

# FESTIVALS AND INDIGENOUS FOOD OF EASTERN BHUTAN

*Cultural and  
Culinary Treasures*



༢༠༢༣  
2023

འད་ལུགས་  
གནམ་ལོ་ ལུ་མོ་ཡོས་ལོ།

Water Female  
Rabbit Year

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# FESTIVALS AND INDIGENOUS FOOD OF EASTERN BHUTAN



## Chunyipai Losar

In Eastern Bhutan the New Year, referred to as Sharchogpa Losar is celebrated on the first day of the twelfth lunar month according to the astrological calculations taught by the teachings Lama Gongdü (ལྷ་མ་དཀོན་མཆོག་འདུལ་) by Sanggyé Lingpa (1340-1396). On this special day, families gather to eat good food, play games and party in the evening. Men often play archery while women stay at home. In the evening, men and women have parties at one of the households. Today, many families go out and have picnic lunches. The Chunyipai Losar had been removed from the list of national holidays at one point but it was recently reinstated.

The day is also known as the Traditional Day of Offering as some people claim that residents of Bhutan made their annual offering of grains to Zhabdrung Ngakwang Namgyel in Punakha on this day. The Trongsa Penlop is said to have led the representatives of eight eastern regions in their offerings, as the Paro Penlop coordinated the people of western Bhutan and the Darkar Penlop oversaw the people of the south. In this regard, some people place great significance on this New Year as a symbol of Bhutan's sovereignty and solidarity.

An indigenous dish in Mongar, especially during the orange season is the lightly fermented Chey Tham which is served during special occasions.

MONGAR

## January

འབྲུག་ལྗོངས་བཟུ་གཅིག་པ་དང་བཟུ་གཉིས་པ།

**2023** གནམ་ལོ་ ལྷ་མོ་སྤྲུག་ལོ།  
Water Male Tiger Year

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
༡༠ 1	༡༡ 2	༡༢ 3	༡༣ 4	༡༤ 5	༡༥ 6	༡༦ 7
༡༧ 8	༡༨ 9	༡༩ 10	༢༠ 11	༢༡ 12	༢༢ 13	༢༣ 14
༢༤ 15	༢༥ 16	༢༦ 17	༢༧ 18	༢༨ 19	༢༩ 20	༣༠ 21
༡ 22	༢ 23	༣ 24	༤ 25	༥ 26	༦ 27	༧ 28
༨ 29	༩ 30	༡༠ 31				

31 Phurba Drubchen, Ramjar

2 Winter Solstice

22 Chugnyipa Losar

## Chey Tham



### RECIPE



#### Ingredients

1. Bitter buckwheat flour- 300 g
2. Oranges- 400 g
3. A pinch of Cinnamon powder
4. Orange peel and cooking oil - for the candle



#### Directions

1. Cook the buckwheat flour with water into a runny soup.
2. Peel the oranges carefully, cut the oranges into slices and remove the seeds.
3. Add the orange slices into the buckwheat soup and mix it well. Ferment the mixture for a day at ambient temperature.
4. Sprinkle the Cinnamon on top and serve it the next day. It has a delicious taste of citrus along with a sour-bitter taste from fermented bitter buckwheat.
5. Don't throw the orange peel! With a bit of cooking oil, you can turn them into a festive and fragrant table candle.



# FESTIVALS AND INDIGENOUS FOOD OF EASTERN BHUTAN



## Phurba Drupchen

In February Trashi Yangtse celebrates the famous festival, Phurba Drupchen. The week-long festival is filled with mask dances and a variety of cultural programs such as dancing and singing. The name originates from Tibet and the word "Drupchen" means "great accomplishment". A sincere participation in this festival is believed to generate great merit and realization equal to one year of retreat.

Food and drinks play an important role in the celebrations and one of the typical and indigenous foods eaten in Trashi Yangtse during festivals is "Datshi paa". The typical datshi paa is made from local cow cheese. Sun drying for a day or two gives the cheese its distinct taste.

