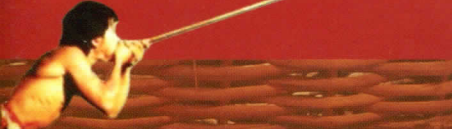


Voices from the forest

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NON-TIMBER FOREST PRODUCTS EXCHANGE PROGRAMME FOR SOUTH & SOUTHEAST ASIA

A Case from the Brazilian Amazon Accommodating Communities' Interests in Public Policies for NTFPs



FOOD FROM THE FOREST
Edible Wild Plants, Insect Recipes,
Nutritional Facts

When Is A Forest A Forest?

Why is forest definition important for developing countries like the Philippines?

Indigenous Peoples' Forest Corridor Conference

1-3 April 2009, SEARSOLIN, Cagayan de Oro City



Major Higaonon traditional leaders or *datu* of the corridor during the conference's opening ritual.

PHOTO BY MIKS GUIA-PADILLA



CARING FOR TRADITIONS TO SAFEGUARD THE FUTURE

The Higaonon's Initiative to Protect their Mountain Forest Sanctuaries

One of my favorite places is Mintapod, nestled on the slopes of the Kimangkil Mountain Range, Bukidnon province, Mindanao in southern Philippines. I love it not only for its breathtaking beauty but also because the indigenous peoples living there, the Higaonon, have managed to maintain the Indigenous Knowledge Skills and Practices (IKSPs) that

protect its forested mountains. It is only fitting that the Mintapod Declaration was affirmed and signed there. The Mintapod Declaration is an agreement of five Higaonon ancestral domains, represented by their traditional leaders called *datu*, to protect the sanctity of the mountains in the range, foremost among them

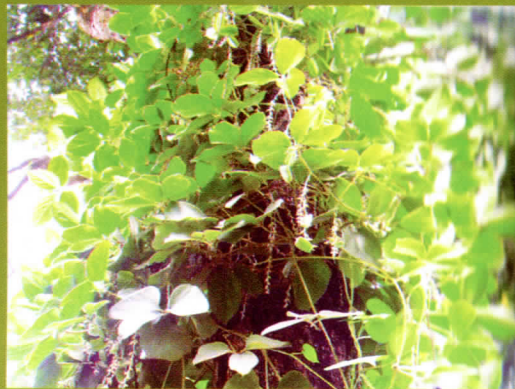
Major Wild Edible Plants of the Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve in India

The Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve (NBR), India, is a representative area of the southern Western Ghats and covers 5670 sq. km. The tribal people living in the area are endowed with a deep knowledge concerning the use of wild plants for food. Most of them depend on forest resources for their livelihood and consume edible flowers, roots, fibres, tubers, rhizome, leaves, etc. Many wild edible plants are nutritionally rich and can supplement nutritional requirements, especially vitamins and micro-nutrients, and are able to fill a variety of food gaps at various seasons.

Wide consumption and availability of wild plants attest their value, and are especially visible among indigenous cultures. But in recent times, the old traditions in many tribal communities are at risk of disappearing; hence, the crucial need to study such knowledge systems and find innovative ways of infusing them to the future generations.

In the early times, gathering and preparing wild food was a regular activity of many tribal households. Women and children used to regularly carry out wild food collections, but now that practice is declining. Our study also shows that at present, there is a lack of interest among the younger generations as they prefer food from the local market rather than the wild collection. It is necessary to create awareness to the young generation about the value of the wild foods in their diet. Keystone Foundation has initiated such a kind of efforts in NBR, where the village elders bring the young children every week to the forests and explain them the importance of forests, wild edible and medicinal plants, collection methods, and necessity of forest conservation. Posters and booklets have also been printed in the local language for the benefit of the community and are distributed in local schools and villages. These efforts we hope will keep the tradition of wild foods alive.

► L.Rasingam & Shiny Mariam Rehel
Keystone Foundation, Kotagiri



Dioscorea tomentosa L.
(Dioscoreaceae)
Noorai Kangu – Irula

A sparsely prickly, tuberous climber common on forest slopes and borders of all districts. The tubers are harvested during the summer season and eaten after boiling with salt or after deep frying.



Cycas circinalis L. (Cycadaceae)
Eendh – Irula, Kurumba

It is a short palm like tree found in some isolated pockets of the NBR and listed in the Red Data Book of Indian Plants. The seeds are leached and the kernels grounded into a paste, salt and chilly are added and steamed. Later small balls are prepared from this and eaten freshly and also stored for future. The young leaves are also cooked and eaten.

