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## A recipe book of traditional Sri Lankan food

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### Abstract

Although a number of various traditional foods and diversity of cooking styles and techniques were available in Sri Lanka, today most of them are getting lost as a result of ‘modernization’ dietary patterns. However, in Sri Lanka, a very limited number of researches have been conducted on traditional foods. Therefore, surveys about traditional foods and dishes are essential to cut down many problems related with the modernized foods and to increase use of locally available food sources. In Sri Lanka, there are many recipe books but they do not give an idea about nutrition composition. The survey was conducted to develop a recipe book by including traditional Sri Lankan food recipes and their nutrition composition. Different food recipes were collected from adult women in different areas (08 districts) by home visits, face to face interviews and through telephone calls. Further, available traditional recipes were collected by reviewing the recipe books and searching internet. The amount of ingredients for solid foods were measured by using household measures and home scale and expressed as grams. Liquid foods were measured by measuring cylinder and household measures and expressed as millilitres. The recipes which were taken from telephone calls were prepared at the University dietetics laboratory. Nutrition compositions of recipes were calculated using the Food Base 2000 software. The developed recipe book consists of 50 recipes of Sri Lankan traditional foods, the method of preparation as well as the nutritional composition. The recipes in the book have been presented under five food categories; cereal based foods, sweets, dishes, mullum and kola kenda / herbal drinks. Thus, the developed recipe book provides different recipes with way of preparation and nutrition composition of them. Therefore, this can be used as an educational tool for menu planning.

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## 1. Introduction

Traditional foods include those which have been consumed locally or regionally for many generations. Preparation methods of these local specialties have been passed down from generation to generation and a part of the fabric of life in many communities. In some cases, they are not formally documented recipes, but often associated with positive health benefits and always with local history<sup>1</sup>.

Traditional foods play an important role in keeping people's health in good condition, and also contribute to increasing the value of agricultural products. As a result, they vitalize the rural economy<sup>2</sup>. There are various traditional foods in Sri Lanka such as rice and curry, hoppers, string hoppers, pittu, milk rice, kolakenda, dosi, upma, vadai, roti, herbal aurvedic foods (welpenela, curry leaves, bittergourd, cucumber, nelli, etc), and fruits (mango, rambutan, mangosteen, wood apple- *Feronialimonia*, cashew, beli- *Aeglemarmelos*, delum- *Punicagranatum*, thibiri, hibutu, jackfruit- *Artocarpusheterophyllus*, etc).

In this study, an effort was taken to sustain and protect our traditional foods by preparing a recipe book, because of the fact that traditional food and dishes have been escaping from Sri Lankans. Early Sri Lankans ate traditional foods and dishes, and own foods were prepared by themselves by using available raw materials from the environment. Most of Sri Lankan ate rice and curry as their staple food. Curries were prepared using plant based raw materials by adding Sri Lankans' hot spices. Sweets were prepared using ingredients such as coconut milk, different types of flour and honey. Thus, during old days, health conditions in the villages remained at a high standard because of the consumption of indigenous traditional food.

## 2. Methodology

Primary data of different food recipes were collected from adult women in selected areas of Kandy, Kegalle, Galle, Matale, Jaffna, Embilipitiya, Kurunegala and Anuradhapura by home visits, face to face interviews and through telephone calls. Secondary data were collected by reviewing the recipes from recipe books and internet. The study sample of adult women, age ranging from 55 to 70 years, having knowledge and practices of traditional recipes were interviewed from each area. The women who were available at home during data collection time and willing to give the information on traditional recipes were interviewed. The study sample was selected by purposively.

The amount of ingredients for solid foods were measured by using household measures and home scale and expressed as grams. Liquid foods were measured by using measuring cylinder and household measures and expressed as milliliters. Some ingredients which were not measured, amounts were directly asked from the subjects (E.g. cashew nut, Semolina, etc.). In case the participants gave different information about ingredients used in each food preparation/dish, the average amounts of ingredients of each food item were used. The recipes which were taken from telephone calls were prepared at the University dietetics laboratory. Nutrition compositions of recipes were calculated using the Food Base 2000, software modified with Sri Lankan food composition data.