TRASHIYANGTSE

## February

འབྲུག་རྒྱ་བཙུ་གཉིས་པ་དང་དང་པ་།

**2023** གནམ་ལོ་ ལྷ་མོ་སྤྲལ་ལོ་ ལྷ་མོ་ཡོས་ལོ།  
Water Male Tiger Year & Water Female Rabbit Year

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
			༡༡ 1	༡༢ 2	༡༣ 3	༡༤ 4
༡༥ 5	༡༦ 6	༡༧ 7	༡༨ 8	༡༩ 9	༢༠ 10	༢༡ 11
༢༢ 12	༢༣ 13	༢༤ 14	༢༥ 15	༢༦ 16	༢༧ 17	༢༨ 18
༢༩ 19	༣༠ 20	༡ 21	༢ 22	༣ 23	༤ 24	༥ 25
༦ 26	༧ 27	༨ 28				

1-5 Phurba Drupchen, Ramjar

21-22 Losar, Water Female Rabbit Year

21-23 Birth Anniversary of His Majesty The King

## Datshi Paa



### RECIPE

#### Ingredients

1. Local cheese (sun-dried for two days) – 500 g
2. Garlic- 100 g
3. Ginger- 100 g
4. Chili powder- 20 g
5. Oil- 10 ml
6. Salt to taste

#### Directions

1. Heat the oil and add the ginger and garlic paste along with chili powder and salt.
2. Add the sun-dried local cheese, cover it and let it simmer for five minutes.
3. Serve it hot with rice.



# FESTIVALS AND INDIGENOUS FOOD OF EASTERN BHUTAN



Photo courtesy: Zhemgang Dzongkhag Facebook page

## Dzongkhag Tshechu

The Zhemgang Tshechu is a religious festival which is celebrated annually in March. It involves a three-day performance of mask and folk dances culminating on the third day with the unfurling of the Guru Thongdroel (a large appliqué painting depicting the 8th century Buddhist master, Guru Padmasambhava).

During this festival, which is the biggest of its kind in the district, large social gatherings attract entire families dressed up in their best traditional costumes and carrying specially prepared and packed lunches. They partake in the celebrations by offering prayers and mingling with family members and friends. It is believed that a mere glance of the Thongdroel – literally meaning “liberation at sight” - cleanses the spectators of sins and allows them to accumulate good merit.

The festival also provides an opportunity to tour the district which is famous for the hot spring at Dunmang, the Royal Manas National Park as well as an interesting mix of local customs and traditions.

One of the popular indigenous foods of Zhemgang is bamboo shoot, as bamboo grows abundantly in the district, especially in Panbang area. For this particular bamboo shoot soup (Jaju) dried bamboo shoots are used.

ZHEMGANG

## March

འབྲུག་ལྗོངས་དང་པ་དང་གཞིས་པ།

2023 གནམ་ལོ་ ལྷོ་ཡོས་ལོ།  
Water Female Rabbit Year

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
			༡༠ 1	༡༠ 2	༡༡ 3	༡༢ 4
༡༣ 5	༡༤ 6	༡༥ 7	༡༦ 8	༡༧ 9	༡༨ 10	༡༩ 11
༢༠ 12	༢༡ 13	༢༢ 14	༢༣ 15	༢༤ 16	༢༥ 17	༢༦ 18
༢༧ 19	༢༨ 20	༢༩ 21	༡ 22	༢ 23	༣ 24	༤ 25
༥ 26	༦ 27	༧ 28	༨ 29	༩ 30	༡༠ 31	

28-31 Dzongkhag Tshechu, Zhemgang

## Bamboo Shoot Curry



### RECIPE



#### Ingredients

1. Dried bamboo shoots- 400 g
2. Milk- 200 ml
3. Butter- 100 g
4. Ginger- 50 g
5. Garlic- 50 g
6. Chili powder- 20 g
7. Salt to taste



#### Directions

1. In a pot melt and heat the butter.
2. Add ginger and garlic paste and fry till it turns golden brown.
3. Add the dried bamboo shoots and fry for a few minutes.
4. Add milk and simmer for ten minutes.
5. Add chili powder and salt to taste and simmer for five more minutes.
6. Serve the dish hot with rice.



