

Food for Thought- Satvik 2004

Subject : Agrobiodiversity.

Details : Satvik 2004 – Second Traditional Food Festival proved to be a unique way of highlighting diversity in cultures and tastes. The ninety traditional recipes and dishes made of organic produce from nine states was an indication of the rich and varied cuisine of the country. With its focus on traditional and organic food, the two day festival (Dec 4-5, 2004), was able to provide a rare opportunity for the urban people to understand and appreciate use of diverse crop varieties and uncultivated plants. It emphasized the importance of ‘voluntary’ organic farming but also drew attention to often ignored ‘compulsive’ organic farmers whose poverty necessitated their dependence on organic inputs.

Around 18,000 people visited the festival during two days. It was organized by SRISTI, along with National Innovation Foundation, Grassroots Innovations Augmentation Network (GIAN), Honey Bee Network and IIMA¹. There were sixty stalls – a 50% per cent increase in the number from the First Traditional Food Festival which was held on Feb 28-29, 2004. Nine states were represented - Uttaranchal, Punjab, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Rajasthan, Orissa, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh and Gujarat. Thus, one could taste *puttus* from Tamil Nadu, *dudi ka halwa* from Uttaranchal or *arisha* cakes from Orissa.

The response of the visitors was overwhelming. Sunda Ram Verma, who was manning Rajasthani stall said, “So many people came to taste our *dal bati choorma* and *pyaz kachhori*. Now they all know about our *Shekhawati* cuisine.” Verma is the Honey Bee Network Collaborator for Rajasthan and has been involved in scouting and documenting traditional knowledge practices and grassroots innovations.

Organizations promoting organic farming and produce such as Sanskruti, Asal, Jatan Vitran Kendra and Vikalp had also put up their stalls. The Peermade Development Society (Kerala) stall sold *ayurveda* medicines such as *thaleepatradi churnam*, *dashamoolambari lehyam* and *sahyadri dahasamini*. Gandhi Vidyapeeth, Vedchhi, Gujarat had put up a stall where one could buy *khadi* clothes made with herbal dyes. Muslim women affected by the earthquake in 2001 had put the clothes made by them on sale. Besides this, creative games, educational activities and quizzes were also organized for children.

The biggest draw, however, was the *khedut mandal* where vegetables and farm products were on display. The large, fresh vegetables and fruits proved to be irresistible for many. For instance, about 20 kg of *bijoru*, a large sized fruit belonging to the citrus family, was sold during the festival. Total sales at the festival exceeded rupees eight lakhs.

Another major highlight was the recipe competition which was held on Dec 4, 2004. The 25 participants mainly women from Gujarat and other states prepared dishes based on minor millets and uncultivated plants. The competition yielded a rich harvest of traditional dishes such as *kele ke phool ka subzi* (a dish made of banana flowers). Some had experimented with the minor millets and uncultivated plants and created new, delicious dishes. The competition was judged by Ambarben

Trivedi, head of the department - food and nutrition, B Arts College, Smitaben, faculty in SLU College and B B S Chauhan, Chief Chef-Hotel Inder Residency. Kaushik Deepti with her *laddoo* (made of soyabean, *ragi*, *bunti*, *bawta* and coconut) and *purla* (made of jowar and soyabean) was given the first prize. The second prize went to Damayanti G Segade who had made two dishes from an uncultivated plant and pulses respectively. These were *looni ki bhaji* and *kulche ki sabzi*. Kavita Kaushik Pathak won the third prize for *kele ke phool ki subzi* and *laddoos* in which she had used the seeds of the *tulsi* plant.

Seven varieties of minor millets and twelve other grains were used in many recipes. The festival also provided an opportunity for farmers, distributors and others interested in organic farming to come together. A meeting was held and various issues such as certification, marketing etc., were discussed. It was felt that all those who were involved in this field should pool their knowledge and expertise. The information which is collated could be put up on a website. The idea of a helpline which would provide information about places from where one could buy organic produce was also mooted.

A survey aimed at gauging people's understanding of organic farming and related issues was conducted with the help of MBA and Journalism students of Rai University, Ahmedabad. The survey was a part of the ongoing research activities on organic and traditional food undertaken by SRISTI and IIMA. The focus of the survey was on aspects like awareness, preferences, attitudes and demand for genetically diverse and organic food produced by small and marginal farmers. The information collected is currently being collated and analyzed. (Honey Bee, 16(1):10-11, 2005).