

Traditional Foods – A value addition at Tourism destinations

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ABSTRACT

Combination of food and tourism is a powerful appeal in recent times. The concept is taking a shape and marking its place in the tourism industry. Traditional foods have played a major role in structuring the various cultures for over 2 millennia; it includes the foods that have been indigenously produced and endogenously consumed. Traditional food practices are the result of the geography and environment of the place, suiting their needs accordingly thus awarding them long life and stronger minds. Due to change in the nature of “Tourist” and the way he is exploring the place, hunt for traditional authentic food locations started gaining momentum in recent past. It is not surprising to say that such foods are attracting tourists from different parts of globe to taste such delicacies. Offering local traditional foods and merchandising them to national and international tourists adds a new facet to the image of a tourism destination. It can boost traditional cooking practices thus preserving them and create economic benefit to local community.

This study carries pertinence on how a traditional food be added as an element to tour package. The sole purpose of this study is to identify some traditional food locations that are gaining importance in India and use their model to suggest a way to promote unique traditional foods that are lesser known at select tourism destinations of Tamil Nadu.

Keywords: *Traditional Foods, Food Tourism, Culinary Tourism, Local community, Food locations, Tourist, Tamil Nadu.*

INTRODUCTION

Food serves as a cultural exchange mechanism, allowing tourists to delve deeper into local customs and better understand the unique characteristics of a particular culture. Food is a basic human need. In a physiological sense, food is a basic requirement for human survival. Food has also been identified as a cultural attraction for some tourists. Culture is multifaceted and food is one of its most important parts. More importantly, food is tied to the unique customs of a region, buying and consuming local food can mean sharing local culture. Food tourism plays an important role in the tourism industry as it is one of the main factors when choosing a travel destination. Although food is not the main attraction, food is an important element for visitors who have other main reasons for visiting a destination. Access to quality locally produced food is becoming more and more expectation of travellers. Going out to eat is the most common object for all tourists and, above all, they want to explore the local and traditional cuisine.

Food, accommodation, and transportation are often seen as complementary experiences on a trip. However, the whole travel experience can be "ruined" due to dissatisfaction with the food available. Taking this into account, food tourism is considered a subspecies of cultural tourism, since cuisine is a manifestation of culture (International Culinary Tourism Association, 2006) that combines community food or culture with events for tourists in the form of festivals, rituals, narratives, or other aspects of cultural expression (Horng & Tsai, 2010). In particular, it contributes to brand identity, improves destination attraction and also keeps money in the

region by avoiding costly foreign food imports (Sims, 2009). Local food and drink are considered important for those who want to experience local culture and tradition. Food tourism could be one of the main popularizing factors of an unknown destination that suddenly becomes very popular for its food. Traditional foods have been equipped for many years and the preparation varies across the country. Traditional knowledge of food processing, preservation techniques and therapeutic effects has been established in India for many generations.

CURRENT SCENARIO

Due to increasing competition in tourism, many countries are now trying to develop new resources to attract a greater number of inbound and domestic tourists to local destinations (Sanchez-Canizares & Lopez-Guzman, 2012). Many tourists also seek a change from everyday life when they travel, which can also include a taste of exotic dishes. Traditional Food, like fashion and design, is an expression of art, and it is through culinary products and dining experiences that consumer identities are enhanced and expressed (Gyimothy & Mykletun, 2009). According to the International Culinary Tourism Association, culinary tourism is growing on a large scale every year. With a surge in awareness of growing food channels, national and local cuisine tourism shows, food blogs, a series of food documentaries and culinary travel shows, an increase in the number of consumers travelling to various destinations just to relish food experience. Indian cuisine is now an amalgamation of a wide variety

of flavours and cuisines, making it one of the most diverse cuisines in the world. Some of the fruits, vegetables and spices that are the mainstays of Indian cuisine come from elsewhere.