# FESTIVALS AND INDIGENOUS FOOD OF EASTERN BHUTAN



## Dueza Festival

This traditional festival is celebrated by the local people of Chhimoong Gewog in Pemagatshel as part of an age-old tradition to ward off evil spirits and to bring harmony and peace to the community. The rituals and performances start on the first day of the second Bhutanese month and they are carried out to appease the local deity. During the festival, men drape in white robes and white hats to represent the fishermen of the community. They chant prayers and proceed in queue to a nearby Chorten (stupa).

One of the indigenous foods prepared during festivals in Pemagatshel is banana stem curry (Jaju). It is an age-old and very traditional dish with a rich taste of butter, cheese and fresh banana stem.

PEMAGATSHEL

## April

འབྲུག་ལྗོངས་གཞི་ས་པ་དང་གསུམ་པ།

**2023** གནམ་ལོ་ ལྷོ་ལོ་ས་ལོ།  
Water Female Rabbit Year

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
						༡༡ 1
༡༢ 2	༡༣ 3	༡༤ 4	༡༥ 5	༡༦ 6	༡༧ 7	༡༨ 8
༡༩ 9	༢༠ 10	༢༡ 11	༢༢ 12	༢༣ 13	༢༤ 14	༢༥ 15
༢༦ 16	༢༧ 17	༢༨ 18	༢༩ 19	༣༠ 20	༡ 21	༢ 22
༣ 23	༤ 24	༥ 25	༦ 26	༧ 27	༨ 28	༩ 29
༡༠ 30	1-15 Dueza Festival, Chimoong Gewog		30 Zhabdrung Kuchoe			

## Banana Stem Curry

### RECIPE



#### Ingredients

1. Banana stem- 300 g
2. Milk- 200 ml
3. Butter- 100g
4. Spring Onion- 100 g
5. Chillies – 50 g
6. Garlic- 50 g
7. Onion- 50 g
8. Local/cottage cheese – 50 g
9. Salt to taste

#### Directions

1. Cut banana stems into thin slices. Keep the slices submerged in water to avoid browning.
2. Heat the butter and add onions followed by chillies, and fry them till the butter separates.
3. Add the banana stem and fry for 2 minutes. Add milk and let it simmer for three to five minutes.
4. Sprinkle the cottage cheese and salt. Add the spring onion and let it simmer for three to five minutes
5. Serve hot with a bowl of rice.



# FESTIVALS AND INDIGENOUS FOOD OF EASTERN BHUTAN



## Preu (Khowchung)

People in Lhuentse celebrate Preu Khowchung in May particularly in Jasabe Chiwog at Tergang Lhakhang from the 10th to 13th day of the 4th month of the Bhutanese calendar every year. The communities seek blessing and protection from natural calamities, disease, famine, and misfortune by praying and making various food offerings wherein the traditional red eggs play a major role.

The Preu festival is associated with Guru Rinpoche who had visited Lhuentse through Boe Khembajong. Every household in the village makes offerings of butter lamps and Tshog, and the main celebration begins on the 9th day of the 4th month of the Bhutanese calendar. On that day, all villagers gather at Tergang Lhakhang to perform rituals and make offerings.

Other parts of the Chiwogs of Kurtoe celebrate only for one day.

Feast offering is done on the 10th day of the 4th month, with boiling every egg that has been collected till then in a big pot along with madder (Rubia Cordifolia). Madder is a natural pigment, traditionally used for dying of textile and paper. These red colored eggs have an important symbolic meaning and represent the red scarfs worn by the monks.

LHUMENTSE

## May

འབྲུག་ལྗོངས་གསུམ་པ་དང་བཞི་པ།

2023 གནམ་ལོ་ ལྷོ་ཡོས་ལོ།  
Water Female Rabbit Year

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
	༡༡ 1	༡༢ 2	༡༣ 3	༡༤ 4	༡༥ 5	༡༦ 6
༡༧ 7	༡༨ 8	༡༩ 9	༢༠ 10	༢༡ 11	༢༢ 12	༢༣ 13
༢༤ 14	༢༥ 15	༢༦ 16	༢༧ 17	༢༨ 18	༢༩ 19	༣༠ 20
༣༡ 21	༣༢ 22	༣ 23	༤ 24	༥ 25	༦ 26	༧ 27
༨ 28	༩ 29	༡༠ 30	༡༡ 31			

30 Preu (Khowchung), Gangzur Gewog

2 Birth Anniversary of 3<sup>rd</sup> King and Teacher's Day

## Red eggs



## RECIPE



### Ingredients

1. Eggs- 20 pieces
2. Madder (Rubia Cordifolia) - 2 g



### Directions

1. Boil the eggs with madder until the egg shells turn bright red, let them cool and offer. Later

they are eaten by the festival guests as "Tshog" (offering) along with rice and curry.



