



# Exotic Cuisine of Nagaland: Methods of Cooking and the Medicinal Value of Their Edible Flora and Fauna

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## ABSTRACT

Present study is an effort to understand the Naga art of cooking; their endemic food variety, cooking methods, and also the medicinal values of the herbs used in their kitchen. This paper deals with the various food items viz., vegetables, meat, spices etc., eaten by the people of Nagaland in their daily routine and on special occasions like festivals and weddings. Some of the traditional kitchenware used by the local tribes was also studied to understand their significance. It was observed that the various traditional methods used by the tribal people to cook food plays a vital role in retaining the nutritive value of the food and has significant impact on their health. This study is an attempt to connect the health, longevity and immunity of the people with the food they eat.

The source of the primary data was visit to various villages, personal interactions and interviews with the tribal ladies and experts of the villages. Local markets of Kohima city were visited and vendors were questioned about the use of the food items. Observation was recorded via photography and videography. Secondary data was also collected from various published resources, to support our observations and findings.

**Keywords:** Kohima, Nagaland cuisine, medicinal herbs, food and health, cooking methods, tribes of Nagaland

## INTRODUCTION

Hidden among the Himalayas, Nagaland has always evoked a sense of mysticism and awe, intensified by the remoteness of its geographical location. A vibrant hill state located in the extreme North Eastern end of India, Nagaland offers a rich, incomparable traditional and cultural heritage. Kohima, the capital city of Nagaland, is a picturesque town, situated amidst lush green wealth of the nature. Located at an altitude of 1444.12 meters, Kohima, the Mirror of Nagaland, is an unexplored territory. The food processed and prepared traditionally by its people is ultimately connected to their socio-

cultural life and health. Their ways of cooking not only demonstrates the creativity and treasure of food heritage of the tribes, but also their incremental learning to sustain the life and ecosystem as a whole. Looking at the diversities in foods eaten by the people of Nagaland, an attempt was made to explore the ethnic foods from different tribes of the area.

The purpose of the visit was to upgrade the information about endemic plants and other exotic meats, found in the north eastern area which is eaten by the people of Nagaland because of their medicinal value. Not only the food but the different ways of cooking used by the local tribal communities play a significant role in retaining the nutritive value of the food they eat. Smoke dried and fermented meat is commonly eaten by the people of Nagaland which tastes very different from the meat prepared by other methods.

Our journey began from Kohima, spreading across various villages of Nagaland like Khonoma, Ketseizou, Kisama, Khezakhona, Makhel, covering the different tribes of the state and studying and observing the various techniques used by them to prepare the platter and its significance. We also visited a few local markets of the area, like Mao Market and Supermarket, to find out about the various exotic crawling and writhing insects and reptiles available over there apart from different vegetables, fruits and herbs.

The research work was a part of the 'Project Gyanodaya', under the Umbrella of University of Delhi, Delhi. The study helped in exploring the indigenous Naga Platter, the kitchen utensils used by the Naga people, their traditional methods of cooking, the use of various medicinal herbs, and their importance in their daily life. Our entire journey of this study was thrilling and full of experiences of the vibrant and dynamic lifestyle of the people of Nagaland and their rare and exotic food habits and tastes.

#### Objectives of the Study:

The objective of this expedition was to

- study and observe the indigenous variety of foods of Nagaland,
- study various methods used by the Naga people to prepare their platter,
- study the impact of food on their health, and
- acquire information about the herbs they use in their home as remedies to treat and cure different diseases.

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Naga cuisine comprises mainly of meats and fish, which are generally smoked, dried or fermented. A typical Naga table consists of a meat dish, some boiled vegetable dishes, rice and chutney (Tathu). People of Nagaland tend to eat boiled edible organic leaves. Some common dishes are fermented bamboo shoot taken with fish and pork, axone, soya bean which is commonly sun dried, smoked and fermented taken along with beef and smoked pork. Smoked meat is prepared by drying it above the fire or hanging on the wall of the kitchen for 2 weeks which could even last for the whole year ahead. Anishiis is fermented yam leaves which are stuffed into patties and smoked over the fire or kept under the sun for drying. Nagaland has a wide range of the varieties for its native chilly. The ginger used in the Naga cuisine has strong aroma and is different from the ones found in other parts of the country. Meat is also generally cooked along with ginger and garlic leaves.