Recipes were categorized under five groups as (1) Cereal based food products - Pittu, Hoppers, String hoppers, Milk rice, etc., (2) Dishes - Jack curry, Breadfruit curry, Cashew nut curry, Polos curry, Maluambulthiyal, Hath maluwa, etc., (3) Sweets - Kevum, Kokis, Aluwa, Asmi, Welithalapa, etc., (4) Mellum (Green leaves) - Penela kola mellunm, Polpalamellunm, Mukunuwennamellunm, etc., and (5) Kenda / Herbal drinks - Gotukolakenda, Hathawariyakenda, and Elabatu / Eggplant leaves kenda.

Recipe analysis database was used, and weight changes during cooking were entered according to the food varieties. Ingredients for each recipe were arranged according to the decreasing order of amounts/ volume. Ingredients of each recipe were given in the recipe book as proportionately to the main ingredient.

Nutrition composition of recipe was given for one portion. For dishes, 1 portion = 100 g; for sweets and other cereal based foods, 1 portion = 1 medium size piece; For Kenda / Herbal drinks, 1 portion = 1 Glass (240 mL).

### 3. Results and Discussion

Table 1 shows selected traditional food recipes of Sri Lankans with their energy and macronutrient composition in a portion.

Table 1. Sri Lankan traditional food dishes with nutrition composition.

Traditional Food Dishes	Ingredients	Nutrition composition per portion
<p>Milk Rice</p> 	<p>White raw rice 500 g Salt to taste Thick coconut milk 2 cups / 280 ml Water 3 cups / 420 ml * Note: For 15 medium size pieces</p>	<p>E =105.4 Kcal 444.2 kJ P = 1.3 g F = 6.7 g C = 10.5 g ( per portion = 55 g)</p>
<p>Pittu</p> 	<p>Rice flour / wheat flour 250 g Scrapped coconut 150 g Pinch of salt Thick coconut milk ½ cup / 70 ml * Note: For 5 medium size pieces</p>	<p>E = 55 Kcal 231 kJ P = 0.9 g F = 2.2 g C = 8.3 g ( per portion = 15 g)</p>
<p>Aluwa</p> 	<p>Rice flour 250 g Sugar 190 g Cashew nut 20 g Cardamom 1 / 1.5 g Thick coconut milk 90 ml * Note: For 10 medium size pieces</p>	<p>E = 93 Kcal 393 kJ P = 1.3 g F = 0.8 g C = 21.4g ( per portion = 26 g)</p>
<p>Seven curry / “hath maluwa”</p> 	<p>Pumpkin 50 g Kiriala 50 g Kankun 50 g Mukunuwenna 50 g Cowpea 50 g Cashew 12 g Jack seeds 25 g Red onion 3 g Coconut milk 1 cup / 140 ml Green chilli 5 g Salt to taste Pinch of turmeric powder Rampe 2-4 small pieces / 1g Chilli powder 1¾ tsp / 2g Curry powder 1½ tsp / 1g Garlic 1 pieces / 1 g</p>	<p>E = 147.3 Kcal 572.1kJ P = 3.8g F = 11.2g C = 7.8g (per portion = 100g)</p>

	Curry leaves	5-8 leaves/1g	
Tender Jack / “polos” curry	Polos/ Tender jack	1 medium size / 250g	E =191.9 Kcal
	Sliced coconut	14g	802.2 kJ
	Red onion	3 small / 9g	P = 2.7 g
	Chili powder	9g	F = 16.7 g
	Curry powder	5g	C = 7.9 g
	Pinch of Turmeric powder		(per portion = 100g)
	Curry leaves/ Rampe	2-4pieces / 1g	
	Cinnamon	1-2 pieces / 1g	
	Garcinia	2 / 2g	
	Salt	to taste	
	Thick coconut milk	2 ½ cups / 350ml	
Thin coconut milk	2 cups / 240ml		
Coconut oil	1tsp		