# FESTIVALS AND INDIGENOUS FOOD OF EASTERN BHUTAN



Photo courtesy: By Basang Norbu

## Bokpi Chham

In Zobel village in Pemagatshel, a unique festival tradition exists whereby maize flour is sprinkled on the heads of the spectators upon the completion of a series of mask dances. This peculiar festival takes place on the fourth month of the Bhutanese calendar. The locals believe that these rituals are a reenactment of Guru Rinpoche subduing evil spirits by sprinkling flour on the faces of the malignant spirits who were temporarily blinded and could not run away. This performance is today called Bokpi (flour) Chham (dance).

The dance is often followed by another bizarre carnival wherein dancers perform using wooden phalluses. The dancers adorn themselves with garlands of phalluses made from banana plants and radish that are worn around their necks while they swirl and jump about in sync with the melody of drums, clarinets and cymbals.

It is a unique festival in the age-old bon tradition that is still revered by the locals and is enacted only in remote and scattered rural communities.

An indigenous festival food in Pemagatshel is called Taro Chhame which it is a delicious and spicy soup from whey that is typically served with steamed wheat dough.

PEMAGATSHEL

## June

འབྲུག་ལྗོངས་བཞི་པ་དང་ ལྗེ་པ།

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
				༡༢ 1	༡༣ 2	༡༤ 3
༡༥ 4	༡༦ 5	༡༧ 6	༡༨ 7	༡༩ 8	༢༠ 9	༢༡ 10
༢༢ 11	༢༣ 12	༢༤ 13	༢༥ 14	༢༦ 15	༢༧ 16	༢༨ 17
༢༩ 18	༡ 19	༢ 20	༣ 21	༤ 22	༥ 23	༦ 24
༧ 25	༨ 26	༩ 27	༡༠ 28	༡༡ 29	༡༢ 30	

4-5 Bokpi Chham, Zobel Gewog

4 Lord Buddha's Parinirvana  
28 Guru Rinpoche's Birth Anniversary

## Taro Chamen

### RECIPE



#### Ingredients

- Taro Chamen**
1. Whey- 700 ml
  2. Chili powder- 50 g
  3. Butter- 100g
  4. Garlic leaves- 50 g
  5. Salt to taste

#### Dough

1. Water- 800 ml
2. Wheat flour- 300 g



#### Directions

##### Taro Chamen

1. Finely chop garlic leaves and keep them aside.
2. Heat the pot and add the butter.
3. After the butter melts, add the chopped garlic leaves as well as the chili powder and fry for two minutes
4. Remove the pot from the flame and keep aside to cool before adding the whey.
5. After the ingredients are cooled, add the whey and make it into a soup.
6. Adjust salt per taste.

##### Dough

1. Boil the water and add the wheat flour.
2. Stir it continuously until the water is soaked up and the wheat is cooked.
3. Serve the hot dough along with the Taro chhame.





# FESTIVALS AND INDIGENOUS FOOD OF EASTERN BHUTAN



Photo courtesy: Andrew

## Ter Chham

This festival happens in Trashigang once in three years in the month of June. During this festival, a group of trained men aged from 18 to 60 perform a sacred dance (treasure dance) and go around each household, blessing the villagers and their homes. They wear little, but skeleton masks. During the event, they accept gifts and food offered by the households.

The main food eaten during festivals across Sakteng is called "Serkyong" appearing like a thick cheesy curry. Dried yak or beef is used together with a lot of butter and fermented cheese. This famous fermented cheese (local name: "Zoetey") is commonly made and consumed in Sakteng households. Fresh cheese is stuffed into cow or yak hide pouches and left to ferment near the "Bhukari (indoor firewood stove)" or above the fireplace for several months. The traditional Serkyong tastes very buttery, delicious, and rich.