The cuisine of the Ao tribe is characteristically non-vegetarian food cooked by boiling instead of frying them. They have an exotic taste, enhanced by the flavor of the local herbal ingredients. Pork meat is the most popular meat and mostly cooked with fermented bamboo shoots. Since the cuisine is spicy in nature, seasonings, spices like ginger and various local herbs and leaves are an indispensable part in food preparation.

The Nagas believe that certain meats can cure human diseases viz., dog meat can cure pneumonia and even the physical injuries can be healed by the bee/wasp larvae, snails and frog meat, etc. Naga people also believe that consumption of fluid from live earthworms can treat venomous snake bite. Such beliefs in the medicinal and curative properties of the meat of different animals and insects have encourages the local people to use such items since ages.

The Ao Nagas of the present study area have been using diverse plant resources since time immemorial and thus have gathered rich traditional knowledge on it for their primary health care, food and shelter. [1]

Some edible and healing plants of Naga tribes:

In relation to Folk medicinal plants of the Mao tribes of Nagaland the study reveals the use of diverse plants for curing different ailments and diseases traditionally. Many species of the plants which they use have a broad spectrum for treating various diseases. Leaves are the most common part utilized by the indigenous people for various ailments and treatments.

- *Crassocephalum crepidioides* (Benth.) S. Moore and *Hibiscus subdariffa* L- Flowers and inflorescence are applied on cuts and wounds and tonic as an appetizer. Other parts like, seeds, bark, stem, and fruits are also sometimes used for medicinal purposes.
- *Mormodica charantia* L. Cucurbitaceae- Leaves are commonly used for treating fever and headache.
- *Rhus semialata* Murr. (Anacardiaceae)- The fruit has potential for treating diarrhoea, dysentery and stomach related problems and the dry fruit are preserved for keeping it throughout the year.
- *Solanum torvum* Sw. Solanaceae- The fruits and seeds are dried before preserving and are used for treating many diseases such as fever, cold, stomachache, headache and blood pressure.
- *Maesa indica* Roxb. Primulaceae- The leaves are used as an agent for clearing the throat/vocal cord for producing a melodious sound. [2]

People of Lotha tribe also use herbs having diverse medicinal use.

- *Alnus nepalensis* D. Don. (Elumtong). Betulaceae – Juice or sap from the plant is taken orally for dysentery and applied externally on injury and wounds to stop bleeding.
- *Citrus limon* L. Rutaceae – Fruit juice is applied for dandruff, scurvy and can be taken orally for stomachache and kidney stones.
- *Embllica officinalis* Gaertn. Phyllanthaceae - Fruit extract is taken for indigestion and also useful for patients having diabetes and asthma problems.
- *Laportea crenulata* Gaud. Urticaceae – Root paste is applied on body swellings and during high fever.
- *Litsea citrate* Blume. Lauraceae – Fruits are eaten treating constipation, cholera, high fever and also for curing food poisoning.

- *Ocimum basilicum* L. Lamiaceae – Fresh leaves and inflorescence are eaten for stomachache and can also be applied on ringworm and earache.
- *Passiflora edulis* Sim. Passifloraceae – Tender leaves are eaten for high blood pressure, diarrhea and chronic dysentery.
- *Solanum torvum* Sw. Solanaceae – Seed extract is applied on toothache. [3]

Most of the tribes of Nagaland use many other herbs which have direct or indirect health benefits. Some of them are listed below:

- *Rubus ellipticus* Sm. Rosaceae – Locally called Rum in Nagaland, belongs to genus *Rubus* and has over 750 species in 12 subgenera. It is used in folk medicines because of its ethno medicinal richness.

*R. ellipticus* root paste is used as poultice for the treatment of bone fracture, applied on forehead during severe headache and root juice is useful for curing urinary tract infection. Fruits are edible, ripe fruits are laxative and can be taken to treat stomach ailments like constipation and young fruits taken in form of paste are helpful for curing gastritis, dysentery and diarrhea. It is also used for curing many other ailments by the Lepcha tribe of Dzongu valley in North Sikkim, India.

