



ISSN: 0975-766X
CODEN: IJPTFI
Research Article

Available Online through
www.ijptonline.com

FOOD CULTURE IN TAMIL NADU- A STUDY

Akmal. S, Suneetha.V

School of Bio-Science and Technology and School of Chemical Engineering, VIT University,
Vellore, Tamil Nadu, India-632014.

Email: vsuneetha@vit.ac.in

Received on: 15.10.2016

Accepted on: 12.11.2016

Abstract

This study refers to practices, attitudes, and beliefs as well as the networks that encompasses the concepts of food ways, cuisine, and food system. It gives detailed study about the fundamentals about food, historical and current conditions shaping that a class's relationship to food, and the ways in which the group of people use food to express identity, community, values, status, power, artistry and creativity. It also includes a groups' definitions of what can be the possible dishes in a particular cuisine, what is delicious, healthy, and socially appropriate for specific subgroups or individuals and when, how, why, and with whom those dishes can be consumed. This study also depicts the different styles of meals served at various festivals or occasions. Rice, the staple food of Tamil Nadu, is used as the best example for describing the nutritional values and few other examples describing the daily source of immunity. A few dishes that have taken birth in Tamil Nadu that is later enhanced and modified in other states have also put forward in this study.

Keywords: Food culture, Tamil Cuisine, Culinary Aspects, Tradition.

Introduction

The food culture and traditions of Tamil Nadu has been shaped by its long history, unique Geography, and greatly influenced by the different rulers, travelers and neighbors [1,2 ,6]. Food is an important part of Tamil culture, playing a role in everyday life as well as in festivals. In many families, everyday meals are sit-down affairs consisting of two to three main course dishes, carbohydrate staples such as Rice, varied accompaniments such as chutneys and pickles, as well as desserts [3,5,7].

Tamil cuisine is generally famous for its different species and also for spicy foods. Tamil Nadu cuisine is of wide variety of tasty dishes and offers wide range of both vegetarian and non-vegetarian dishes. Tamil cuisine has well known

curries for instance Sambar, Rasam or perhaps kuzhambu. Food is not just important for eating, but it is also a way of socializing, getting together with family, relatives and friends.

Materials and methods

Tamilnadu Cuisine

Tamil cuisine is generally famous for its different dishes and also for spices. Tamil Nadu cuisine is of wide range of mouthwatering dishes and offers good choices for both vegetarian and non-vegetarian varieties [4,7 ,8]. This cuisine is famous for curries like Sambar, rasam or perhaps kuzhambu (the tamarind curry which should become acquired with sizzling warm rice). You can find accompaniments which are by using it for instance kootu (avocado dependent dish), poriyal (assortment of vegetables) and also apalam (crispy wafers). The general opinion for breakfast is dosa (the crispy crepe) or idlis (steamed hemp scallops), on a daily basis, which is often consumed with sambar or in combination with a selection of chutneys (pickles). The demand for eating in places, India, that serve these dishes is higher than normal. Under the Tamil cuisine comes the Chettinad food, which can be pointed out simply by its spices and also beef. The food dishes in Tamil Nadu is actually hot and spicy, that is carefully prepared along with elegant use of acrylics, peas and also tamarind. The original approach to serve South Indian food is on a banana leaf with specific culinary aspects [5,7,8]. Tamil Nadu provides its visitors with a variety of delicacies, both vegetarian as well as non-veg, though most food cultivated in Tamil Nadu are of grain, rice, lentils and vegetables. Tamil Nadu does not use fried foods, but rather uses the techniques of roasting and baking. One of the most common ingredient in sambar is curried vegetable presented as soup. Fine desserts also are prepared, like mysorepak (chick pea dish) and creamy payasam (milky rice dish). However, each place has its own unique way of presenting the Tamil culture

