



Traditional Ready-to-eat (RTE) rice-based snacks of Manipur: Processing, Preparation methods and its Utilization

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ABSTRACT

Manipur is a small state located in the north-eastern most corner of the Indian sub-continent. Known for its rich culture and heritage, Manipur itself is a little India where people of different communities, religion stays together in harmony, speaks different languages and have different food habits. The diversity in the state is not only seen in the culture, religion and the languages they speak but also largely influence in the different food and dishes that we prepared in our day to day life, in the cultural, religious and marriage ceremonies etc. Each community in Manipur have their own traditional methods and process of making snack foods from the indigenous raw material that is available in the state. These foods and snacks are being prepared at home by the elders of the community from time immemorial and is been passing on from generation to generation. In this study, the various methods and process of traditional and indigenous rice-based snacks foods prepared by different communities of Manipur were documented.

1. Introduction

The ready-to-eat (RTE) snacks food is a small portion of the food which is usually consumed between meals. They served as a food which can be eaten anytime and anywhere. They may be batter and dough-based, confectionary, cookies, cakes, pastries, meat-based, noodles, chips, sandwiches etc. Like in many states of India, Manipur too has the concept of eating evening snacks whether it may be steamed/boiled snacks, deep fried snacks, mix vegetable salads etc. Rice being the staple food of the entire North eastern part of India and Manipur in particular is consumed in the lunch and dinner every day along with the boiled dishes with fermented fish (Kangsoi) that we consumed in our day to day life. Apart from being the staple food and also being available abundantly, rice is also processed into different easy to eat snacks and value added products as well. There are a variety of snack foods which are prepared at home traditionally by the elders of the family and this has been passed on to generation to generation for years. Whether it may be post-harvest festival, special occasions, marriage ceremonies and from morning breakfast to evening snacks this traditionally

made snacks is been prepared and eaten all the year round in every household. In Manipur, traditional RTE snacks, viz. Kakching bora, Kakching chasubi, Kabok khoidum, Kabok lalu, Koutianji, Langchiphon, Kupsu, Hao Khamui, Kabok Akhingba and others have been consume as a regular RTE snacks in different communities in the state for over a long period of time. With time these snack foods which are being prepared and eaten only at home finds its way slowly in the small shops called 'Lokmai' or 'Potpham in the villages and the nearby areas for the income generation and livelihood. This household culinary art are practised and handled down through generation by generation and from community to community. As these snacks have been confined to the household and local areas only, the need for commercializing these products has been lacking, also the need for promoting and developing a new product owing to the nutritional value and value added products have been limited. In this study, the above mentioned RTE rice based snacks food preparation processes and methods were documented from different villages and from different communities of the state of Manipur. This study will also highlight the importance of the

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ready-to-eat rice based snacks particularly which are available in Manipur and it will also serve as a document for the young and micro food processing entrepreneurs for building up their food processing business as a whole.

2. Methodology

The documented research was carried out in different selected villages of Manipur. These include the villages in the hills where the major community in those villages were the tribes. The study was also carried out in different selected villages in the valley where the majority of the population were the Meitei's community. The selected community in the study have different rice based snacks which are made and consumed traditionally in different occasions in their respected community. For each of the variety of RTE rice based snack product selected production sites were visited and the unique indigenous practices were allowed to perform and the step by step procedure was also learned and recorded. The raw materials involved in making of the RTE rice based snacks foods were all indigenous to the place and hygiene was maintained throughout the preparation process. The objective here was to document the traditional knowledge associated with indigenous RTE rice based snack food preparation process in detail and also to highlight the importance of these products in light of the ceremonies, tradition and occasion.

3. Results and Discussion

A detailed description of the traditional and indigenous process of making RTE rice-based snack foods practised and followed by the different sections of the community in different districts of Manipur were learned, collected and presented below:

Kabok Afaba

Kabok Afaba is the simple popped rice which is processed from the rice grain. It is a popular snack that is well liked by the people in olden times. Being significantly accepted as a regular snack and also in various religious rituals, occasions and marriage ceremonies etc., the importance of Kabok Afaba cannot be ignored by all the sections of the community. For preparation of Kabok Afaba, the rice grain is first roasted in a deep circular open pan called 'Khang' directly on burning fire in an indigenous fire hearth at high temperature and allowed the rice grain to be popped out. After that the popped rice is separated from the husk by using the traditional bamboo winnowing tray. The Kabok Afaba thus obtained is packed in an airtight plastic container or plastic bags and stored. The Kabok Afaba is light, blend in taste and flavour. This particular Manipuri food product is indispensable during religious rituals and ceremonies of Manipur, the Meitei community in particular.