The young shoot, chewed raw gives relieve to sudden stomach pain. Root decoction is very useful to get rid of stomach worm and is therefore given to children. The Tibetans consider the inner root bark of the plant as a medicinal herb, and is generally used as a renal tonic and antidiuretic. [4]

- *Colocasia esculenta* (L) Schott. Araceae (Elephant Plant) - The edible types, grown in South Pacific are known as taro, chamadhumpa, eddoe, and dasheen which are cooked like potatoes. The leaves are rich in iron and are used to make soup with coconut milk. The leaves and roots of the plant are used in the Indian subcontinent. Utti, one of the exotict Manipuri cuisines is made from the leaves of this plant which are called Paanghoklaa by the natives. The edible corms (known as Paan) and fermented soya bean are generally used to make curries. The famous indigenous Manipuri side dish called Eromba is also prepared from the edible corms. [5]

- *Panax pseudoginseng* L. Araliaceae (Ginseng) - Ginseng is a slow-growing perennial plants with fleshy roots. It is found in the colder regions of North America and in eastern Asia (mostly Korea, northeast China, Bhutan and eastern Siberia). Ginsenoids are the important components of Ginseng.

The roots have high medicinal value and are available in dries form. Folks use the roots as oral medicine; it acts as an aphrodisiac, a stimulant for the treatment of type II diabetes, and for curing sexual dysfunction in men [6]. Ginseng may be used in energy drinks or herbal teas, such as ginseng coffee but in a little quantity [7]. It may be found in hair tonics and cosmetic preparations although its use is not clinically prove.

- *Urtica dioica* L. Utricaceae (Nettle) - The leaf, flower, seed, and root of nettle contains different chemical constituents and they are widely used. Nettle leaf is a nutritious food; however, its stinging hairs which contain histamine, formic acid, acetylcholine, acetic acid, butyric acid, leukotrienes, 5-hydroxytryptamine, and other irritants are destroyed by cooking or steaming it before ingestion.

The hydrophilic components of nettle are useful in prostate disease which includes lectins and polysaccharides. A lectin called *Urtica dioica* agglutinin (UDA) is a heat- and acid-resistant found in stinging nettle, primarily the root and induces a pattern of T-lymphocyte activity.

Topical nettle can be used for lumbalgia, sciatica, chronic tendonitis, sprains, and osteoarthritis as mentioned by weiss.

The extracted UD inhibit platelet aggregation and also help in improving lipid profiles. Flavonoids also help in this potent inhibition. It was suggested that the Allergic Rhinitis Anti-inflammatory effects of nettle leaf may be useful for all types of allergic diseases. Traditionally nettle leaf has been used for curing numerous other conditions like gout, hair loss, and mild bleeding (particularly mild menorrhagia) [8]

- *Alnus serrulata* (Aiton) Willd. Betulaceae (Alder tree)- The alder tree was used long back by the tribal farmers and still various old trees, probably more than 200 years' old trees can be seen in the area. A remunerative agro-forestry system forms by the Agricultural crops along with the alder trees. Trees have the ability to regain the soil fertility which has been fully utilized by the tribal farmers of Angami, Chakhasang, and Chang Yimchaunger and Konyak tribes.

A symbiotic relationship between *Alnus* and nitrogen-fixing actinomycetes of the genus *Frankia* causes Nitrogen fixation in *A. nepalensis* and thus helps in improving degraded jhum lands. *Frankia* are symbiotically present in specialized structure called nodules, in the root system of the host plants. Besides fixing atmospheric Nitrogen, the litter added to the soil provided potassium, phosphorus, calcium and other nutrient through the addition of biomass.

It is a good crop for intercropping as the high rate of re-growth of Alder helps in supplying good quantity of biomass for nutrient enrichment the soil and thus the farmers of Kohima and Phek district are growing paddy in Alder based agroforestry system. In some of horticulture crops as turmeric, Cinchona and *Eletaria subulatum*, this is grown as shade crop. On terraced slopes, the species is commonly pollarded for poles and inter planted with crops like paddy, maize, barley, chili and pumpkin.

Shifting agriculture has become the customs in the region; many of festivals and other social ceremonies are organized in jhum areas. The Indigenous farming system like Alder based farming hold good promises, where crops are grown along with Alder and regular pruning of Alder leaf biomass in the soil for nutrient enrichment is being done [9].

- Akhuni- Akhuni (Axone or Aghuni) is fermented Soya Bean product which is one of the special food additives, a probiotic product which has high culinary and health values. All the Naga food and feast is incomplete without Akhuni. [10]

Axone is often used as flavouring agent for preparing pork, fish and vegetable dishes in all parts of Nagaland. Lotha and Ao tribes like it mildly matured, Angami mostly like strongly fermented fresh axone while Sema and Chakhesang tribes prefer to consume brown fully matured axone [11]. Consumption of axone and axone-like fermented soybean products is claimed to be associated with several health benefits despite of their very peculiar smell. [12]

Traditionally these alkaline and smelly foods are considered good for health and enhancers of life span. [13]. In recent studies several nutraceutical effects are noticed with fermented soy foods, viz., anticancer activity of chungkukjang [14] production and reproduction enhancement in pig, poultry and mice with axone [11,15,16a,b] and prevention of osteoporosis with natto [17]. Axone is prepared at household level without using a starter culture under different tribal practices of Nagaland.