## Serkyong



TRASHIGANG

## July

འབྲུག་ལྗོངས་ལྷ་ས་དང་རྩུག་པལ།

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
1-6 Ter Chham (Treasure Dance Sakteng)						༡༣ 1
7 2	༨ 3	༩ 4	༡༠ 5	༡༡ 6	༡༢ 7	༡༣ 8
༡༤ 9	༡༥ 10	༡༦ 11	༡༧ 12	༡༨ 13	༡༩ 14	༢༠ 15
༢༡ 16	༢༢ 17	༢༣ 18	༢༤ 19	༢༥ 20	༢༦ 21	༢༧ 22
༢༨ 23	༢༩ 24	༣༠ 25	༣༡ 26	༣༢ 27	༣ 28	༤ 29
༥ 30	༦ 31					

21 First Sermon of Lord Buddha

## RECIPE



### Ingredients

1. Dried meat- 300 g
2. Butter – 300 g
3. Fermented cheese (Zoetey)- 100 g
4. Fresh cottage cheese- 50 g
5. Chili powder- 50 g
6. Salt to taste



### Directions

1. Cook the dried meat and cut it into large dices.
2. Take a pan, heat the butter and add fermented cheese and fresh cottage cheese and let it simmer under low heat until the cheese is melted and combined well with the butter.
3. Add the diced meat into the mixture of butter and cheese and stir it well.
4. Add chili powder to add color and flavor to the dish. Cover and let it cook for 10 to 15 minutes.
5. Adjust seasoning and serve it hot with rice or Dengo (dough made of buckwheat).



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# FESTIVALS AND INDIGENOUS FOOD OF EASTERN BHUTAN



Photo courtesy: ana-cooljapan.com

## Hoongla Choekhor

There are numerous ancient festivals in Trashi Yangtse, and the Hoongla fire ritual is one of the most intriguing. This annual ritual is performed at Tokaphu Lhakhang in Tongzhang village.

The practice roots back to the Bon tradition and is observed around mid-August. In the local belief, the ritual helps to dispel malignant spirits from their communities and it is performed by both laymen and monks.

The ritual begins at dusk with the arrival of two rival groups at the Tokaphu temple representing the four hamlets of the Gewog. The groups are armed with flaring torches made from bamboo, fat and wood. They are also equipped with the so-called Hoongla powder, processed from dried juniper barks, as their chief arsenal. A skirmish then ensues whereby the rival groups spray the Hoongla powder on their opponents culminating into a battle-like scene amid a frenzy of fireballs, loud shrieks and chants. The warriors then circumambulate the temple for three times and continue the ritual till dawn of the next day.

Trashi Yangtse is known to be the only district in Bhutan where the iconic chili variety "Urka Bangla" is grown. Urka Bangla has a fruity flavor and slight sweetness. It is sold fresh or dried, and serves as one of the cash crops for communities like Boomdeling. People in Trashi Yangtse make various dishes out of it, to be eaten during festivals and special occasions. One such dish is "Urka Bangla Kamgey" from dried Urka Bangla.

TRASHIYANGTSE

## August

འབྲུག་ལྗོངས་རྒྱ་རྒྱུག་པ་དང་བདུན་པ།

2023 གནམ་ལོ་ ལྷོ་ཡོས་ལོ།  
Water Female Rabbit Year

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
		༡༥ 1	༡༦ 2	༡༧ 3	༡༨ 4	༡༩ 5
༢༠ 6	༢༡ 7	༢༢ 8	༢༣ 9	༢༤ 10	༢༥ 11	༢༦ 12
༢༧ 13	༢༨ 14	༢༩ 15	༣༠ 16	༡ 17	༢ 18	༣ 19
༤ 20	༥ 21	༦ 22	༧ 23	༨ 24	༩ 25	༡༠ 26
༡༡ 27	༡༢ 28	༡༣ 29	༡༤ 30	༡༥ 31		

1 Hoongla Choekhor, Tongmajangsa Gewog

## Urka Bangala Kamgey

### RECIPE



#### Ingredients

1. Dried Urka Bangla- 500 g
2. Butter- 100 g
3. Garlic, sliced into half - 50 g
4. Onion- 50 g
5. Tomato - 100 g
6. Salt to taste



#### Directions

1. Heat a pan and melt the butter. Once the butter melts, add the sliced garlic and fry till it gets golden brown.
2. Add the onions and tomatoes and fry till the tomatoes become soft and form into a nice paste.
3. Add the dried Urka Bagla which is cut in half and fry for ten minutes and add salt to taste.
4. Serve it as a side dish along with rice and curry, as it is eaten as an appetizer.