Culinary Aspects

Rice has been the staple diet of the Tamilian. Thanjavur is regarded as the ‘granary of the south’ usually parboiled rice is consumed due to its nutritive value. Rice predominates in all dishes of the Tamilian and preparations of rice for all meal of the day. Lentils too are consumed extensively as accompaniment to the rice preparation. Being on the seacoast – seafood and coconut is also available in plenty[9,10,11]. While tamarind is used for adding tang, peppercorn, and chili, both red and green are used to make the food hot. To neutralize the effect of the chili and soothe the stomach, curd is used in a variety of dishes. Other spices like mustard, cumin, garlic, etc. are used for tempering and seasoning. The

Tamils believes that the ideal food should cater to the six variety of tastes- Bitterness, acidity, sweetness, saltiness, sourness and astringent taste. Meals served on banana leaves, consisted of rice, with flavorings or plain topped ghee. Sambar, meat curries, vegetables are added separately for the rice. Side dishes include Poriyaals, (seasoned vegetables) Varayil (fried crisp), Pachidi (salad form or raita) along with Appalam and Vathals- followed by Payasam. The second course is rice and rasam (dal water). The third course is curd rice with pickles. Curd is supposed to be cooling for the body system. Rasam is religiously made in 'Iyya Chombu' or lead vessel to right flavors. Breakfast and afternoon snacks called 'Tiffin' include Idli, Dosai, Vada, Pongal, Upma, etc. Dosai is made in different kinds with variations and is accompanied by coconut chutney, sambar and Muluga podi. Tamil Nadu is renowned for its filter coffee made in a special way with coffee decoction.

Eating and Serving Styles

Eating with your hands is considered important in Indian etiquette because a person eating with his hands knows the exact temperature of food before the morsel hits his mouth thus preventing blisters in mouth due to consumption of hot food [12,13]. A universal aspect of presentation is to sit down on a mat or low stool with the thali, a large plate with samplings of different vegetable dishes accompanied by breads such as roti, chapathi, naan, puri and rice. In Tamil Nadu, a cleaned banana leaf is often used as a hygienic and visually interesting alternative to plates. Traces of Magnesium and Zinc present on the plantain leaf is said to have health benefits too. In addition the plantain leaves are completely biodegradable.

Results and Discussion:

Food customs followed by Hindus:

Table.1: Religious Customs and Effects On Food:

During Pongal	During Diwali	During Aadi	During Navarathri	During marriage occasions
Newly harvested rice and dal are cooked together in a mud pot and worshipped.	Several sweets and gastronomical delights are prepared and consumed	Total abstinence from meats	The elders fast during Amavasya and Ekadasi	Food prepared and served during this occasion are idli, dosa, pongal with sambar and varieties of chutney, vada, idiappam, and any 2 kinds of sweets generally as breakfast.

Food Customs Followed By Muslims:

Muslims celebrate 2 major festivals in a grand fashion- Ramzan and Bakarid.

During the month of Ramdhan (in Arabic calendar), the Muslims have a custom of fasting for 30 days. In the process of fasting, they consume food only twice a day- before sunrise and after sunset, in between which there is absolute no consumption of any food item or water. The food taken before sunrise must be filling and heavy, which may include staple dishes like rice, meats and other foods rich in carbohydrates and proteins. This is done to prevent loss of energy when no other food is consumed throughout the day. The food consumed after sunset, starts with water to prevent complete dehydration and provides a protective coating in the stomach. Water is followed by dates, sweets, crispy or spicy dish and porridge (made of rice, milk, coconut milk, cardamom, cinnamon). During the festival of Ramzan, the most famous and delicious dish called biryani is prepared and consumed by all.

