

Fermented and Dried Food of Eastern and Southern Bhutan



༢༠༢༤
2024

རང་ལྷུགས་གནམ་ལོ་
ཤིང་ཕོ་འབྲུག་ལོ།
Wood Male
Dragon Year

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Fermented and Dried Food of Eastern and Southern Bhutan

Gundruk (Fermented Dried Leafy Vegetables)

A popular fermented ingredient in the southern region of Bhutan is *Gundruk*, which is fermented leafy vegetables. Predominantly, *Rayo Saag* (Mustard Greens), *Mulako Saag* (Radish Leaves), *Toriko Saag* (Mustard Leaves) and *Bandha kopi* (cauliflower leaves) are used to produce *Gundruk*. *Gundruk* bears similarities to the popular Korean *Kimchi* and German *Sauerkraut*. During winter, when fresh vegetables are scarce, people can obtain the much necessary nutrients and vitamins from the fermented *Gundruk*. It is served as a pickle on the side or as a soup.

To make *Gundruk* in the traditional way, the vegetable leaves are wilted for one or two days. A pit that has a diameter and depth of about a meter is excavated. Once the pit is ready, straw is burned inside to dry and sanitize it. Straw and bamboo sheaths are laid in the pit to avoid a direct contact with the soil. The leaves are then crushed, packed in layers and sprayed with warm water. Finally these packs are placed into the pit and covered with another layer of straw and bamboo sheaths followed by a thick layer of soil. Large flat stones are used to keep the material pressed down. The leaves are left for fermentation for a period of 3 to 4 weeks. Once the fermentation is complete the leaves are taken out and sun-dried to be stored and used throughout the year.

These days, earthen pots have replaced this age-old technique. After the leaves are wilted, they are packed into these pots with warm water and let to ferment for the same period of time.

Gundruk Jhol (Soup)

Ingredients

- *Gundruk* - 100 g
- Onion - 30 g
- Cherry tomato - 30 g
- Oil - 20 ml
- Dry red chili - 5 g
- Turmeric powder - 3 g
- Water - 300 ml
- Salt to taste

Direction:

- Soak the fermented *Gundruk* in warm water for 10 minutes.
- Heat the oil and fry the chopped onions, tomatoes and chilies. Add turmeric powder.
- Drain the soaked *Gundruk* and fry along with the chilies, onions and tomatoes.
- Add salt and 200 ml of water apart from soaked water.
- Boil for 10 minutes and serve hot with cooked rice.

2024 Water Female Rabbit Year

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JANUARY

འབྲུག་རྒྱལ་ བརྩུ་གཅིག་པ་དང་བརྩུ་གཉིས་པ།

ཇམ་བུ་ SUN	མིག་དམར་ MON	ལྷག་པ་ TUE	ལྷན་བུ་ WED	པ་སངས་ THU	སྤེན་པ་ FRI	ཉི་མ་ SAT
	༣༠ 1	༣༡ 2	༢༢ 3	༢༣ 4	༢༤ 5	༢༥ 6
༢༦ 7	༢༧ 8	༢༨ 9	༢༩ 10	༣༠ 11	༡ 12	༢ 13
༣ 14	༤ 14	༥ 16	༦ 17	༧ 18	༨ 19	༩ 20
༡༠ 21	༡༡ 22	༡༢ 23	༡༣ 24	༡༤ 25	༡༥ 26	༡༦ 27
༡༧ 28	༡༨ 29	༡༩ 30	༢༠ 31			

- 2 Winter Solstice (Nyilo)
- 12 Traditional Day of Offering (Chunipa Losar)



Fermented and Dried Food of Eastern and Southern Bhutan

Sinki (Fermented Dried Radish)

Sinki is another popular, though less frequently eaten, fermented treat from southern Bhutan. Only the taproot from radish plants is used to make *Sinki*. *Sinki* is made when radish is plentiful in the winter. *Sinki*, like *Gundruk*, is customarily fermented in a pit, which is now replaced with earthen pots.

After cleaning and washing the radish is sun-dried for one or two days until it becomes tender. After that, it is crushed and firmly packed into the pits or earthen pots. Heavy stones, are placed on top of the pits or the earthen pots, to push down the radish and compress the vegetables for non aerobic fermentation. It ferments for 20 to 30 days.

After the fermentation is complete, *Sinki* is taken out and consumed fresh as pickles or sun-dried and stored for further use as soup or dried *Sinki* pickles.