## METHODOLOGY

This study was conducted to get a better understanding of the relationship between food, its medicinal values and health. The survey was conducted in villages surrounding the Kohima city, the capital state of Nagaland. Five villages {Khonoma, Ketseizou, Kisama, Khezakhona, Makhel} were visited during the course of study which was conducted under the umbrella of the project “Gyanodaya –V (2014-2015)”, funded by University of Delhi, India.

The data was collected by visiting the kitchens of different tribal houses to gather information regarding the meals they consume; the methods to prepare food as well their knowledge on the medicinal value of herbs they use in their household.

Oral narrations, informal conversations and interviews of native people using an open ended questionnaire consisting questions related to the local remedies associated with the herbs and other edible items consumed by them was used as the source of the primary data. The data was then analyzed in order to reach a definite conclusion.

Photography and videography was done to record the observations about the various kitchen articles, food items like meat, greens, herbs, vegetables etc., which was later analyzed.

Secondary data was collected from the various authentic published resources like journals, books and internet.

## OBSERVATIONS

Naga kitchen is unique in itself whether it is about chulha (Mipho), baskets, their cuisine, the herbs used as home remedies, or utensils. The floor is made up of mixture of mud and cow dung cake. Above chulha is a wooden plank meant for keeping woods.

### A. Kitchen tools

The kitchen is full of varieties of utensils which can be divided into two sets. The modern kitchen part which shows the stainless steel plates, glasses, spoon and the chinese mud cups, LPG gas fully modernized version but on the other hand the other part of the same kitchen is completely traditional. The chulha (Mipho) [Fig. I] made up of red mud/earthen mud. The oak woods are used for fire and cooking. Traditionally Mithun horns are used for drinking purpose but now they are limited to occasions called kiwi. The plates used for eating are more like a tripod stand having less curved bowl over it called kuphi. Their water carrying vessel is more of like an urn called liphii. A wooden mortar and pestle used in making tathu (traditional chutney).

Study revealed that Naga forefathers used to cook food in earthen pots as they tasted better. In Naga kitchen baskets made of bamboo play a vital role as they are used for different purposes. Each basket has different patterns as per their use and they are named differently. Such as:

- Khang: These baskets are weaved in a coarse fashion and have wide pores. They are used for carrying fire woods.
- Melhe: These are shallow plate like baskets, mostly used for winnowing paddy. The strips are closely interwoven and have many uses apart from winnowing.
- Zei: This basket is conical in shape and tightly interwoven. It is special in Naga tradition as it is given to the daughter as a marriage gift.

- Khi: A big Bamboo basket meant for storing paddy. [Fig. II]
- Kephei is a strap of Bamboo which is used to carry the baskets.

## B. Cuisine

Nagaland has very unique cuisine. It is diverse from vegetarian to meats, where non-vegetarian cuisine is an integral portion of Naga platter but incomplete without the vegetables, greens and rice. Generally the food is boiled with organic and fermented spices. Meat is not only limited to chicken but they also relish eating meat of animals like bear, elephants and monkey.

### 1) Meat:

Meat is generally smoke dried especially when it is pork and beef. Smoke drying is generally done from few weeks to a year. Fats from the meat is extracted and stored to be used in cooking purposes as oil.