Famous Products from Tamilnadu:**Table.2 Famous and Common Products Available In Tamil Nadu.**

Dish	Description
Meen Poondu Kuzhambu	It is spicy red colored garlic flavored fish gravy. It is cooked in a mud pot over a charcoal fire.
Nadaan Paal Payasam	This is made of Bengal gram, moong dal, sago and broken rice sweetened with jaggery and cooked in coconut milk.
Dosas	Pancakes made with rice and lentil may be eaten with chutney or stuffed with spicy potatoes.
Idly	This is a steamed rice pancake eaten with chutney enjoyed all over south India.
Idiappam	These are called string hoppers. They are made of rice flour and are steamed.
Kazhani kootu	Vegetables with raw mango cooked in tamarind water and finished with coconut milk.
Sambar sadham	Boiled rice tempered with crushed jeera, peppercorn,

	slit green chilies, cashew nut and curry leaves.
Rasam	Tempered dal water that can also be flavored with other ingredients.
Morkholombu	Buttermilk and vegetable curry.
Avial	Mixed vegetables in coconut gravy.
karuvattu kuzhambu	Salted, dried fish gravy.
Puttu	This literally translates into jacketed cylinders made from rice, and is served steaming hot with a gravy of chickpeas. The garnish to the sides is generally made up of coconut.
Appam	Composed predominantly of coconut milk and batter of rice. If the concentration of the base ingredients is increased, the same delicacy is referred to as Pallapam. Many variants of appam are also served like honey and egg appam etc.
Sundal	Made into a stirred fried form, it is composed of whole grain channa or chickpeas, with rice and curry added to it while stirring.
Chicken Chettinad	Bite into the spicy taste of chicken chettinad, made from poppy seeds, roasted chilies, cloves, cardamom, fennel seeds and many other authentic spices, made into a curry to amalgamate with the chicken.
Puliyogare Rice	'Puliyogare' is 'Tamarind' in Tamil and the dish is made by mixing boiled rice with a paste made from the same. This is usually served with the traditional chutney made from coconut.
Bisi Belle Bhath	Rice made delicacy, the traditional form of Bhath is made by mixing rice with nutmeg, toor dal and a host of other spices. An interesting add-on is either potato chips or pappadums.
Uttapam	Uttapam, made from rice flour as the base, and fried with vegetables and spices added to its top. It is made from eggs and meat, and has a unique

Kothu Parotta	traditional sauce called Salna added to it, to give it the spicy tinge. Leave the comforts of plush restaurants, and head to the streets for the best taste.
Murukku	It is made from a combination of rice and urad dal flour.
Payasam	It is a sweet in rice delicacies, with broken wheat and tapioca added to it, cooked with sugar to give you Payasam.
Kozhukkatta	A traditional dumpling made from rice flour that is sweetened using jiggery.

Tamil Nadu Food Nutrition

Most Tamil Nadu food nutrition depends on how it was cooked and the ingredients put into the dish. Most Indian food has all the food groups, and has lot of nutritional value to it. The basic Indian dish is frequently baked or roasted. The odd deep fried food is also available. On a nutritional level, Indian food is relatively healthy.

Table.3. Some age old practices good for health.

Food	Nutritional Value
Fermented foods	Idli - prepared by steaming a fermented black and batter. It is a major source of protein, calories and vitamins, especially B-complex vitamins, compared to the raw unfermented ingredients. It can be used as a dietary supplement in developing countries to treat people suffering from protein calorie malnutrition and kwashiorkor.
Ghee –Clarified Butter	Other examples: Curd, lassi, buttermilk, Dosa, dhokla, Jalebis, Kanji, appams.
Jeera Water	It is an integral practice of ayurvedic herbal formulation. Being oil it can bond with lipid-soluble nutrients and herbs to penetrate the lipid-based cell membranes of the body. It also balances excess stomach acid, and helps maintain/repair the mucus lining of the stomach.
Ragi	It is very good for flatulence, dyspepsia, diarrhea and cold.
	It contains the amino acid Methionine. Recommended by pediatricians for infants of six months and over because of its
Cane Sugar or Jaggery	high nutritional content, especially calcium.

