

Healthy soil, healthy food, healthy thoughts: Satvik 2006

A sweet pudding made of seeds of Bamboo that flowers once in 12 years, Amrut Pey, an energetic drink made from Bilipatra and Pipal leaves, a dish made of Aloe Vera, and many more recipes using rare and traditional crop varieties were displayed at Satvik, the fourth Traditional Food Festival (TFF) organized by SRISTI in collaboration with GIAN, NIF and IIMA. The festival also brought the grassroots innovators on a common platform, and helped disseminate the spirit of the organic movement. Idea contest organised on the occasion tried to spread creative consciousness not yet pervasive enough in society.



Satvik, the fourth annual food festival was organized at the new campus of the Indian Institute of Management (IIM), Ahmedabad from 25th November, 2006. Dr Bakul Dholakia, IIM's Director, inaugurated the festival, and stressed the importance of preserving traditional knowledge and agricultural biodiversity. It was also mentioned on the occasion that only food grown on fertile soil can promote constructive ideas, and a realization of right values in the long run.

About 44,000 visitors, including 15,000 children visited the stalls during three days (Nov 25-27, 2006) featuring organic produce, grassroots innovations, traditional foods, and social ventures. These stalls were set up by various organizations, farmers' collectives and individuals from Rajasthan, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Jharkhand, Orissa, and Kerala apart from Gujarat.

Consumer surveys were also undertaken to gauge people's opinions about organic food. Tens of thousand free passes were given to children so that they would bring their parents to the TFF and trigger learning in families from below.

Culinary diversity: The recipe contest

Minor millets and many traditional dishes have been disappearing from our cuisine, leading to a decline in their demand and thus causing loss in agrobiodiversity. The food festival provided an opportunity to familiarize the urban audience with recipes made from these crops, and to utilize consumer demand as a major catalyst towards their conservation. In all, 72 food stalls were set up, of which 54 showcased the revival of traditional recipes. Attempt was made to ensure that the recipes were free from



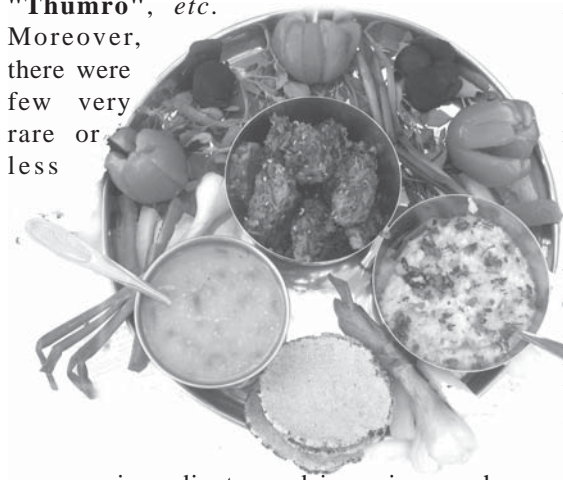
The food festival provided the platform to reach out to as many people as possible, and to sensitize them about the implications of going organic, conserving not only less known crops but also varieties of different food and other crops for which market did not exist. There was a special focus on the school going children; for moulding the consumption preference of young people is one of the major challenges faced by the organic movement.

artificial colours and additives, even if all of them were not entirely based on organic ingredients.

People from all over the state were invited to participate and submit their recipes and bring a sample a day before the TFF. The entries were judged by Ms Rekhaben Mehta (Retd. HoD, Health and Nutrition, DD College of Home Science, and a regular columnist in a leading local newspaper), Ms Kirti Rathod (winner of the 2nd prize during the first recipe contest, and an active participant in SRISTI activities concerning promotion of traditional food varieties), and Ms Sudhaben Dhanesha (a traditional food expert and winner of the special prize during the first food festival for bringing 30 recipes made from rare and less cultivated crops).