Kabok Lalu

Kabok Lalu is an oval shaped edible snack made from grinded Kabok Afaba crumb and mixed with sugar syrup. For the preparation process, Kabok Afaba is first roasted dry and grind to make a rice puff crumb, then the sugar syrup is prepared separately by boiling water and lime juice first then sugar is added and stirred until a thick sugar syrup is obtained, then the syrup is added on the crumb slowly and round ball is made according to desired sizes from small, medium to large sizes and it can also be made in different shape as well. Apart from consuming in day to day life as a regular snack, Lalu has a significant importance from offering to the deity in worship to the marriage ceremonies in Manipur.

Cheng Kabok

Cheng Kabok is one of the popular sweet roasted rice snacks mix with jaggery¹. For preparation of Cheng Kabok, the rice is first roasted in the heated deep open pan in the indigenous fire hearth known as "Leirung" until the colour changes to light brown and puffed slightly. On the other side the jaggery is melted, and then the melted jaggery is mixed with the roasted rice and makes into an oval shaped ball and let it dry for some hours. The oval shaped ball thus obtained is known as Cheng Kabok. The taste of the Cheng Kabok can also be customized by the addition of roasted peanut, soya bean or perilla seed or all mixed together. Sometimes sugarcane syrup is also used in place of melted jaggery. Cheng Kabok like the other products has the same importance when it comes to religious offerings, certain rituals and marriage ceremonies.

Kabok Akhingba

Kabok Akhingba is also one of the popular varieties of rice-based snack available in Manipur. It is very similar to Kabok Afaba just that Kabok Akhingba is much smoother in texture as compared to Kabok Afaba. For preparation of Kabok Akhingba, the cleaned rice is soaked in salt water for 3-5 min. (varies with the quantity). After soaking the excess salt water is drained off by straining it in a traditional bamboo basket called "Thumok". Then it is roasted on a pre-heated deep open circular pan until it is properly dried. After that the rice is transferred to the deep open pan where large amount of salt is added and roasted until the rice is properly puffed out. Thus the product that we obtained is known as Kabok Akhingba. Sand can also be used sometimes instead of salt as a heat transferring medium. Later on sugar and salt can also be added as per the desired taste.

Chengpak

Chengpak is a traditional flattened rice which is popular and easily available. It is also of immense importance as it has lots of applications from offering in the ritual prayers to the religious and marriage ceremonies. For preparation of Chengpak, the paddy is first soaked in clean water overnight and then on the next day the excess water is drained off by straining it in the bamboo basket and holding it for some time. After that the rice grain is pressed in the indigenous wooden mortar called “Sumban” and the grain is flattened. Then the flattened rice is sun dried until dried properly, followed by the separation of husk from the dried flattened rice by traditional bamboo winnowing tray. After separation the dried flattened rice is stored in an airtight container or plastic bags.

Kabok Khoibak

Kabok Khoibak is a popular local sweet rice-based snack which is available throughout the year. It is circular in shape made from puffed rice mixed with melted jaggery. For the preparation of Kabok Khoibak, plain Kabok Akhingba (puffed rice) is used which is mixed with melted jaggery. After mixing, it is made into circular shaped and left until dried properly. Thus the circular product that is obtained is known as Kabok Khoibak. It can also be garnished with black sesame on top of Kabok Khoibak to improve the taste. The importance of Kabok Khoiba apart from consuming it as a regular snack is also being offered in the different traditional rituals and ceremonies in the state.

