

Oral presentation

Preserving foodways, preserving culture: A case study of mango achar

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Introduction. Food is medicine. Food is culture. When external forces begin to undermine traditional cultures, the wisdom about human-environment relationships begins to lose its relevance. This particular process has been called the “extinction of experience.” When a particular culture imposes itself on another culture, for example, often local ecological knowledge is at an especially high risk.

Objectives. In South Asian foodway traditions, there is a long history of preserved foods. In particular, Pakistan and India share a tradition of pickled and preserved foods that persists today. Highlighting the therapeutic value of these daily-consumed pickles can prevent their disappearance from our plates and our culinary traditions. One such food that I have recreated is my maternal grandmother’s mango “achar” (pickle) recipe.

Methods. Based on unstructured interviews with three of my mother’s sisters in Lahore and Islamabad, Pakistan, I carried out this field research on two occasions: March 2005 and March 2006.

Results. A review of the medical literature of the ingredients used in mango achar reveals a large number of in vitro, in vivo, and human studies demonstrating numerous therapeutic effects of the mango pickle ingredients.

Conclusion. These preserved medicinal concoctions are a form of culinary medicine, consumed daily in small amounts along with meals to enhance taste, flavor, digestion, and health.

Keywords: Mango pickle, culinary medicine

Selected References

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