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# FESTIVALS AND INDIGENOUS FOOD OF EASTERN BHUTAN



## Jomo Lhasoel

**A**ma Jomo is the quintessential protecting deity of Bhutanese living in Merak and Sakteng highlands in Trashigang. During Jomo Lhasoel festival, a woman, known as Jomo, invokes the deity and cures the sick through unique rituals. This practice has spread to other parts of eastern Bhutan, too.

The Jomo possesses the divine powers of healing. Before rituals begin, a special altar for Ama Jomo and her nine (sometimes seven) daughters is built. This is followed by "Mo", a divination to identify other female spirits called Khandroms, apart from Ama Jomo, who would help them. After this, the Jomo is said to be possessed and loses her normal state of consciousness. The rituals continues with what appears like a heated exchange between the Jomo and the evil spirits, the ones responsible for making someone sick. During the process, the Jomo embodies these spirits by changing her voice and language. She yawns, shivers and commands the evil spirits to leave the bodies of those sick.

Apart from individual healing rituals, the Jomo performs annual household rituals to ensure the vitality and fertility of household members, animals, and crops.

One of the indigenous foods eaten by the highlanders is called "Kupa", which is made from fermented yak or cow cheese. The cheese is fermented in the same way as the famous Zoetey (fully fermented cheese stuffed in animal hide) but the duration of fermentation is shorter, usually just one month. Kupa is often consumed with "maize dengo" (maize dough).

The maize dengo is made by adding maize flour to boiling water and stirring it vigorously till it gets cooked and becomes a dough.

## Kupa



TRASHIGANG

## September

འབྲུག་ལྗོངས་བདུན་པ་དང་བརྒྱད་པ།

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
					༡༧ 1	༡༨ 2
༡༩ 3	༢༠ 4	༢༡ 5	༢༢ 6	༢༣ 7	༢༤ 8	༢༥ 9
༢༦ 10	༢༧ 11	༢༨ 12	༢༩ 13	༣༠ 14	༡ 15	༢ 16
༣ 17	༤ 18	༥ 19	༦ 20	༧ 21	༨ 22	༩ 23
༡༠ 24	༡༡ 25	༡༢ 26	༡༣ 27	༡༤ 28	༡༥ 29	༡༦ 30

29 Jomo Lhasoel Festival, Merak Gewog

20 Thimphu Drubcheo (Thimphu Only)  
24 Blessed Rainy day  
24-26 Thimphu Tshechu (Thimphu Only)

## RECIPE



### Ingredients

1. Cheese, fermented for one month- 500 g
2. Butter- 200 g
3. Chilli powder- 50 g
4. Salt to taste



### Directions

1. In a pot take some water and add some salt.
2. Add the butter, fermented cheese and chilli powder
3. and cook for ten minutes. Serve it with maize dengo (maize dough).



# FESTIVALS AND INDIGENOUS FOOD OF EASTERN BHUTAN



Photo courtesy: Hkhangjey's fb page

## Dashain

**D**ashain, also known as Vijaydashami in Sanskrit, is one of the most important festivals of the Hindu communities in Dagana and the southern parts of Bhutan and it falls in the month of October.

In Sanskrit, the celebration is also known as Nauratha or Navaratri, which means "Nine Nights" in English. It begins on the month's lunar night known as Shukla paksha and finishes on Purnima, the full moon. Among the fifteen days over which it is celebrated, the tenth day, Dashain, is the main festival.