Kakching Bora

Kakching Bora is a traditional style fritter (Pakoda) which is indigenous to Kakching district of Manipur where the basic ingredient is rice powder. Before the preparation process is started, rice is soaked in cleaned water for 1-2 hours. After soaking, the excess water is properly drained off. Then the soaked rice is grinded in the traditional hand pounder until desired fineness of the rice powder is achieved. The rice powder is then mixed with soda powder, salt and water to form dough; it is then rested for an hour. After resting, the dough is mixed with the soaked peas. It is then made into small balls with 1-2 soaked peas in it. The small balls are then spread it in a bamboo winnowing trays and dried under the sun. After drying it is deep fried in the pre-heated cooking oil in the deep drying pan until the colour turns golden brown. Kakching Bora is taken out from the cooking pan and is ready to serve. It can be packed in a plastic container and can be stored for a long period of time.

Kupshu

Kupshu is an indigenous snack which is a spicy roasted rice powder and is served with different kind of leafy

greens and herbs. Kupshu is made with roasted rice powder mix with fermented fish, chilly and garnish with onion and coriander on top. For preparation of Kupshu, the rice is first soaked in water for 5-10 min. After soaking, the excess water is drained off and it is roasted in the deep pan until the rice is slightly pop or until the rice turned into brown colour. It is then grinded to make powder and mix with chutney which is made from fermented fish, dried chilly and salt followed by addition of garnish according to our taste with local grown herb. It is served with different leafy green vegetables and herbs to go with it.

Kakching Chasubi

Kakching Chasubi is a traditional and unique type of snack which is only available in Kakching keithel (market) in Manipur. The name of Kakching Chasubi has been derived from Jat Subi since it is prepared from mixing of various types of vegetables and spices². It is an indigenous style savoury pancake. Kakching Chasubi is prepared like bread. The Cheng Chadon (broken pieces of rice after shelling) is first grinded in Shumbal (indigenous pestle) to form powder. The rice powder is then mix with spices, chilly, salt and different type of vegetables and herbs like coriander, Maroi Nakuppi (Chinese chives), Maroi Napakpi (Winter leek), Mukthubi (Winged prickly ash), Hentak (Dried fish paste) etc., and with some water to form a batter. The batter is then poured in the shape of a cake around 2 cm thick on the pre-heated pan with a dash of oil and flip until cooked from both the side. In the past, the well prepared mixture was wrapped in a Kakkalla (Kokkal leaf) and heated on a frying pan. But today, plantain leaves are used instead of Kakkalla due to unavailability and Ngari (Fermented fish) are used instead of Hentak (Dried fish paste) as Ngari is abundantly available in the market.

Leima Kabok

Leima Kabok is a popular and special type of snacks that is offered to the invitees on a traditional occasion in Manipur. It is made with fried flattened rice mix with salt, roasted coconut flakes and peanuts. For the preparation of Leima Kabok, the flattened rice (Chengpak) is first fried in the pre-heated vegetable oil in the deep frying pan. After frying the fried flattened rice is mixed with salt and sugar, thereafter the coconut flakes which is dry roasted to make crispy and the peanut were also deep fried. Then the fried Chengpak were mixed together with the roasted coconut flakes and the fried peanuts. Thus we obtained the famous Leima Kabok which is further packed in a plastic pouches or the plastic containers to keep it crispy and fresh until consumption. Sometimes cardamoms are also added to enhance the flavour of the product during the mixing stage.

Tan Aheibi

Tan Aheibi is a traditional style sweet version of fried bread made with rice powder. For preparation of Tan Aheibi, first the rice kernel is grounded in the traditional mortar and pestle until rice powder of desired fineness is achieved. The rice powder is then mixed thoroughly with water, sugar, dry fruits and cardamom seeds to form a batter. After the homogenous batter is formed, it is then poured into pre-heated oil in a frying pan and thereon it is fried until the colour changes to golden brown. Tan Aheibi is now ready to serve hot. Along with this sweet fried bread, people usually drink black tea with a piece of lemon on it. To add taste to the fried bread, dried fruits and nuts can be added to the batter mixture according to taste and cinnamon or cardamom can also be added to enhance the flavour of the fried bread.