The competition received a total of 49 some what unique recipes (either in terms of ingredients or in the way of presentation) representing a diversity of cultural patterns. There were many interesting entries like "**Makai Paniya**" and "**Makai ki Thuli**", two dishes made of Maize (*Zea mays* L.), "**Urd ka Vada**", a snack made of Black Gram (*Phaseolus mungo* L.), "**Bavta ka Ladoo/Papad**", a sweet and a snack made of Finger Millet (*Eleusine coracana* (L.) Gaertn.), "**Baans ke beej ka Sheera**", a sweet pudding made of Bamboo (*Bambusa arundinacea* (Retz.) Willd.) seeds, "**Kodri ki Khichdi**", a dish made of Kodo Millet (*Paspalum scrobiculatum* L.), "**Marua ki Sharbat**", a drink made of Marua (*Ocimum basilicum* L.), "**Kothambda ka wafer**", wafers made of Wild Melon (*Cucumis callosus* (Rottl.) Cogn. ex Cogn. & Harms), "**Ranikela ki Shak**", "**Thumro**", etc.

Moreover, there were few very rare or less



common ingredients used in recipes such as "**Kunvarpathu Shak**", a vegetable made of Aloe Vera (*Aloe vera* (L.) Webb. & Berth.), "**Arbi**

Singhada ki Tikki", a snack made of Coco Yam (*Colocasia esculenta* (L.) Schott), and Water Chestnut (*Trapa natans* L. var. *bispinosa* (Roxb.) Makino)}, and energetic drinks like "**Ashtamrut**", and "**Amrut Pey**" prepared from Apple Wood, (*Aegle marmelos* (L.) Corr.) and Pipal (*Ficus religiosa* L.) leaves.

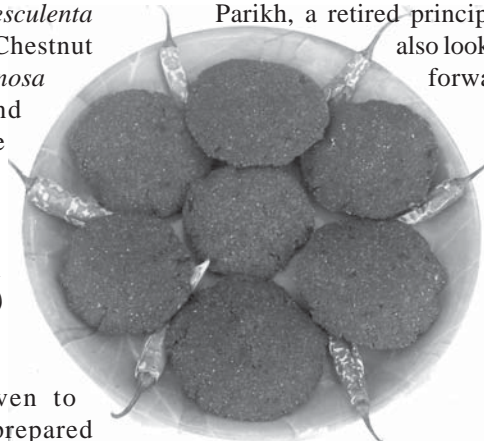
The first prize was given to "**Khatta Mitha Gola**" prepared from Dates (*Phoenix sylvestris* (L.) Roxb.), Elephant apple (*Limonia acidissima* L.), and jaggery. "**Kodri ki Khichdi**" made of Kodo millet (*Paspalum scrobiculatum* L.) won the



second prize. The third prize was given to "**Amrut Pey**", "**Chitravali ki Chutney**" and "**Hariyalu Shak**". Ms Hema Mehta, who has studied home science and read many books on traditional cuisine, learnt the recipe of Amrut Pey in an old book belonging to her mother-in-law. Chitravali Chutney is made from the roots of Leadwort (*Plumbago zeylanica* L.) and is a very good digestive agent.

Many visitors were pleased to find a variety of dishes that they had heard of but never tasted. "I tasted Saragawa soup, made of Drumstick (*Moringa oleifera* Lam.) for the first time and liked it too. I'm going to go home and prepare it for my husband",

said Roma Bhatt. Dr Narendra Parikh, a retired principal, also looked forward



to this festival all year long. He added "If you want people to adapt to a healthy lifestyle, such festivals should be organized at least every quarter. I never knew *Dhokla* could be cooked using Soyabean (*Glycine max* L.)".

The magic of "Organic"

The food festival also served as a platform for people for various parts of the country to sell their organically grown products. Mr P Surulivel of Tamilnadu brought organically grown cardamom variety. One of the Honey Bee Network volunteer did a survey in the nearby market and found the price of good quality dried cardamom, and accordingly suggested Mr Surulivel. By lunch, all his cardamom was sold, fetching him more than double the profit he originally expected. One could not imagine the happiness on his face. Mr Sabu Varghese who came on the second day with his cardamom variety also managed to sell it fast, and at a very good profit.