	It is wholesome sugar and, unlike refined sugar, retains more mineral salts. No chemical agents involved. It is beneficial in treating throat and lung infections.
Coconut	It is rich in short and medium chain fatty acids. Lauric acid the major component of coconut has been recognized for its
Medicinal rasam	antibacterial, antiviral and antiprotozoal functions. In addition to the nutrient and fiber content in coconut the medium chain fatty acids (MCFA) help lower the risk of both atherosclerosis and heart disease.
White Rice	It loosens crammed stomachs and ease breathing for those with a bad cold.
Curries	A good source of energy and fiber, 200 grams of white rice would approx. contain 420 calories.
Curd	It is used to blend or roast whole spices for better flavor without using unhealthy ingredients. Replace the cream with yogurt, or natural coconut milk.
Red chilies	Curd is basically a milk product made by fermentation of milk with certain bacteria. Yogurt is good for the digestive system as the bacteria present in yogurt improve digestion. 250 grams of curd made from toned milk would approx. serve 150 Calories. It is a good source of calcium, carbohydrates and proteins to the body.
Lentils	100 grams of chili red peppers have hardly 40 Kcal. But, chili peppers contain the chemical compound capsaicin, which has
Turmeric	anti-bacterial, anti-carcinogenic, analgesic and anti-diabetic properties. They are also rich in a number of Vitamins A, B, C and many phytonutrients too. It provides about 30% of their calories(240 Calories in 230 grams) from protein like essential amino acids isoleucine and lysine. They also contain dietary fiber, folate, vitamin B1, and minerals such as iron. Thus, it helps in many major functions of the body like regulating our cholesterol and sugar levels. Traditionally, it has been considered great medicine for coughs,colds, stomach disorders, open wounds and as a beauty

	agent	since	time	immemorial.
	It has great anti septic properties and used without fail in almost all dishes except sweets.			

Conclusion

The detailed study about the fundamentals about food, food customs ,eating and serving styles, culinary aspects, historical and current conditions shaping that a class's relationship to food, and the ways in which the group of people use food to express identity, community, values, status, power, artistry and creativity were discussed.

Acknowledgement

The authors want to express their gratitude to, **Dr G. Viswanathan**, Founder and Chancellor VIT University for his constant support and encouragement, Sri Sankar Viswanathan, **Dr. Sekar Viswanathan** and Sri G.V Selvam, **Vice presidents**, VIT university for their constant motivation and **Mr.Raj Sekar V** (Temple university, **Singapore**) **Senior Vice president Citi Group Florida USA** for providing constant help throughout this research.

References

1. Alagarsamy, K. & Nallusamy, S. *Bioresource Technology*, 2010; 101(3), 5552–5556.
2. Anastassiadis, S. & Rehm, H. *Electronic Journal of Biotechnology*, 2006;9(2), 26-39.
3. Bauman, *Thinking sociologically*Blackwell, Oxford 1990;21-43
4. Becker, G. Durlauf SN, Blume LE (eds). *J Polit Econ*,1974; 82 (6),. 1063-1093.
5. Becker, G. *Economica*, 1981;48 (189), 1-15.
6. Bénabou, R., Tirole, J.2006 *American Economic Review*, 96 (5), 1652
7. Bennett, T., Savage, M., Silva, E., Warde, A., Gayo-Cal, M., Wright, D *Culture, class, distinction*. 2009; 71-79
8. W Hennan. *Groundwater Quality and Groundwater Hydrology*, McGrawHill, New York, 1978: 4245-4246.
9. Herman Bower. *Groundwater Hydrology*, McGrawHill, Hogkusha Ltd. Tokoyo, 1978;339-375.
10. PG Whitehead, S Sarkar , L Jin, MN Futter, J Caesar, E Barbour , D Butterfield, R Sinha, R Nicholls, C Hutton, HD Leckie, *Environ Sci: Pro and Impacts*. 2015; 17 (6): 1082-1097.
11. O. Ogbonna, W.L Jimoh, E. F Awagu and E.I Bamishaiye, *Advan in Appl Sci Res*. 2011; 2 (2): 62-68.
12. Sankpal, N. V., Joshi, A. P., Kulkarni, B. D. *Journal of Microbiology and Biotechnology*, 2002;10(3), 51-55.