Acacia pennata (L.) Willd. (Mimosaceae)
Seengai dagu – Irula, Kurumba

An extensive armed straggler found in forest borders and scrub jungles. The young leaves are harvested during the pre-monsoon period and cooked with lentils and eaten with millets.



Scutia myrtina (Burm.f.)
Kurz (Rhamnaceae)
Kokkimullu, Sodali – Irula, Kurumba

A straggling thorny shrub found very common in forest borders and scrub jungles from plains to 1200m. The ripened fruits are edible.

Dioscorea oppositifolia L.
(Dioscoreaceae) Rhea Kangu - Irula

It is an extensive climber found on thickets and secondary forest patches of above 750m and the tuber is the main food source for the Irula and Kurumba community. The tubers are harvested during the January-April period and eaten after boiling with salt and deep fry.



Bambusa arundinacea (Retz.) Roxb. (Poaceae)
Dodda bidur – Kurumba, Billia moonga – Irula

A tall erect green bamboo with spines found on the moist deciduous to semi-evergreen forests. The young shoots are harvested and cooked with tamarind and other ingredients and eaten with millets.

Solanum nigrum L. (Solanaceae)
Kakkae dagu – Irula

A small shrub found along the riverbanks, agricultural fields and wastelands from plains to 1500m. The leaves are cooked with lentils and taken with rice or millet. It also has the medicinal properties to cure stomach ache, chest pain and mouth ulcer. Peoples are very fond of this green vegetable and cook weekly once.



Cissus quadrangularis L. (Vitaceae)
Naralaikkodi – Irula, Kurumba

A rambling shrub with quadrangular stem found along the forest paths, scrub jungles of deciduous forests. The young stem and leaves are used to make chutney with tamarind.

Cereus pterogonus Lemaire (Cactaceae)
Bella Kalli – Irula

A profusely branched columnar shrub found along the roadsides and fences. The flowers are harvested during the period of March to June and cooked with salt and chilly and eaten with rice.



Syzigium cuminii (L.) Skeels (Myrtaceae)
Naaval – Irula, Kurumba

It is an evergreen tree found in a variety of habitats from plains to 1400m. The ripened fruits are dark blue and eaten raw. Huge quantity of fruits are collected during June-July period and sold in the market. The honey from this tree has a bitter taste.



Food for Thought!

How can women, especially those in remote communities, improve their health and well-being?

Recommended Reading:
Where Women Have No Doctor

There are 5 important vitamins and minerals that women need: iron, folic acid (folate), calcium, iodine, and vitamin A. Iron makes blood healthy and prevents weak blood (anemia). Aside from meat, chicken, eggs and beans, these foods have a lot of iron – **grasshoppers, crickets** and **termites**. It is best to eat food rich in iron with fruits with a high Vitamin C content. Vitamin C helps the body use more of the iron in the food.

To get more iron:

- Cook food in iron pots. If you add tomatoes, lime juice, or lemon juice to the food while it is cooking, more iron will go to the food.



- Add a clean piece of iron – like an iron nail or a horseshoe – to the cooking pot. These should be made of pure iron, not a mixture of iron and other metals.
- Put a clean piece of pure iron, like an iron nail, in a little lemon juice for a few hours. Then make lemonade with the juice and drink it.

Folic acid (folate) makes healthy red blood cells. Good sources of folic acid are dark green leafy vegetables and mushrooms among others. Best to avoid cooking food for a long time as it destroys folic acid and other vitamins.

Good sources of folic acid are:

- dark green leafy vegetables*
- whole grains
- mushrooms*
- liver
- meats
- fish
- nuts*
- peas and beans
- eggs



* including those gathered from the forest

Calcium makes bones and teeth strong, especially green leafy vegetables and shellfish. Iodine in the diet helps prevent a swelling on the throat called goiter and other problems. The easiest way to get enough iodine is to use iodized salt instead of regular salt. Vitamin A prevents night blindness and fights off some infections. Dark yellow and green leafy vegetables, and some orange fruits, are rich in vitamin A.

This helpful information, and more, are found on the pages of a Hesperian publication, **Where Women Have No Doctor, A Health Guide for Women** (2006) by A. Burns, R. Lovich, J. Maxwell and K. Shapiro. The book combines self-help medical information with an understanding of the ways poverty, discrimination and cultural beliefs limit women's health and access to care. Download this free of charge at <http://www.hesperian.info>.

Another recent publication of Hesperian, *Community Guide for Environmental Health*, will be reviewed by NTFP-EP and featured in the next issue of Voices.