Navara rice, a variety of rice, which grows in the wild in some pockets of Kerala, was also a major attraction. Though priced at Rs. 400 a kg, it found many customers who bought the 100 gm samples. The rice is claimed to have medicinal properties, particularly for people with heart problems, diabetes and nervous disorders.

Khedut haat



One of the most important features of the festival was the Khedut Haat, which gave the farmers a platform to sell their products directly to the customers. Eighty farmers from 30 villages displayed around 15,000 kg of organic products. They were happy with the direct sales approach, as they collected much higher profit than they could have got otherwise.

Kankuben made such a lot of profit that she was finally able to afford a cell phone. "The cell phone allows me to keep in touch with people. I can now get orders on my phone".

Another farmer, Mr Mahendra Patel, who participated in the festival for the first time displayed four varieties of



Amla, candies and mouth freshner made of Amla. He wished he had brought more products to the festival as all his organic wheat biscuits were sold out by the second day. He plans to bring a variety of organic products to the next festival as per the feedback of the visitors. Sardar Patel Farm, a well-known organic farm, has been a regular participant in the food festival during the last four years. This year, they had brought over 25 varieties of grains and 12 kinds of vegetables and fruits, all of which were sold by the third day. Mr Pratik Patel, an organic farmer was very happy to see many people informed about organic products. He said "Until last year, people used to enquire about organic products. This year, almost all the visitors were aware of organic farm products. When such customers buy our products, we also feel satisfied."

Mr Mukesh of YUVA, an NGO in Rapar, Gujarat recalled how only one farmer had participated in the first food festival. The farmers later formed an association, and this year, 31 farmers participated in the festival displaying organic and dairy products from their area. He believes that the number will increase to 70 participants for the coming food festival. He added, "In each festival, we gauge the market requirements and consumer behaviour, with the result that this time not even a grain was left unsold". He also emphasized the need for value addition in the products saying "We need to lay more importance on value addition in products to make them appealing to the urban dwellers and to make the festival a bigger success".

Ms Rita Rathode of Jasdan, coordinator of an organic farmers group, brought 40 farmers, of whom 20 were women. She appreciated the efforts of SRISTI in organizing such a unique festival and suggested that the space allotted to the stalls in the Khedut Haat should be increased, so that customers can be attended well.



Face painting, T-shirt painting, and hand painting done by students of the National Institute of Design and the Indian Institute of Management, Ahmedabad

The wild varieties of chilly brought by Mr R.G. Hedge were well appreciated by the people. Since he had mainly brought the varieties for demonstration, many were left disappointed as they were too eager to buy it after tasting it. The black pepper he had brought also generated a lot of interest among the customers. Walnuts from Kashmir brought by Mr Mushtaq Dar were also liked by many people.

Grassroots creativity on display

An exhibition showcased by GIAN and NIF displayed innovations like a cycle sprayer, an amphibious bicycle, a mechanical thresher, tongs, tawas, firkis, etc. Visitors showed a lot of interest in these innovations and many of them were sold quickly.

Mr Mansukhbhai Prajapati displayed his non-stick clay tawas (earthen cooking plates coated with non-stick material) and earthen refrigerator, "Mitti Cool". He sold all his 400 tawas in two days and was very happy with the overwhelming response that he received from the urban dwellers. "Such festivals provide a very good platform for grassroots innovators. The objective of the food festival i.e., adapting to natural lifestyle was one strong factor for the sale of my products", commented the innovator. He too wished that such festivals were held every quarter.