- Pork: The internal organs of pork are used to cure cold, fever and sour throat by consuming its soup. [Fig. III]
- Chicken: Hens are reared in almost every house and women are fed with it to recover the blood loss after child delivery.
- Mithun: Mithun is the State Animal of Nagaland and among the expensive meats. The meat of the animal is considered a great delicacy and a person who offers the feast with Mithun meat shows his status symbol and richness amongst the other people of his tribe.
- Fishes and Sea Food: A variety of fish species are sold in the market from Rohu to eels and small dolphins. The most common species is Rohu. The fishes are sold dried but eels are sold alive and peeled off before cooking.  
Amongst all the sea food, prawn is the most expensive and all the sea food is imported from other states of the country.
- Mice: Except head and tail, every other part of mice is consumed. Nagas believe that mice meat helps in curing many problems such as asthma, fever. It is sold alive in the markets.
- Rabbit: Its skin is peeled off before cooking and is often consumed in roasted form.
- Frog: Frogs are sold in the market in both the forms alive and dried. It is believed to cure many diseases. Its flesh helps in recovering from burn injuries. Frog soup helps in treating diabetes and high blood pressure.
- Insects: Insects are sold alive and these are important source of proteins.
- Kelu (Pink Worm): It is very nutritious and sold at the rate up to Rs.2000 per basket. These worms are sold alive. It has many medicinal properties. It is taken for joint pain relief and soup of boiled kelu is applied on body to get relief from cramps. [Fig. IV]
- White worms: These small white worms are like caterpillars, nutritious and very costly. [Fig. V]
- Swan (Raja Hans): These are also in the list of meat but not in great demand as a delicacy. It is either boiled or sometimes fried or roasted.

- Snails: Snails are very common in the local market. They are usually fried or boiled and taken as nutritive food. The snails are picked up generally from the fields and private ponds for selling. [Fig. VI]
- Honey comb: These are sold in polybags. The larvae in honey combs are also consumed.

The vendors in the local market were mostly from Bihar and West Bengal and sea food in Nagaland is supplied from Andhra Pradesh.

There are different varieties of wild meat like deer, bear, elephant but they are sold illegitimately since killing these wild animals is against law.

## 2) Spices:

Spices are generally used in making chutneys (thathu). The vital ingredients of thathu are red Naga chilly, ginger, garlic and some herbal leaves pounded together having a spicy taste.

- Naga Red Chilly: This chilly is one of the world's hottest chilly. Its chilliness ranges up to  $1 \times 10^6$  Scoville units. The color ranges from yellow to bright red color. It is very common spice of naga kitchen. [Fig. VII]
- Ginger: Naga ginger is small in size and has a very strong aroma, unlike the common ginger. It is grown organically. It is used as medicine for sour throat and cold, for high blood pressure and also lowers the fever. [Fig. VIII]
- Garlic: It has small bulbs and leaves are also consumed as a vegetable. It is also grown organically, having very strong aroma. It has many medicinal properties as it is good for high bp, curing cold and cough. [Fig. IX]
- Akhuni (Dzachie): Dzachie is the product of fermented soybean seeds. The soybean seeds are fermented for days till it gives out an aroma and then grinded to use as spice for taste. Mainly used while cooking pork and beef. [Fig. X]

## 3) Vegetables:

Nagaland people use a wide range of vegetables in their platter and practice a healthy cooking style. They generally prefer boiled vegetables instead of deep frying. Some popular vegetables used in their household are:

- Tomato: Two varieties of tomatoes are found having different shape, size and color. The small and cherry shaped local tomatoes are seasonal and easily accessible. This tomato is sour in taste and used for making soups. Whereas the wild tomatoes are more like egg shaped and used in thathu preparation and grown in kitchen gardens. This tomato can be used as a substituent of local tomato as local tomatoes are rare during winters. [Fig. XI, XII]
- Kochu (Yam): Kochu is edible underground stem same as colocasia. It turns white when boiled in water. It is considered to be more nutritious than potato. [Fig. XIII]
- Bottle gourd: It is like an urn. The tender gourd is consumed by cooking but when it ripens it is dried and becomes hard and brown in color. The tip is cut down and cleaned up with a thin bamboo stick and water after which it is used for storing fluids. [Fig. XIV]
- Chow Chow /squash (*Sechium edule*): Squash is a climber commonly found in Nagaland. The fruit is often cooked. Tender shoots and leaves are also used as vegetable and also used to feed pigs. [Fig. XV]
- Sesame and Millet: The seeds are used for extracting oil. Seeds are grinded and used as flour for making chapattis. Some people fry the seeds to eat.



- Zhonghchah: The botanical name of the plant could not be identified. This is a kind of bean bright green in color with long edible pods. It is eaten cooked or raw. [Fig. XVI]
- Bamboo: Tender bamboo shoots are the important delicacy of Nagas with pork and other meats and these are also sometimes fermented and consumed with meat. The juice of bamboo is cream in color and sold in local markets in plastic bottles. Bamboo culms are used for making mugs and moras.
- Lei (Mustard): The leaves are boiled with water with or without salt. It is an important green of their cuisine.
- Collard (*Brassica oleracea*): Collard leaves are common in Nagaland and can be easily found. It is a winter crop. It is boiled for consuming. [Fig. XVII]
- Nettle Grass (*Urtica dioica* L.): It is locally known as Lovie. The bristles of the leaves cause itching when touched. Some people consume it by boiling as it removes the stings. Earlier people use to peel off the epidermis of the bush and extract fiber from it to make shawls. Some people believe that Lovie is useful for cancer treatment but some considered that it has some side effects. [Fig. XVIII]

