



Our Food, Our Heritage, Our Future: Traditional African Cooking

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Abstract

The best culinary secrets are with individuals within our African villages who still retain the age-old wisdom on the utilization of Traditional African Foods (TAFs). To tap from this wealth of wisdom and enjoy the same benefits it is critical to retrace our roots, to explore what exactly our forefathers ate, that kept them healthy, enabled them to live long and endure even the lean seasons. There is little published information on TAFs and indigenous knowledge systems on their production, processing and even preservation. There is a need to learn the primary production systems, fruit and vegetable processing methods, milk processing and other typologies of indigenous foods. With the rising incidence of Non-Communicable Diseases, including obesity in Sub Saharan Africa, with poor dietary patterns being a major cause there is a need to relook at TAFs as a healthy alternative considering that traditional cereals, such as sorghum, pearl millet and finger millet are relatively low in their GI values. The consumption of these cereals together with relishes such as goat meat (2.3 grams/100gram of meat) offers a healthy option. Traditional vegetables such as *Cleome gynandra*, *Cucurbita maxima*, *Phaseolus vulgaris* leaves, to mention a few, offer a diverse vegetable option. Milk products like ihiqa (fermented milk) act as functional foods boosting immunity by acting as probiotics, boosting the GALT system (Gut Associated Lymphoid Tissue). There are some functional food products like Umncantsha (underground fermented sorghum) which have completely disappeared from the current indigenous food trends. Insects also offer valuable essential oils with insects such as Mopane worms (*Gonambrasia belina*) and locusts (*Locust sp.*) being harvested for their high protein content. Africa's wild-fruit wealth is essentially unknown to modern culinary science. Wild fruits are Africa's most nutritionally important resource, playing a critical role in the early growth stages. Some fruits (n=39) in the Matabeleland region of Zimbabwe have shown to be useful towards food security also offering numerous micronutrients. A wide range of underground tubers can also be explored to complement the dynamic and diverse TAF system. TAFs definitely promote biodiversity and speciation offering a new dimension to modern food trends.

Biography: Makhosi Mahlangu

Makhosi Mahlangu is the future of Traditional African Foods (TAFs). He has a strong background in food processing, novel food designs, modern culinary trends, sustainable food trends and science acumen in TAFs. He comes from a village called Sivalo in Nkayi District (Zimbabwe), which is one of the most food insecure regions in the world. Makhosi has intrinsic knowledge of Italian food systems. He has worked in

numerous countries in animal husbandry and food processing, from Botswana to South Africa to Zimbabwe to Zambia to Spain to Italy. He is involved in numerous projects such being part of the organizing team for the Amagugu Food Expo in Zimbabwe and the Traditional African Food and Agriculture Expo in Kinshasa, DRC. He is currently lecturing Food Science courses at Lupane State University in Lupane, Zimbabwe with a strong emphasis on Traditional African Foods. He is the founder of the African Food Revolution.