Rice, yogurt, and vermillion is mixed to make "Tika", which the elder relatives apply to the forehead of younger ones, in order to wish them prosperity in the coming years. This ritual of taking tika helps to renew and strengthen the community ties. Tika's red color stands for the blood that binds the family together. Older family members also bless younger relatives by offering them "Dakshina (little sum of money)".

For five days until the full moon, families and close relatives visit each other to exchange gifts, send greetings, and partake in lavish meals.

The days are celebrated with lots of foods, such as "Dhakani", which is made of rice, butter, milk and sugar.

DAGANA

## October

འབྲུག་ལྗོངས་བརྒྱུད་པ་དང་དགུ་པ།

**2023** གནམ་ལོ་ ལྷོ་ཡོས་ལོ།  
Water Female Rabbit Year

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
༡༧ 1	༡༨ 2	༡༩ 3	༢༠ 4	༢༡ 5	༢༢ 6	༢༣ 7
༢༤ 8	༢༥ 9	༢༦ 10	༢༧ 11	༢༨ 12	༢༩ 13	༣༠ 14
༡ 15	༢ 16	༣ 17	༤ 18	༥ 19	༦ 20	༧ 21
༨ 22	༩ 23	༡༠ 24	༡༡ 25	༡༢ 26	༡༣ 27	༡༤ 28
༡༦ 29	༡༧ 30	༡༨ 31				

24 Dashain

## Dhakani

### RECIPE



#### Ingredients

1. Milk- 700 ml
2. Rice- 300 g
3. Butter 200 g
4. Sugar- 100 g



#### Directions

1. Heat the butter in a pan.
2. Add rice and fry till the rice turns golden brown.
3. Add milk and stir to avoid the rice and milk to stick to the pan.
4. Cover and let it simmer for ten minutes.
5. Add sugar and stir.
6. Cover again and cook for five to ten minutes.
7. Serve hot or cold according to preference.



# FESTIVALS AND INDIGENOUS FOOD OF EASTERN BHUTAN



Photo courtesy: fb page-finchin Gakhi Adventures

## Kharam Festival

The annual Kharam (bad luck and evil spirits) festival is celebrated in Chali Gewog in Mongar. The traditional intention of the festival is to ward off bad luck and evil spirits from families, houses, people, villages, properties and cattle. The festival is celebrated for three days around mid-November. The first day is celebrated as the land festival (sa kharam), while the second day is dedicated to cows and cattle (nor kharam), and the third day of the festival is dedicated to the villagers (mi kharam).

Especially this last day of the festival is usually celebrated with good food and greeting rituals among the villagers.

One of the indigenous foods eaten in Mongar is called "Ashom Thukpa", consumed during festivals and on special occasions. It is a stew made from maize which is the most important crop of Mongar. It is a very delicious, nutritious, and comforting meal.

MONGAR

## November

འབྲུག་ལྗོངས་དགུ་པ་དང་བཅུ་པ།

**2023** གནམ་ལོ་ ལྷོ་ཡོས་ལོ།  
Water Female Rabbit Year

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
			༡༩ 1	༢༠ 2	༢༡ 3	༢༢ 4
༢༣ 5	༢༤ 6	༢༥ 7	༢༦ 8	༢༧ 9	༢༨ 10	༢༩ 11
༣༠ 12	༣༡ 13	༡ 14	༢ 15	༣ 16	༤ 17	༥ 18
༦ 19	༧ 20	༨ 21	༩ 22	༡༠ 23	༡༡ 24	༡༢ 25
༡༣ 26	༡༤ 27	༡༥ 28	༡༦ 29	༡༧ 30		

12 Kharam Festival

1 Coronation Day of His Majesty The King

4 Descending Day of Lord Buddha

11 Birth Anniversary of 4<sup>th</sup> King & Constitution Day

## Ashom Thukpa



### RECIPE



#### Ingredients

1. Maize- 300 g
2. Pork/beef (fresh/dry)- 200 g
3. Potatoes- 100 g
4. Beans-100 g
5. Onion leaves- 50g
6. Ginger-20 g
7. Garlic -20 g
8. Chili powder-10 g
9. Sichuan Pepper (Thingye)-5 g
10. Salt to taste



#### Directions

1. The maize is sundried and afterwards the kernels are roasted in a pan.
2. Pound the maize and wash it to remove the skin before slowly boiling the pounded maize.
3. Slowly cook it into a stew for 8 hours or longer along with pork or beef (nor-
4. mally pork or beef feet are used) as well as potatoes, beans and chili powder. Garnish the stew with fried onion leaves, ginger and garlic, add salt and Sichuan pepper (thingye) and serve hot.