Mr Ravajibhai Savaliya also sold out his entire stock of Ribbed Tawa. People responded very positively to his design which has now been proved to have higher thermal efficiency. The University Department of Chemical Technology (UDCT), Mumbai has confirmed the advantage of ribbing in increasing thermal efficiency besides similar

confirmation by Indian Institute of Petroleum earlier. This was sent for testing by GIAN (West) and NIF under the CSIR-NIF partnership for value addition in different areas. It could have enormous implications for saving energy in industrial boilers worldwide-another example of grassroots to global (g2g).

Ms Doru Kachu and her husband from UK have attended many food festivals in there and were happy to visit Satvik while they were passing through Ahmedabad on their India trip. "It is good to see that such things are happening in India. Such fairs are also good for the sustainability of farmers." Of course they could not notice that in UK, the focus was on food rather than conserving agrobiodiversity alongside. Innovative tongs helping one carry hot vessels with more convenience than the conventional ones were liked by consumers a great deal.

With the kite flying festival around, motor operated *Firkis* were also sold out quickly. These innovative *firkis* work on a battery to wind the thread, when pressed from one end and were available at Rs 225. The idea was that when a kite was cut, the thread had to be wound up manually. This took a lot of time and strain. With motor inside winding took place fast without tiring the flyer. The Robocrats, a club for engineering students from around

Gujarat, also displayed an innovation relating to the kite festival. These student innovators designed a low cost method for shielding cyclists from stray kite strings. They distributed hundreds of such shields free among the visitors and the whole concept was highly appreciated.

Many new mentors had shown their interest in further development of technologies and providing financial support to the innovators. The support staff and innovators received several queries from the visitors, on topics like business development of innovations. The response received from the mentors incubating some of the grassroots innovations during the food festival is being used to strengthen the on-line collaboration model developed by SRISTI.

Social ventures

There were stalls where physically challenged children sold their paper crafts. Another NGO, Arzoo working with riot affected Hindu & Muslim children sold the beautiful cards made of hand made paper. Ms Sulekha Ali, who runs the organization, recalls that "For the last two years, I was attending the festival only as a visitor. This year, on SRISTI's suggestion, we decided to set up a stall displaying the hand-made paper cards, diaries, and products made by the riot-affected




Children from Arzoo displaying handmade paper cards



Some visitors and participants expressed an interest in holding the traditional food festival during every quarter. Other suggestions were: organizing region wise stalls, and including larger stalls and a bigger seating area to reduce crowding. Mr Mahendra Patel emphasized the need for forming associations of farmers in any area prior to the festival, so that they can attend the festival in groups and travel costs can be cut down. Many participants suggested that a meeting should be organized prior to the festival where the potential participants can interact amongst themselves, and discuss the rules and regulations to be followed. This way the inconsistency observed in the prices of some of the goods across the stalls can also be dealt with. It was also felt that a certification mechanism should be introduced so that only farmers with genuine organic products are encouraged. (Those interested in participating in future fairs should get in touch with SRISTI)

children". She suggests that the festival should be extended for a few more days, and the entry fees could be increased. She plans to display paintings, flower pots, cups, and other items made by the children in the next festival. Darpana Academy had a stall where women from their village development project sold their goods. Students from IIMA are now planning to join hand next time to arrange a social venture fair along side Satvik 2007. Social, cultural and culinary diversity will reinforce each other and make us respect the salt of life, the diversity.

practices, as compared to 40 stalls in 2004. The total sales for this food festival were about three times that of the first festival. This year, about 44,000 people attended the festival, more than twice the number during the first one. The food festival attracted participants from states like Uttaranchal, Arunachal Pradesh, Punjab, Himachal Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Jammu and Kashmir, Jharkhand, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Rajasthan, Orissa, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, and Gujarat.

The spirit of Traditional Food Festival hinges closely on the ability of urban consumers to pay for conservation of agro-biodiversity in the rural areas. They would do so only when taste is blended with information and innovations. Satvik 2007 awaits new ideas, new innovations and new tastes. 

The road ahead

This year, a total of 72 stalls showcased products and information about traditional food

Visitors and organizers of the fair had a number of suggestions that SRISTI would like to implement.