Sinki Achar (Pickle)

Ingredients

- Dried or fresh *Sinki* - 200 g
- Onion - 100 g
- Chili - 30 g
- Mustard oil - 10 ml
- Salt to taste

Direction:

- Soak the dried *Sinki* in warm water for 10 minutes to soften it or take the fresh fermented *Sinki*.
- Add chopped onion, chili, mustard oil and salt and mix well.
- Serve the pickle with rice and curry.



2024 Water Female Rabbit Year & Wood Male Dragon Year **༢༠༢༤** རང་ལུགས་ གནམ་ལོ་ ལུ་ལོ་ ཡོས་ལོ་དང་གིང་ལོ་འབྲུག་ལོ།

FEBRUARY

འབྲུག་ལྗོངས་ བཙུ་གཞིས་པ་དང་དང་པ།

ཇམ་བུ་	མིག་དམར་	ལྷག་པ་	ལྷན་པ་	པ་སངས་	སྟེན་པ་	ཉི་མ་
SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
				༢༡	༢༢	༢༣
				1	2	3
༢༤	25	26	27	28	29	10
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29		

10 11 Losar (New Year)
21 22 23 Birth Anniversary of His Majesty the King

Fermented and Dried Food of Eastern and Southern Bhutan



Levi Yithpa (Fermented Soya Bean)

Fermented soy bean, also called *Kinema* in southern Bhutan and *Levi Yithpa* in the east, is an alkaline food with a strong and pungent fragrance. *Levi Yithpa/Kinema* is made from cooked soy beans. *Levi Yithpa* or *Kinema* is comparable to Japanese *Natto*. The distinct aroma that results from a longer fermentation process of *Kinema* which distinguishes *Kinema* from *Natto*.

To make *Kinema/Levi Yithpa*, soy beans are soaked overnight and cooked on the next day. After the beans are cooked, they are cracked and thoroughly combined with either wood ash or corn powder. Then, it is put in a basket, covered with banana leaves and fermented in a warm location at 25 to 30 °C for two to three days, or until the beans turn sticky emanating the pungent aroma.

Kinema /Levi Yithpa is eaten fresh or is dried in the sun for storage to become a delicacy in the east and south.

2024 Wood Male Dragon Year

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ཤིང་ལོ་ལྔ་ལྔ་ལོ།

MARCH

འབྲུག་རྒྱལ་ཁབ་དང་པ་དང་གཉིས་པ།

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

Levi Yithpa Potato Curry

Ingredients

- Fermented soy bean (*Levi Yithpa*) - 30 g
- Potato - 200 g
- Chili - 100g
- Water - 100 ml
- Onion - 20 g
- Tomato - 20 g
- Oil - 20 ml
- Salt to taste

Direction:

- Cut potatoes, onions, chili, tomato into cubes and keep aside.
- Take a pot and stir-fry all the chopped vegetables into the pot along with oil, and add salt and water and start simmering.
- Once the ingredients are half cooked add the fermented soy bean and cook for 10 minutes.
- Serve hot with steamed rice.



Fermented and Dried Food of Eastern and Southern Bhutan

Namnang (Pogostemon Amaranthoides)

Pogostemon amaranthoides, a unique leafy plant with a hot, chili-like flavor, is also known as *Badongma*, or *Namnang* commonly in eastern Bhutan. It is indigenous to Southeast Asia and belongs to the *Lamiaceae* (Mint) family. It grows in damp, shaded areas of lowland forests as a perennial shrub.

Traditional Chinese medicine uses this plant to treat fever, headaches, and several skin conditions. In south Bhutan people chew roots of the plant and extract juice from the leaves to treat cold. This plant is highly prized in the Bhutanese culture and cuisine, as it imparts a distinct flavor that intensifies the spice and flavor of curries. You can consume the *Namnang* dried or fresh. People dry the plant and eat it all year long.

Typically, potatoes, pumpkin, or other vegetables are added to make *Namnang* dishes. Sometimes cheese/datsi is added to make it tasty.

Namnang Datsi

Ingredients

- Dried *Namnang* - 150 g
- Potatoes - 200 g
- Cheese - 50 g
- Onion - 50 g
- Butter - 20 ml
- Garlic - 10 g
- Salt to taste

Direction:

- Wash and cut the potatoes, onions and garlic.
- Soak the dried *Namnang* leaves in warm water for 5 minutes.
- Put all the ingredients and cook till the potatoes are half done.
- Now add the *Namnang* and cook for another 5 minutes.
- Add cheese/datsi and simmer it till the cheese melts
- Add salt to taste.
- Keep it a bit soupy and serve it with rice or dengo (flour dough).