1tsp

Agunakolamellum	Aguna kola	50 g	E = 60 Kcal
	Scraped coconut	¾ cup / 25 g	584 kJ
	Green chilli	1-2 / 5-6 g	P = 3.3 g
	Red onion	2-3 samall / 9g	F = 4.1 g
	Moldive fish	1 tbs / 1 g	C = 2.9 g
	Lime juice	2-3 drops	(1 portion = 1 cup, 50g)
	Salt	to taste	



Hathawariya /Asparagus Keda	Asparagus /Hathawariya leaves	65 g	E = 121.2 Kcal
	White raw rice	60 g	510.1 kJ
	Salt	to taste	P = 1.5 g
	Thin coconut milk	350 mL	F = 9.4 g
	Thick coconut milk	175 mL	C = 7.5g
			(per portion = 1 glass)



E: Energy, P: Protein, F: Fat, C: Carbohydrates

The developed recipe book contained 50 recipes of Sri Lankan traditional foods and dishes. Recipes are presented under five groups; cereal based foods, Sweets, Dishes, Mellum and Kenda / Herbal drinks. Pittu, Hoppers, String hoppers, Milk rice, like food are included under cereal based foods. Milk rice / Kiribath is a ceremonial specific and is most common among Sinhala community. Milk rice was prepared with combining with mung gram (Mungkiribath) and with peni pol (Ibulkiribath). Nutrition composition is enhanced due to these combinations.

Hoppers were consumed as a breakfast as well as a snack. It was consumed with lunumiris or banana, and the way of preparation was same in all studied areas. Another common traditional breakfast was string-hoppers and way of

preparation was same in all studied areas. This was prepared with wheat flour, kurakkan flour, white rice flour and brown rice flour and consumed with curries with gravy and with coconut sambol.

Upma and Vadi were common among Tamil and Muslim communities. The way of preparation differs in Jaffna than other study areas. Main difference is the addition of cardamom and cumin seeds to the Vadi mixture.

There are 3 main types of curry: White, Red and Black. Example for white curry is “Kirikos”. Red curries contain a large amount of chili powder or ground red chilies with a few other spices. An example for red curry is Jackfruit curry prepared with adding more chili powder. Black curries are dark in color which is achieved by the roasting of the spices until they are a deep brown (e.g. maluambulthiyal). The way of preparation of many of curries differs in different study areas. Polosambul / tender jackcurry is prepared in different ways in Kandy and Kegalle. Lotus root curry is more specific to Anuradhapura area among other study areas. Kalupolmaluwais common in Kurunegala and Kandy areas while Cashew curry is common in Kurunegala District.

Sweets are another group, and varieties of Kevum (Mungkevum, Kondakevum, Athirasa, etc.) are common in Sri Lankan cuisines. Way of preparation of Athirasa and Kondakevum were approximately same in all study areas except Kandy where a special way of preparing Mungkevumis adopted by preparing batter with adding eggs. Other sweets are Aluwa, Welithalapa, Helapa, Uduvel, Asmi, and Kokis.

Mellum is fondly eaten with curries. Prepared from finely shredded green leaves and maldive fish, it is mingled with grated coconut and spices. The way of preparation of mellum was approximately same in all study areas.

Kenda / Heahal drinks were common traditional food item and still they are popular among rural communities, especially in Kandy, Anuradhapura, Embilipitiya and Galle. Different varieties of green leaves are used for preparation of Kenda, and combinations of different leaves are also used. The way of preparation is approximately same in all areas but, there is a slight difference among Muslim community than others as they added beef, chicken and goat meat into Kenda.

#### **4. Conclusion**

The developed recipe book provides traditional recipes with method of preparation and nutrient composition. Therefore, this may be useful as an educational tool for menu planning for healthy people as well as patients who need special dietary menu planning.

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