

Assessing Seasonal and Natural Dietary Habits: An Empirical Study on Santhal Tribe in West Bengal

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Abstract:

Food is always considered as the foundation of any civilisation, culture and substance for nutritional support for livelihood. The food habits depend on the availability of food found in the surroundings. Food preparation along with nutrition considered as the most important influencer of human life. During ritual and festivals, they prepare special food and beverages enrich with different nutrients and good bacteria which add nutritional values in their diet. It may play a significant role in the world of gastronomy if nurtured and cultivated properly. This study endeavours to investigate the dietary practices and nutritional strategies employed by the Santhal tribes of West Bengal, with a particular emphasis on the utilization of local seasonal produces (collected from 'haat'/ field) and its association with health benefits.

The Santhal are one of the oldest and largest tribes of Eastern India, mainly West Bengal, Bihar, Jharkhand and Odisha. During our empirical study we will observe the tribe's reliance on indigenous fruits, vegetables, shrubs, herbs and other food items with their nutraceutical properties. Also focused on the socio-economic characteristics based on agricultural geography with the food habits and their preparations process while visiting local market, household lifestyle of those tribes. We will also focus on the new changes in their lifestyle, as the young generation is exposed to globalization. With the new age food habits of urban lifestyle and its impact on their culture. While using those various nutraceutical plants, the Santhali tribes of West Bengal balance their food intake to live a sustainable livelihood being close to mother nature.

Key Words: Tribal Gastronomy, Seasonal Food, Natural Food, Good Bacteria, Nutraceutical Properties, Agricultural Geography, New Age Food Habit.