The basic composition of a culinary tourism includes five kinds of activities, including eating at restaurants known for their local cuisine, buying local food products, tasting local drinks, eating at quality restaurants, and eating at chains of restaurants and franchises. Previous researches on food tourism have shown that local food products can contribute to the sustainability of tourism in an area. From a tourism point of view, Manisha Bhasin, Senior Executive Chef of the hotel chain ITC Maurya, is relevant: she claims that “foreign tourists have a limited idea of Indian cuisine. Unlike other countries, the specifications of Indian cuisine change every 100 KM’s and with every region, community and ethnic household kitchen” (India Today, 2012, Para 7).

Understanding consumer behaviour is the first step in establishing appropriate marketing strategies, including destination positioning. In modern days, people are influenced with social media, the tourist or travellers are more available about the local cuisine, famous regional & traditional foods. By adding the particular region’s traditional food in the tour package will act as an additional component which can attract many tourists for its uniqueness. The stakeholders of the industry should join together in conserving and marketing the regional traditional foods which helps the culture and local community to sustain.

SIGNIFICANCE OF TRADITIONAL FOODS AT TOURISM DESTINATIONS

Food tourism does not mean that the tourist often only eats gourmet meals, now-a-days tourists are looking for authentic or new food experiences, and some may enjoy exploring new restaurants while others prefer street food and traditional foods. Food tourism is not about the type of food a tourist eats, but the fact that when people go to a new place, they try to find new food experiences of a region. Indian cuisine varies from place to place. Traditionally, certain states in India have their own unique dishes which are usually prepared at religious and social gatherings. Many similarities between the culinary areas of India are highlighted through an exquisite use of spices and flavours. This range from cumin, mustard, cloves, ginger to garlic, fennel seeds, chillies, turmeric, saffron, etc. Different varieties of rice are grown and consumed in India, from long grain and medium grain to glutinous rice.

Traditional foods play an important role in local identity, positioning tourism destination, the transmission of cultural heritage to future generations and how this heritage interacts with the rest of the world. In many countries, the promotion and protection of traditional foods is controlled by quality, agricultural and special policies. The traditional foods can act the bridge in connecting the food lovers, especially the people who are willing to explore and experience the authentic and traditional foods of a particular place. It can help tourism sector to boost and position its destination. Here are some of the traditional foods from Indian Cuisine,

- 1) Lau Palla (Assam), also called as pitha, an authentic Assamese snack prepared during the Magh Bihu season. It is a popular pitha made with bottle gourd, rice flour, and jaggery.
- 2) Paani ki Roti (Uttar Pradesh & Haryana) is an age-old recipe that involves shaping the dough like a roti with wet hands. To cook this roti, a layer of water is applied to the tawa and then grilled, resulting in a crispy roti.
- 3) Gahat ki Dal (Bihar) is a lesser-known bean. It is usually eaten in the form of sprouts. It also has many health benefits. Therefore, dal prepared with Gahat should be spicy, with simple basic flavours of spices and herbs. Gahat Dal (Horse Gram) may help in weight loss.
- 4) Phulkari Pulao is a lost recipe from Punjab is prepared with several rice types with paneer, dried fruits, saffron, khaskhas and a mixture of whole and dried spices. Phulkari pulao began to rise to prominence in the 19th century when biryani became common in Indian cuisine. It lost significance because the biryani gained over the dish.
- 5) Tavsali Goan – Cucumber Cake is a traditional recipe from the Goan cuisine and it is basically a cucumber cake. The best part is that the cake is steamed instead of baked. This dish was traditionally cooked with yellow cucumbers, but regular or long dark green cucumbers can also be used to make. This dish is not only sweet, but also extremely healthy in nature.
- 6) Tootak (Hyderabad, Telangana) is a popular appetizer in Hyderabadi cuisine and is made mostly of semolina and condensed milk which form the appetizer. It was a dish that

belonged to the Deccan family of recipes. The Nizam of Hyderabad used to offer this dish to their guests as a welcome gift.