#### 4) Fruits:

- Rum (*Rubus ellipticus*): Rum is a kind of berry which fruits during May –July. It is bright yellow in color and sweet in taste. The rum plant can be easily seen on high altitudes at shady places. The fruit is used for oral cavity problems. [Fig. XIX]
- Wild Apples: Wild apples are the most common fruit during winters. The apples are green in color and sour in taste. The wild apples are used for commercial capita. The fresh apples are chopped down and boiled with sugar and then kept in bright sun for dehydration till the color changes to sunset orange. [Fig. XX]
- Phomelo: It is a sour fruit from lemon family. It is lemon yellow in color from outside and has peach color from inside. Generally it is taken in salads and also for cooking pork as it reduces the fat. The leaves of phomelo are used for cleaning the floors and also for washing the clothes. [Fig. XXI]
- Gooseberry (Amla): It is a wild seasonal fruit small and green in color. It is sour in taste and a rich source of vitamin C. The juice of this fruit is used for bladder ailment and cold and cough.
- Anaras (Pineapple): Lower regions of Nagaland are good producer of pineapple. One can easily see the fields of pineapple on the way to Kohima. Pineapple of this state is among the best in the world as they are very sweet and with less or no fibre.
- Banana: Banana of Nagaland is small in size and seeded. The flower buds and tender shoots of banana are used as vegetable. The leaves are used in a traditional manner to serve food, for selling vegetables and meats.
- Burma Badam: Burma badam is one of the dry fruit known to Nagaland. It has a hard covering. This fruit is imported from Burma and is sweet in taste. [Fig. XXII]

#### 4) Cereals:

- Rice: Staple food of Nagaland. [Fig. XXIII]

Wet rice cultivation is a common practice. During paddy seedling transplantation naga people help each other. The threshed crop is pounded using traditional mortar and pestles (pounder) and then winnowed with melhe. Milled rice consumption is less practiced here.

Generally boil rice is consumed but often taken as puffed and fried form.

Varieties of wet rice-

- a. Mekhrehla – It is an expensive variety of rice used on special occasions. The grains are soft and smell good when cooked.
  - b. Kemesu - Another variety of wet rice which used for daily cooking purpose.
  - c. Kemenya – A variety of sticky rice used for making zutho (rice beer). This rice is not used for daily cooking purpose as it becomes less in quantity after cooking.
  - d. Riiluo – This is red color rice used in daily cooking purposes.
  - e. Nierhiiko – A variety of sticky rice which is fried after threshing to make them puffed and used as snacks.
- Naga Dal or Kholar :  
This pulse is indigenous to Nagaland. Naga dal is a variety of kidney bean grown in the North East Asia. The most common variety is the Adzuki bean (*Vigna angularis* (Willd.) Ohwi & H. Ohashi), belonging to family Fabaceae. The boiled dal is consumed with rice.
  - Corn/ Maize :  
Corn is generally grown in the month of July to August. Various colors of corns are hanged from the roof top of the house. Generally corn is roasted or boiled for consumption. Roasting is the most common way of consuming.

#### 5) Herbs in Food:

- Teichiinha: The plant is small in height and has oval leave. The meat is stuffed with these leaves. The leaves are used in meats to reduce swelling and are the fastest way. [Fig. XXIV]
- Nitso (Naga Tulsi): Nitso is used in dry form. It has a pleasant aroma. The seeds are used in food for aroma and can be eaten as such. Nitso is also good for people suffering from high blood pressure, for fever, asthma and gastric problems. [Fig. XXV]
- Nehii: Nehii is a seasonal plant grown in the month of July- August. It is easily available in local market. It is also used in dried form. The smell of nehii is very pleasing, similar to lemon leaf and is used in cooking to give food a good smell. [Fig. XXVI]

#### 6) Medicinal Herbs:

The hillock is gifted with several medicinal herbs which are being used from ancient times till today to cure types of diseases. Most of the medicinal herbs that were seen in the hills during the study had local names and their corresponding botanical names could not be identified as the local tribes did not know their common English names.

