustard oil in a pan. Add coriander seeds, cumin seeds, red chilies, omum seeds, black pepper, turmeric powder, garlic paste and ginger paste and heat till brown. Now add slices of pear fruit and salt to taste. Cook it on slow fire for 20-25 minutes and add a little sugar to it.

Aaddu ki sabji

Put required number of peaches/aaddu (Prunus persica) in boiling water for some time after tying in
muslin cloth. Let it cool, then take out its peels and stones. Heat mustard oil in a pan and add all spices as mentioned in nashpati ki sabji to it and heat till brown. Now add paste of peach and salt to taste. Cook it on slow fire for some time.

**Khatti bhuji**

Khatti bhuji is also known as Garyali bhuji. For preparing Khatti bhuji, take whole plant of colocasia (Colocasia antiquorum Schott.) along with its leaves, stem and bulb and cut it into pieces after washing properly. Heat mustard oil in a pan, put red chilies and coriander seeds salt and then add pieces of colocasia and cook till soft. Now, add dried mango slices and cook on a slow fire for 15-20 minutes. Generally, Khatti bhuji is taken during Dipawali festival. Another method for preparing Khatti bhuji is put pieces of colocasia along with all the spices in an earthen pot (Fig. 1). Add a little of water and keep it on a slow fire. When it is half cooked, pour mustard oil and dried mango slices to it. After cooking completely put off the pot. Give dhuni to the preparation before serving.

**Patrodu**

Patrodu are prepared from healthy leaves of colocasia (Colocasia antiquorum Schott.). Make the paste of black gram flour of pouring consistency. Now take few leaves of bhavri (Ocimum basilus Linn.), 2-3 medium sized onion, one piece of garlic, green chillies and salt according to taste. Ground all the ingredients and add these to the dough of Bengal gram flour. Take one leaf of colocasia keeping its lower side upwards; apply the dough over it properly. Cover the leaf with another leaf in reverse manner and again put paste over it and repeat this process for 4-6 leaves. Fold sides of the leaves inside and then roll like bedding. Apply paste on all sides of flat bread while folding. For making it one piece, wrap it in a leaf of turmeric and tie with thread. Take a big pan and add small amount of water to it. Put small sticks inside the pan to make rack over water. Place the folded leaves on the rack and let it steam cook. It will take about 20-25 minutes to cook. Take out the leaves, let it cool and cut it into small pieces. Before serving, these pieces can be shallow fried or can be deep fried depending upon the requirement, occasion and availability of time. Patrodu are specifically prepared during rainy season.

**Khandole**

Khandole are prepared from healthy stems of colocasia (Colocasia antiquorum Schott.). Soak black gram pulse overnight to remove covering of the grains, ground to make fine paste and add salt and spices to it. Take stems of colocasia and cover them with paste one by one. Put it in sun to half dry. Now, cut the stems along with paste into small pieces carefully and again put the pieces called khandole in sun to dry completely and store in an air tight container (Fig. 7). For preparing the dish, heat oil in a pan and add coriander seeds, cumin seeds, chilies in the oil, add khandole along with some water to it. Potatoes may also be added for variation and serve with chapatis.

**Bhavri ka namak**

It is a type of fruit salt used along with fruits or salad. Take few leaves of basil, locally known as bhavri (Ocimum basilus Linn.), mustard leaves and green chillies. Mint leaves (Mentha arvensis) may also be added to it and grind well. Add good amount of salt to this paste and mix well. The shelf life of this preparation is approximately one week. To increase its shelf life, mixture of salt and paste of Bhavri is dried by keeping it on fire for some time and allowing it cool before storing (Fig. 2).

**Kulfa ka sag**

Pigweed plant locally called, kulfa (Portulaca oleracea Linn.) is wildly grown near water channels. It is bit spongy and contains gum like substance. Pigweed leaves are washed, cut into fine shreds, boiled by adding salt till soft and ground into paste (Fig. 5). Mustard oil is heated in a pan; coriander seeds and red chilies are added to the heated oil and then add paste of pigweed leaves, cook for some time and serve hot. Kulfa ka sag tastes bit sour and is served with rice or chapati.

**Chhunali ki bhuji**

Watercress (Nasturtium officinale W.T. Aiton) is also found near water channels. It is harvested along with roots. Sort water cress thoroughly, wash and then cut into fine shreds (Fig. 6). Heat oil in a pan; add coriander seeds and red chilies heat till brown. Add a pinch of asafetida and salt to taste. Put shreds of the leaves and cook on slow fire till it is soft. It is also taken with chapati. Rice water is added to bhuji as gravy if it is to be consumed with rice.

**Nutritive value of recipes**

The nutritive value of selected plants/parts of plants per 100 gm of fresh material used in various traditional recipes has been discussed. It was
observed from the table that in general Java fig and leaves of plants, viz. colocasia, fig, basil, pigweed, buckwheat and watercress used for preparing various traditional recipes are very good source of calcium, phosphorous and iron (Table 3). Further, buckwheat contains good amount (10.3%) of proteins also. Grass
Pea is an excellent source of protein (28.2%), minerals (2.3%), iron (6.3mg) and phosphorus (317mg.). As it is associated with the disease lathyrus, so it must be processed properly to reduce the antioxidant factors present in it. Seera, which is prepared from whole wheat is considered to be very nutritious. Hundred gram of fresh wheat contains 11.8%, 1.5%, 71.2% and 306mg of proteins, minerals, carbohydrates and phosphorous, respectively.

Conclusion
The food habits of the people have changed these days but those who have their roots in the villages, still relish the traditional recipes prepared from seasonal plant materials. These recipes are losing its sheen in the fast food culture. So there is a need to conserve our traditional food habits and recipes. The plant material used for preparing these recipes is seasonal and completely organic. It is both nutritious and safe to eat thus healthy. The tapping of traditional knowledge in cooking and the preparation of food in combination with modern techniques may also very well be utilized to prevent the junk food habits. It is hoped that the information will be of use to plan future research in this direction.

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