

DOCUMENTATION ON SMOKED FISH

A. Introduction:

Fish is one of the important food items amongst the tribes of Meghalaya. It is prepared in various recipes in which smoked fish is one of the unique products in the Jaintia hills District. It is popularly known as 'Da Kharang' in Jaintia hills and 'Doh Khasyang' in Khasi hills. Smoked fish in Jaintia hills is an old age practiced for preserving fishes from spoilage. This practise started in Borkhat, Muktapur around 120 years ago by the Jaintiapur. During those times the fishes were caught from the rivers and streams around the village vicinity and smoke dried along the river bank and marketed to the nearby markets. Later during the early 19th century, these people migrated to Umlatkur village under Amlarem block. Till date the people have been practising the same method of fish drying.

B. Raw materials used for drying:

- Firewood
- Bamboos
- Furnace stand
- Chopping block and daw
- Storing basket
- Fish: Presently, the common carp fish imported from Andhra Pradesh is used for drying due to the decline in local fish population in the Village Rivers and streams.

C. Products:

- a. Kharang: A single fish inserted with a straight bamboo along the gut.
- b. Khyrwong/Kha Pyndong: A double fish stand twisted in a circular manner by piercing a bamboo through the eyes and tails of both the fishes.

D. Methods of preparation:

- The fishes are washed properly after which a sharp bamboo is inserted through the mouth and degutted.
- The bamboo act as a stand in the furnace during the drying process.
- The fishes are smoked in the furnace for about five to six hours
- After drying, the smoked fish are kept in a bamboo basket and covered with locally available leaves (sla lamet) /muslin cloth/ newspaper to sustain the aromatic essence in them

E. Marketing:

- The smoked fish are marketed to Jowai and other nearby villages
- The smoke fish fetches a good market during the winter seasons. For instance, approximately 50-60 smoked fish are sold in a day per person whereas 20-25 smoked fish are sold during summer seasons.
- The volume of production from the village is approximately 1,87,800 fishes/year
- Due to the market potential of the smoked fish, the villagers started a self help group known as Seng borlang Women in the year 1995 for improving their socio-economic status.
- The women are the main sale person for marketing the products whereas the men take part in preparing the smoked fish.

F. Constraints/Challenges:

- Distant market linkages
- High transportation cost



Fig. 55(a): Burning furnace



Fig. 55(b): Final Product ready for marketing

- Non availability of local fishes

G. Cost of production per household:

| Particulars | Mandays | Cost/year |
|---|---------|-----------|
| A. Cost of raw materials/inputs: | | |
| a. Firewood@16t/yr | | 22,000 |
| b. Bamboo@1500bamboos/yr | | 7,000 |
| c. Fish@12.5t/yr | | 15,02,400 |
| B. Operational cost: | | |
| a. Cost of labour in production@180/day | 313 | 56,340 |
| b. Cost of transportation@ 200/day | | 62,600 |
| c. Cost of marketing labour@160/day | 313 | 50,080 |
| C. Final product cost: | | |
| a. Cost of finish product@ Rs 150/fish(40 fishes/day) | | 18,78,000 |
| D. Cost of production: | | |
| a. Total cost of production | | 17,00,420 |
| b. Unit cost of production per fish | | 136 |
| c. Total Net profit | | 1,77,580 |