- Ginseng (*Panax pseudoginseng*): Ginseng is an expensive herb which is almost at an alarming rate of extinct and found very rare. Ginseng is good for blood purification and people having high blood pressure. But it is risky and avoided for people having low count of leucocytes.
- Chunha /Japan Patta/Elephant Plant (*Colocasia esculenta*): The leaves are sour in taste and are crushed between the palms and applied on the wounded area to stop bleeding and for fast recovery of wound. [Fig. XXVII]

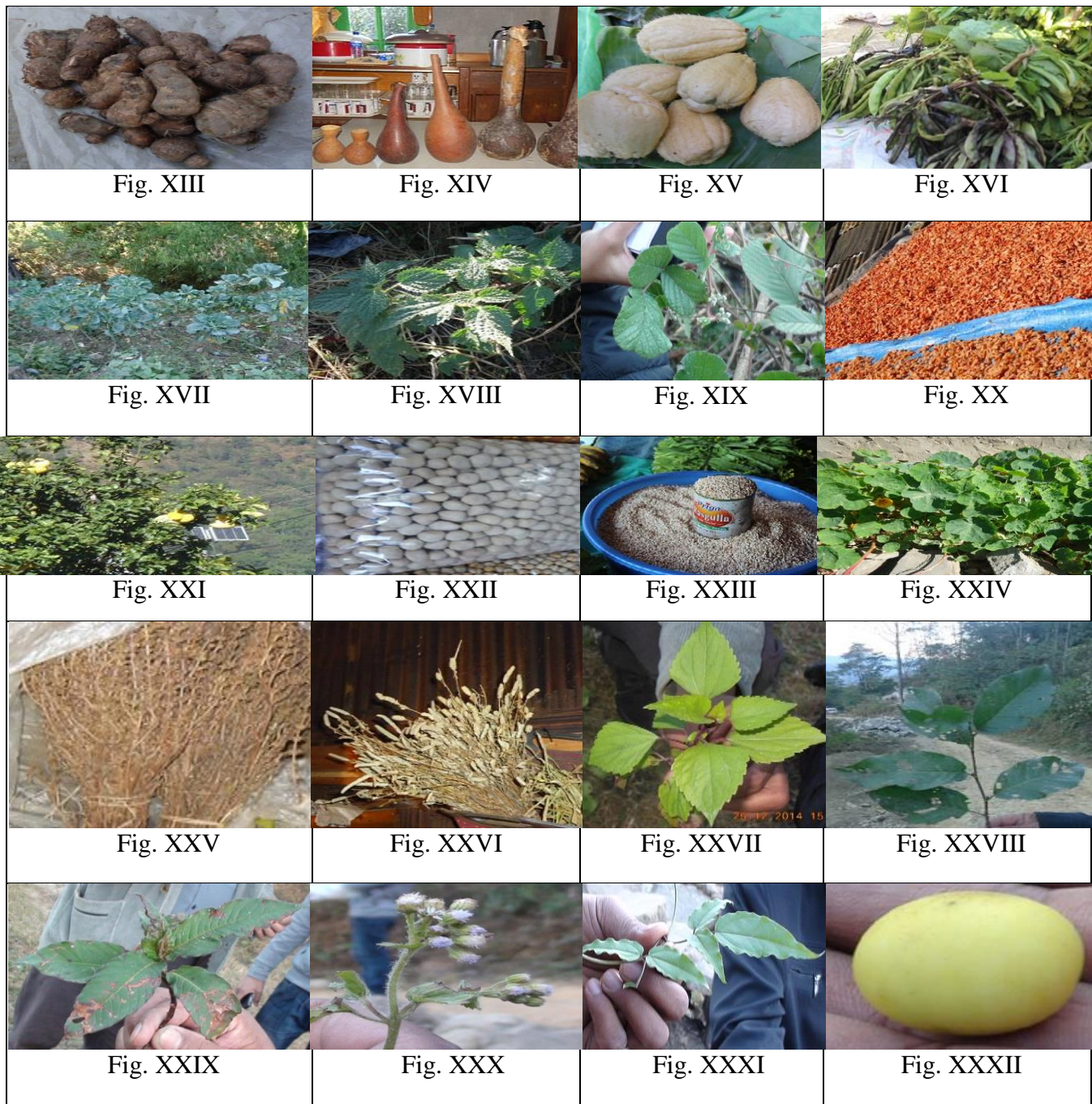
- Alder Tree (*Alnus serrulata*): The tree bark and leaves are rich with medicinal properties. The leaves are used in dysentery whereas bark juice is used for curing breathing problems. Besides having medicinal properties, it is also grown in paddy fields. [Fig. XXVIII]

