Recipes from the World of Pastoralists

Antha, Life Network, LPP, WAMIP, Redes Chaco, Pastor Americas

Introduction / Background

The food made by pastoral communities is as diverse as the animals they rear. Different livestock products, milk, meat and eggs from animals raised under distinct pastoral systems contribute to an astonishing array of cheeses, sweets, yoghurts, teas, smoked meats, preserves, curries and stews. Diverse landscapes contribute to specialized and niche products unique to a region and a community. Pastoralists especially migratory pastoralists have food cultures which represent their lives and the livestock they rear. They represent biodiversity, ecological niches, cultural significance and importance of pastoral systems of different regions.

Methods / Approach

A collection of recipes and preparations have been gathered through a simple survey from different groups associated with pastoral communities or from pastoralists themselves. This collection is an attempt to acknowledge the contribution of pastoralists to world cuisines and cultures and most importantly sustainable food production systems. Some additional research has also been undertaken from other sources who have documented traditional recipes such as the ark of taste slow food. Along with recipe, the type or types of animals, breed, geographical location, special feed or fodder on which the animals graze, the community raising these animals, processing and preserving techniques and whether these products are available commercially. The contribution of distinct pastoral communities is acknowledged.

References / Links

2. fagouris@gmail.com
3. pablofrere@gmail.com
4. www.antha.org

Acknowledgements

1. Pastoral communities of the world
2. Fagouri Said
3. Pablo Frere
4. Ilse Kohler Rolffson
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7. Ashwini Labde and Sangeeta Khapre (Anthra)
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Results

Did you know that the Berbers of Morocco gave the world the Tajne? That “Kallari” is a type of cheese made from buttermilk from a Gojji buffalo which grazes in the forests of the lower Himalayas? That “ghee” can be made in many different ways and is important for its medicinal properties besides being an important cooking ingredient. Camel milk makes excellent tea which keeps you going the whole day. Koumiss is a fermented drink made from “mares” milk by the pastoralists of Mongolia. “Churpi” is a hard cheese made from Yaks milk. Gijze is a special cheese made from the milk of the Bardhok sheep of Albania. Our collection has all this and more.

Pastoral communities have also developed several different methods of cooking, processing and preserving livestock products especially as they are often on the move, and it would be difficult to carry heavy utensils and cumbersome equipment. There are methods for smoking, salting and curing meats, special containers crafted from clay for cooking, molds made of woven leaves for curing cheese, gourds and calabashes for storing milk and dairy products.

Camel milk chai from India & Goat milk cheese from Argentina

Tajine d’Agneau ou Chevreau aux Pruneaux from Morocco

Conclusions / Significance

Foods produced by pastoral communities contribute to sustainable food systems many of which have been made for several centuries. They offer a fascinating range of cuisines made from different livestock species and products. Reindeer, yak, camel, horse, sheep, buffalo, cattle, goat, pig, even ducks. Acknowledging these systems is giving recognition and value to different cultures, cuisines, food processing and preservation methods and celebrating the diversity.

Pastoral foods and recipes are in danger of being lost as pastoral systems struggle for land and space, get sedentarized or give up herding, as breeds and species being herded change, as people trained in preparing these foods take up other professions. These foods will also rapidly disappear as commercially prepared foods enter areas where pastoralists live and silently replace traditional diets. Ill conceived policies of food aid and distribution can also replace these traditional foods and diets. The loss of these recipes and food systems is a loss. Besides cultural capital we stand to lose the biodiversity and valuable knowledge related to these food systems.