Some traditional foods in Tamil Nadu

ArsiParupuSadam



Figure 1 – ArsiParupuSadam

<https://gospicy.net/arsi-paruppu-sadam-kongunadu-special/>

ArsiParuppuSadam (Figure 1) is one of the most popular rice varieties in parts of the Kongunadu region of Tamil Nadu. It's a comfort food made from rice and spices softened with dal. It is one

of the unique and famous dishes of this region.

Kachayam



Figure 2 - Kachayam

<https://www.kannammacooks.com/pazha-kachayam-banana-kajjaya/>

Kachayam is a lovely and traditional sweet dish very popular in Tamilnadu region. Kachayam (Figure 2) are basically sweet dumplings unique to the Kongunadu region. This sweet dish is

prepared with flour, sugar or jaggery, coconut and they even add banana sometime. People visit Kongunadu intends to taste this delicious dish.

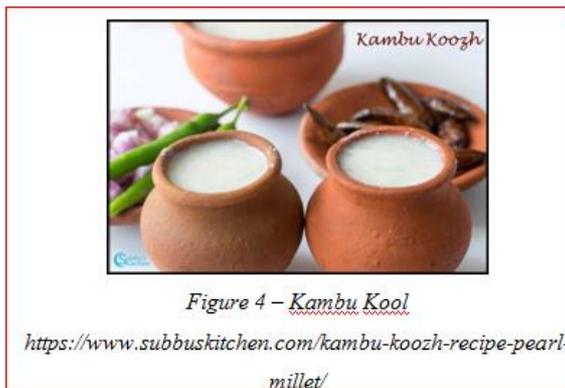
Ragi Kali



Ragi Kali (Figure 3) is a simple yet nutritious healthy soft balls made from two basic ingredients: finger millet flour and water. It is rich in calcium and is widely consumed in all parts of Tamil

Nadu and also in parts of Karnataka.

Kambu Kool



Kambukool (Pearl Millet Porridge) is a refreshing and healthy drink for a hot summer. Pearl millet is one of the healthiest types of millet. It has a balanced

diet of protein, fibre and starches which makes this dish wholesome and healthy. Someone can easily identify this dish (Figure 4) in roadside carts during summer.

Paruthi Paal



Figure 5

<https://krishijagran.com/health-lifestyle/paruthi-paal-cottonseed-milk-the-nutritious-health-drink-of-tamil-nadu-india/>

Paruthi Paal (Figure 5) is one of the healthiest drinks which used to treat cold and cough in Tamil Nadu. It is a mixture of ingredients like cottonseed milk,

ginger, cardamom and almonds.

Sarkarai Pongal



Figure - 6

[https://www.archanaskitchen.com/barnyard-millet-sweet-pongai-recipe-kuthiraivali-sakkarai-pongai](https://www.archanaskitchen.com/barnyard-millet-sweet-pongal-recipe-kuthiraivali-sakkarai-pongai)

This sweet and buttery dish is made with freshly harvested rice, jaggery, and ghee with coconut, sesame seeds, raisins, milk, and cashews. Sarkarai Pongal (Figure 6) is traditionally prepared as an offering to

the Sun god during Pongal festival, a three-day harvest festival held in mid-January all over the state of Tamil Nadu.

Traditional foods are nutritious in nature. Each state and region of India has its own unique traditional foods which give each region its uniqueness and potential to attract many tourists.

For example, rural areas can be promoted through food and drink themed imagery. In the tourism industry, marketers are always looking for niche products to meet their own interests and satisfy the needs and wants of tourists. Traditional foods can bridge the gap and latent as the niche product of the tourism industry.

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS: The purpose of the study is to identify some traditional food locations and use their model to suggest a way to promote unique traditional foods that are lesser known at select tourism destinations of Tamil Nadu. The research is done with the secondary data. The more I studied recent food tourism data and practices, the more I realized that food tourism management had to be distinguished from food tourism development and promotion. Trying to manage food tourism as an item can be fuzzy and confusing. The management of food tourism consists in understanding the heritage and the resources available. In addition, the management of food tourism requires a close relationship with local and regional producers both at the agricultural and commercial level. Also, realized that food tourism is part of the identity and history of a community, so it is also about managing local people and preserving the identity of the community.