Langchiphon

Langchiphon is a rice snack which is mainly consumed by the Kabui tribe community in Manipur. It is prepared from rice powder in an important occasion and ceremonies of this community. For preparation of Langchiphon, first the rice kernel is grounded in the traditional hand pounder until the rice kernel is converted into rice powder³. Then the rice powder is mixed with the sugar syrup to add taste and flavour. The mixture is then poured into the earthen pot called Tanganlai and no water is added into the earthen pot. Tanganlai is specially designed for cooking of Langchiphon, which has a hole at the bottom. The gap or hole is covered by banana leaves before putting the mixture into it. It is then covered with a tight lead after the mixture is added into the earthen pot. After that, the earthen pot is placed on a boiling water pot to cook by the steam of water. The boiling of water continues with high flame for about an hour, after one hour of steaming inside the pot, Langchiphon is ready to be unwrapped and served hot.

Hao Khamui

Hao khamui is generally prepared in the festivals like Yerui and Khaikap of the Tangkhul tribe which is celebrated after the harvest season which marks the resting period of the community. The harvested grain is sundried and pounded in a traditional wooden mortar and pestles. The de-husked grains are then soaked for some hours to soften the grain. The wet grains are laid out to drain excess water in a traditional multipurpose plate like a dehusker/rice cleaner made of cane or bamboo called *yam*. After the excess water has been drained off, the rice is pounded again into flour of preferred fineness. The rice flour is then mixed with water and made into a batter. The batter is then poured and wrapped in the *Hedychium* leaves in square or in circular shape and carefully sealed by tying with the split strands of the stem to prevent any leakage. This square or round packet are then

either steamed or boiled for about an hour. After boiling, Hao Khamui is ready to be unwrapped and served hot.

Fola

Fola is a traditional sweet, wholesome and complete snack which is often served in the ritual ceremonies. It is also taken on days when one is keeping a fast or some people also take Fola as breakfast as well. The main ingredients consist of Chengpak (Flattened rice), two kinds of Kabok - Kabok Aphaba and Kabok Akhingba, Lafoi (Banana), Sangom Aphamba (Curd), Sangom (Milk), Chuhi (Sugarcane syrup), Yubi (shredded coconut), etc. For preparation of Fola, Chengpak and Kaboks are properly cleaned and kept aside. Then the Chengpak is taken in a big cleaned steel bowl and wash it 4-5 times thoroughly and the excess water is drained off properly. After that, milk, sugarcane syrup, curd are mixed and soaked for about 10-15 minutes. After 15 minutes the peeled bananas are added to the Chengpak and meshed the bananas along with the Chengpak until well blended. Now both the Kaboks are added and mixed well along with the other ingredients. Finally the shredded coconut is sprinkled on to the mixture and it's ready to serve.

Crepe Cake

Crepe Cake is a fried version of sticky rice cake which is traditionally eaten in day to day life of the Tangkhul community of Manipur⁴. The preparation of Crepe Cake also marks the ending of the harvest season and also signifies the resting period of the community after the long harvesting season. For the preparation of Crepe Cake, first the harvest grain is properly sun dried and pounded in an indigenous wooden mortar and pestles. The de-husked grains are then soaked for some hours to soften the rice grain. The wet grains are then laid out to drain excess water after soaking in a traditional multipurpose plate like a Dehusker/rice cleaner made of cane or bamboo called *Yam*. After the excess water has been drained off, the rice is pounded again into flour of preferred fineness. The rice flour is then mixed thoroughly with water, sugar and other baking products and made into a batter. After the batter is made, it is portioned and poured into a pre-heated vegetable oil in a deep frying pan. The batter is fried until it is turned into golden brown colour. Thus Crepe Cake is obtained which tastes best when it is served hot.






Koutianji








Koutianji is a traditional local rice-based steam/boiled snack which is usually prepared in festivals and other social functions. For preparation of Koutianji, local rice is soaked in clean water for 2-3 hours⁵. After soaking the excess water is drained off and it is dried under the sun in an indigenous bamboo winnowing tray/fan called "Katanglu" or in a bamboo basket called "Khoupak". After it is properly





dried, it is grounded into rice powder as per the desired level fineness in the indigenous mortar and pestle called “Gupanthun and Mee”. The rice flour is then mixed with sugar syrup for better taste and palatability. The mixture which is usually hard is then made in different shapes and

sizes as per the liking. It is then wrapped individually in cleaned banana leaves and tried properly with the split strands of the banana leaves to prevent any leakage. Then the same is put in the boiling water inside the earthen pot and boiled for about one hour. After boiling for one hour, it is taken out from the earthen pot and is ready to serve hot.