Many local medicinal herbs that were used by the tribal people could only be identified with their local names. Their corresponding English or Botanical names could not be traced. Some of them are:

- Pieris: It is very commonly collected from jungles and is for medicinal purpose by the local tribes. The plant is like ginger plant. The herb is crushed, dried and juice is made. The herb is good for purifying blood, blood clotting, steam burn and wounds.
- Celo: This herb is used for curing cancer patient.
- Gappa: It is another local herb used for curing blood clotting.
- Rus Tea: Yellow fruits of this plant are used as tea with sugar and for treating cold.
- Gagi: This herb is used for lowering blood pressure. [Fig. XXIX]
- Penie: This herb is used against itching caused due to nettle grass. [Fig. XXX]
- Mezhagapfhi: Leaves of this creeper are used as green vegetable and good for high blood pressure. [Fig. XXXI]
- Chiikrii: A wild plant having small lemon yellow like fruits used for problems related to oral cavities. [Fig. XXXII]







## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Rice is a staple food but still Nagaland is not among the leading producers of rice because rice cultivation practice is limited to their fulfillments and are not cultivated for the commercial capita The glutinous rice is sweet in taste as it is hand shelled therefore the bran and embryo remains intact which contain vitamins, minerals and other nutritional values.

The pink glutinous rice appears so in color because the husk, bran is not removed. The glutinous rice is rich in fat and not in protein.

People of Nagaland mostly eat boil food rather than the fried food. The boil food retains its nutritive value. Green leafy vegetables are important part of their diet, Lot of fresh herbs and greens make their cuisine simple and healthy. Green herbs, vegetables and red meat in their diet makes them rich in vitamins and minerals which give them a golden skin and better eyesight even in old age.

People generally avoid medicines and use more natural herbs and home remedies to cure diseases.

The more use of the herbal methods help in retaining their immunity. Paans and tamuls are the most common mouth fresheners used after meals and because of chewing paan they do not get carminative problems more often.

Red meat contains large amount of fat which is extracted from the meat and people have lean meat in their diet this is one of the reasons that they are fit and slim and makes them less prone to cardiovascular diseases.

The meat kept for weeks and years for smoke drying hanging above the Chula does not smell because it gets completely dehydrated and therefore get less prone to fungal or bacterial attack.

## CONCLUSION

Nagaland has rich diversity not only of their food but also has various methods of food preparation. It has exotic varieties of foods with high nutritional values. The healthy lifestyle and food is reflected in their skin, hair texture and physique. The endemic herbs of Nagaland have significant medicinal value and they are extensively used by people in their houses to cure diseases. Nagaland is full of secrets with respect to herbs, cuisine and cooking methods therefore aptly known as the Flacon Capital of the World and provides a wide scope of research in its floral diversity. The possibility of finding cures to some rare diseases is much likely in the wild beauty of this rich and unexplored state.

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## FIGURE LEGENDS

Fig. I	Mipho
Fig. II	Khi
Fig. III	Pork
Fig. IV	Kelu (Pink Worms)
Fig. V	White Worms
Fig. VI	Snails
Fig. VII	Naga Red Chilly
Fig. VIII	Ginger
Fig. IX	Garlic
Fig. X	Akhuni
Fig. XI	Small Tomato
Fig. XII	Wild Tomato
Fig. XIII	Kochu (Yam)

Fig. XIV	Dried Bottle Gourd
Fig. XV	Chow Chow/ Squash
Fig. XVI	Zhonghchah
Fig. XVII	Collard ( <i>Brassica oleracea</i> )
Fig. XVIII	Nettle Grass ( <i>Utrica dioica</i> )
Fig. XIX	Rum ( <i>Rubus ellipticus</i> )
Fig. XX	Dried Apple Chips
Fig. XXI	Phomelo
Fig. XXII	Burma Badam
Fig. XXIII	Rice
Fig. XXIV	Teichiinha
Fig. XXV	Nitso (Naga Tulsi)
Fig. XXVI	Nehii
Fig. XXVII	Elephant Plant ( <i>Colocasia esculenta</i> )
Fig. XXVIII	Alder Tree ( <i>Alnus serrulata</i> )
Fig. XXIX	Gagi
Fig. XXX	Penie Flower
Fig. XXXI	Mezhagapfhi
Fig. XXXII	Chiikrii