As described by Rand and Heath (2006), the management and development of food tourism is not about creating or changing the food offer according to the preferences of tourists, but about preserving the traditional, agricultural, natural and historical resources of the region.

Tamil Nadu is rich and famous for its cuisine, most districts have their own signature dish, featuring unique dishes from all corners of the state. Below (Table 1) are some of the famous traditional foods, its destination and nearby tourist places which can be linked with tour package and can act as a value addition point at tourism destination.

Table 1: Traditional Food Destinations and its Foods in Tamil Nadu

<i>Food Destinations</i>	<i>Famous Traditional Foods</i>	<i>Nearby Tourist Places</i>
Tirunelveli	Halwa, Nellai Sodhi, NellaiSamabar	Nellaiyappar Temple, Agasthiyar Falls, Papanasam Dam, Kalakkadu Sanctuary
Kancheepuram	Kancheepuram Idly	Kailasanatha Temple, Kamakshi Amman Temple, Ekambareshwarar Temple
Kanyakumari	Nanjilnadu Fish Curry	Vivekananda Rock Memorial, Thiruvalluvar Statue, Suchindram Temple
Madurai	Jigarthanda, Kari Dosai, Paruthi Paal, Mallipu Idly, Irameen Kuzhambu	Meenakshi Amman Temple, Azhagar Kovil, ThirumalaiNayyakar Palace
Kumbakkonam	Degree Filter Coffee,	Airavatesvara Temple,

	Kadapa	Patteswaram Temple, Sarangapani Temple
Karaikudi	Chettinadu Cuisine (Chettinadu Chicken, Urlai Roast, PalkattiChettinadu	KundrakkdiMurugan Temple, Chettiyar Mansion, Karpagavinayagar Temple
Tenkasi	Senkotai Border Parotta	Kasi Viswanathar Temple, Courtallam Falls, Old Coutrallam Waterfalls
Erode	Kongu Nadu Cuisine (Pallipalayam Chicken, Opputu, KelvaraguPuttumavu, Ragi Kali)	ChennimalaiMurugan Temple, Isha Yoga, Ooty
Dindigul	ThalapakattiBriyani	Sirumalai Reserved Forest, Kodaikanal, Silver Cascade Falls
Ooty	Varkey, Chocolate	Avalanche Lake, Deer Park, Toy Train, Doddabetta Peak
Thoothukudi	Macroon	Tuticorin Port, Beach, Kattabomman Memorial Fort, Kalakkadu Wildlife Sanctuary

Aspects of food tourism can involve different needs and motivations. In order to attract traditional lovers and manage food tourism as a strategy, it is crucial that destination planners and stakeholders understand these aspects and dimensions. Tourists need to be updated and presented with opportunities for relevant tourism experiences in destinations, and to do this, tourism industry leaders need to understand how to engage tourists.

CONCLUSION: This paper has attempted to examine the importance of food and drink in promoting cultural heritage, positioning a destination and indeed its influence to the tourism industry as a whole with the help of available secondary data. Cultural diversity should be seen as strength in the promoting of food tourism in Tamil Nadu. In addition to an extensive food source, such as the creation of a common database of food sources related to an area, it is also important to involve stakeholders and the community in the processes of establishing food tourism package as a local or regional destination marker.

The growth of food tourism is directly linked to the growth of local job creation in the region and in the food sector. All supporting business of food industry is indirectly depending on the growth of food tourism for their future prospect. Likewise, the growth of food tourism is directly dependent on the growth of the regional tourism industry. Local food production is a combination of the unique properties of the natural environment and knowledge of the local community and the historical

and cultural resources generated by historical and cultural events that make up the unique character of the place.

The different traditional foods of Tamil Nadu have a potential pull factor for the tourist from all over the country and globe. The stakeholders of the tourism industry should come with the strategic plans and ideas to include the traditional foods of a region in the tour package. So that the people who selects the tour package can experience the authentic traditional foods, which have a value addition to that tourist destination.

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