2024 Wood Male Dragon Year

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ཤིང་ལོ་འབྲུག་ལོ།

APRIL

འབྲུག་ལྗོངས་ གཉེན་པ་དང་གསུམ་པ།

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

18 Death Anniversary of Zhabdrung (Zhabdrung Kuchoe)



Fermented and Dried Food of Eastern and Southern Bhutan

Ema Shukam (Dried White Chili)

In Bhutan, chilies are the most popular vegetable. The national cuisine of Bhutan is ema datshi, or chili cheese, and Bhutanese people adore eating chili at every meal. It is thought that traders and pilgrims from India brought chilies to Bhutan in the 18th century. Owing to the country's climate, people in Bhutan have come to rely heavily on chili, because it provides warmth when eaten. Different varieties of chili are consumed in Bhutan. They can be eaten raw, dried, or ground into powder. Either fresh or dried chili is used in the national cuisine. Most of chilies grow in the months between July and September. During the off-season, dried chili is frequently consumed and is considered a special delicacy. Dried chilies are usually more expensive than fresh ones, and they are sun- or electric-dried. There are two kinds of dried chilies, the regular chili and the unique variety known as *Shukam*. While dried red chilies are made from fully ripened red chilies, *Shukam* is made from unripe green chilies.

Unlike the dried red chilies, it's not easily found in the market and only a small number of households make and sell it because of the labor-intensive nature of the process.

For *Shukam*, green chilies are blanched (Soaked in hot water for a short while) and then dried before being used. The chilies turn yellowish-white after drying. On special days, the *Shukam* is cooked with cheese and dried meat.

Typically these chillies are less spicy than the normal red chillies

Shakam Datsi

Ingredients

- *Shukam* - 100 g
- Dried Beef - 200g
- Cheese - 100 g
- Onion - 50 g
- Spring onion - 20 g
- Tomato - 30 g
- Oil - 20 ml
- Salt to taste

Direction:

- Take dried beef and pressure cook until the meat gets soft.
- Once the beef is soft, take a pot and add the beef, onions, tomatoes, *Shukam* and oil and boil it for 10 minutes.
- Add the cheese and salt to taste.
- Once the cheese melts, garnish it with spring onion and serve with red rice.

2024 Wood Male Dragon Year

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རང་ལུགས་གནམ་ལོ་
ཤིང་ལོ་འབྲུག་ལོ།

MAY

འབྲུག་ལྗོངས་གསུམ་པ་དང་བཞི་པ།

ཇམ་བུ་ SUN	མིག་དམར་ MON	ལྷག་པ་ TUE	ལྷན་བུ་ WED	པ་སངས་ THU	སྟེན་པ་ FRI	ཉི་མ་ SAT
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༢༧ 5	༢༨ 6	༢༩ 7	༣༠ 8	༡ 9	༢ 10	༣ 11
༤ 12	༥ 13	༦ 14	༧ 15	༨ 16	༩ 17	༡༠ 18
༡༡ 19	༡༢ 20	༡༣ 21	༡༤ 22	༡༥ 23	༡༦ 24	༡༧ 25
༡༨ 26	༡༩ 27	༢༠ 28	༢༡ 29	༢༢ 30	༢༣ 31	



Fermented and Dried Food of Eastern and Southern Bhutan

Nakey (Dried Fiddlehead Fern or Ostrich Fern)

Bhutan boasts thirty edible wild plant species, the most well-known of which is the *Nakey* (Fiddlehead Ferns), whose scientific name is *Matteuccia Struthiopteris*, it is commonly referred to as *Ostrich Fern* internationally.

These ferns have a very limited harvesting time during the monsoon season, because they must be harvested before they reach maturity as fully matured ferns turn bitter and poisonous. Fiddlehead ferns are turned into various dishes and seasonal delicacies. The ferns have a flavor that is somewhere between sweet beans and asparagus. Bitter ferns are not as common and popular as sweeter ones.

To enjoy them during the lean season, many people in eastern Bhutan, dry and store them. The brown furry stuff that covers ferns must be removed before cooking, in order to avoid unfavorable taste and furry texture. To get rid of the fur before drying, the fern can be either boiled for a short while or cleaned in vinegar water. Ferns are consumed as *datshi*, which is made by gently tossing them in butter and adding yak or cow cheese, or they can be cooked along with meat as *paa*, which is dried or fresh beef.