Table 1. Indigenous Ready-to-eat rice-based snack available in Manipur

Sl. No.	Image	Name	Description
1.		Kakching bora	It is a local indigenous fried snack prepared from rice flour and fried peas. It is originated and popular in Kakching district of Manipur.
2.		Kabok Afaba	It is a popular local rice snack made by popping the rice grain. It has a lot of different ways to consume apart from being eaten plainly.
3.		Kakching Chasubi	It is a local pan cake snack which is prepared from rice powder which is mixed with spices, vegetables, chillies and salt.
4.		Kabok Khoidum	It is a local round shaped snack made by mixing puffed or popped rice and sugarcane syrup.
5.		Kabok Lalu	It is an indigenous oval shaped snack made from the residues of the Kabok making process. It is used in religious ceremonies.

6.		Kabok Akhingba	It is a local snack made by puffed rice. It can be consumed in many ways. It is one of the oldest snack which is being consumed and used in various occasions and ceremonies.
7.		Kabok Khoibak	It is an indigenous circle shaped snack made from puffed rice and sugarcane syrup. It has certain other usage in rituals and ceremonies apart from being eaten as a snack in day to day life.
8.		Koutianji	It is a boiled snack made from rice flour which is usually prepared in festivals and other social occasions. It is a popular homemade snack of the Kabui Tribe community.
9.		Langchiphon	It is a steamed snack prepared from rice powder in important social occasion. It is particularly prepared and consumed by the Kabui Tribe community in Manipur.
10.		Fola	Fola is a traditional sweet snack which is prepared with flattened rice, banana, milk and other ingredients. It is regarded as a wholesome complete meal also.
11.		Chengpak	It is a popular snack which is prepared by flattening the boiled rice. It can be consumed in many forms and is offered and served in many rituals and ceremonies.
12.		Tan Aheibi	It is a sweet fried pancake made with the rice flour and sugar. It is generally eaten as a morning breakfast or as an evening snack.

13.		Kupsu (Ahabi)	It is an indigenous spicy snack made from rice powder, fermented fish, chilli etc. and often eaten with green leafy vegetables.
14.		Hao Khamui	It is steamed/boiled sticky rice bread which is usually prepared after the harvest of the sticky rice and during festive days. It is being prepared at home while there is a resting period after the harvest.
15.		Crepe Cake	It is a fried sticky rice cake usually prepared at home for evening snacks and in special occasion as well. It is a popular snack among the Tangkhul Tribe community in Manipur.
16.		Leima Kabok	It is savoury fried flattened rice snack which is quite popular and it is being served in the social ceremonies and also consumed as a snack in day to day life.

4. Conclusion

The traditional rice-based snack products are being prepared at home by different sections of community in Manipur from time immemorial. The preparation process of all these snacks has been indigenous from the kitchens of these communities which have been passed on from generation to generations. Traditional snack items are still a favourite item for offering it in the various cultural and rituals ceremonies, marriage and other occasions, and it is also being eaten in the day to day breakfast, or as evening snacks with a cup of hot tea etc. This traditional art of preparation of rice-based snacks should be conserved and at the same time it can't be ignored as these traditional snacks are interrelated with the diet of the indigenous people and most importantly it has a connection to the culture, tradition, ritual and ceremonies performed in day to day life of the people of Manipur. So, there should be purposeful effort to revive and promote the traditional food habit systems not only in the local region but it should have a wider vision of passing these traditional knowledge in the national level and around the

globe as well. There is also a need for the development of value added products by selecting process improvement, raw material selection, packaging material selection, etc. which will find its way to the national and global market. And for the above said development there is a need for multi-institutional and food industries collaboration for further research and improvements in the said products. As a result, a noble food product with clinically established health-promoting characteristics might be developed and sold at a reduced cost. Such an endeavour is predicted to have a significant impact on people's health and well-being, particularly among Manipur's low-income population.

5. References

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