# FESTIVALS AND INDIGENOUS FOOD OF EASTERN BHUTAN



## Kidlung Choedpa

**K**idlung Choedpa is celebrated every year on the 14th and 15th day of the 11th month of the Bhutanese calendar at Kidlung Lhakhang in Gangzur Gewog. The celebration starts early in the morning. Although the first day's celebration concludes with the Nub Chham, there is a midnight dance called Re Chham. On the second day, people witness the dances of Gonpo (Mahakala) and Lhamo (Mahakali) all day long. The participants offer prayers, and sampling of various food and beverages is an important part of this festival.

Kidlung Lhakhang has a sacred iron chain which was used to prevent the statue of Tshepagmey (Boddhisattava of longevity) from escaping the temple. One can also see a footprint of Tshepagmey outside the temple.

One of the indigenous foods eaten during special days is Rinchen Wangdi khagthem jaju (Watercress soup). Watercress is a very healthy perennial plant which is rich in Vitamin C, which supports the immune system, helps in injuries and supports healthy collagen production. It is consumed by people of Minje Gewog in Lhuentse and they make it into delicious jaju (soup) and have it with rice. It has a bitter taste which goes well with milk and cheese.

LHUMENTSE

## December

འབྲུག་ལྗོངས་བཅུ་པ་དང་བཅུ་ག་གཅིག་པ།

**2023** གནམ་ལོ་ ལྷོ་ཡོས་ལོ།  
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					༡༩ 1	༢༠ 2
༢༡ 3	༢༢ 4	༢༣ 5	༢༤ 6	༢༥ 7	༢༦ 8	༢༧ 9
༢༨ 10	༢༩ 11	༣༠ 12	༡ 13	༢ 14	༣ 15	༤ 16
༥ 17	༦ 18	༧ 19	༨ 20	༩ 21	༡༠ 22	༡༡ 23
༡༢ 24	༡༣ 25	༡༤ 26	༡༥ 27	༡༦ 28	༡༧ 29	༡༨ 30
༡༩ 31	25-26 Kidlung Choedpa		17 National Day			

## Rinchen Wangdi Khagthem Jaju



### RECIPE

#### Ingredients

1. Rinchen Wangdi Khagthem (Watercress)- 300g
2. Milk- 300 ml
3. Local Cheese- 20 g
4. Onion-50 g
5. Tomato-50 g
6. Garlic- 20 g
7. Chili powder- 10 g
8. Oil- 10 ml

#### Directions

1. Heat the oil in a pan and add the onions and fry till it gets golden brown.
2. Add the tomatoes and garlic and simmer for one minute.
3. Now add the Rinchen Wangdi khagthem and fry for two minutes before adding the milk.
4. Add chili powder and local cheese and boil for five minutes.
5. Serve hot with your favorite rice.





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## Festivals and Indigenous Food of Eastern Bhutan

### *Cultural and Culinary Treasures*

The Eastern districts of Bhutan boast of colorful and vibrant festivals throughout the year.

These festivals present a unique opportunity to encounter age-old traditions and beliefs as well as amazing culinary discoveries at the same time.

Travelling at the right time to the right place will reward you with an unforgettable experience and will definitely make up for the sometimes adventurous and bumpy road trips that it takes to reach the places and locations featured by the SHINE Festival and Food Calendar 2023.

This calendar is not only a travel inspiration but also serves as a recipe book. Each Dzongkhag has its unique dishes and delicacies which are served during festive occasions.

You can try recreating some of these dishes at home even if you can't possibly visit all the amazing festivals in Eastern Bhutan, simply by following the recipes for the twelve months.

The whole team of the SHINE project wishes "Bon appétit" and an increasing appetite to visit the lesser-known but amazing destinations in the Eastern part of Bhutan.

Dr. Robert Wimmer