Shakam Nakey Paa

Ingredients

- Dried *Nakey* - 200 g
- Dried Beef/ Yak - 200 g
- Chili - 100 g
- Onion - 50 g
- Tomato - 30 g
- Garlic - 20 g
- Butter - 20 g
- Salt to taste

Direction:

- Soak the dried *Nakey* for 10 minutes
- Pressure cook the dried beef/yak to soften the meat.
- Cut the onions, chili, tomatoes and garlic and keep aside.
- Once the beef/yak is ready keep aside.
- Take a pot and add the *Nakey*, onions, tomatoes and garlic and cook till it is half cooked.
- Add the beef, butter and salt and cook further for 10 minutes/till the water is dried.
- Serve it along with rice of choice.

2024 Wood Male Dragon Year

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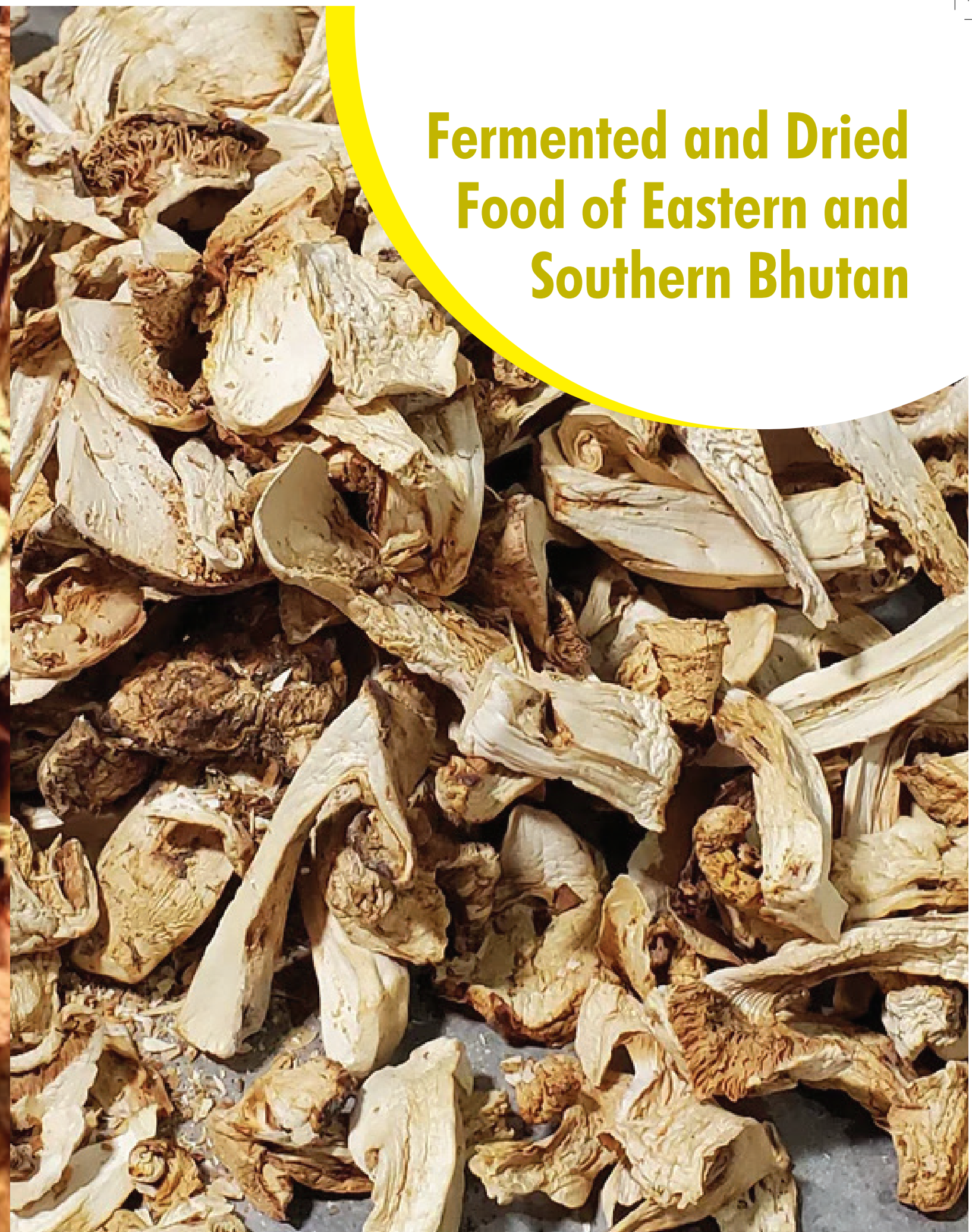
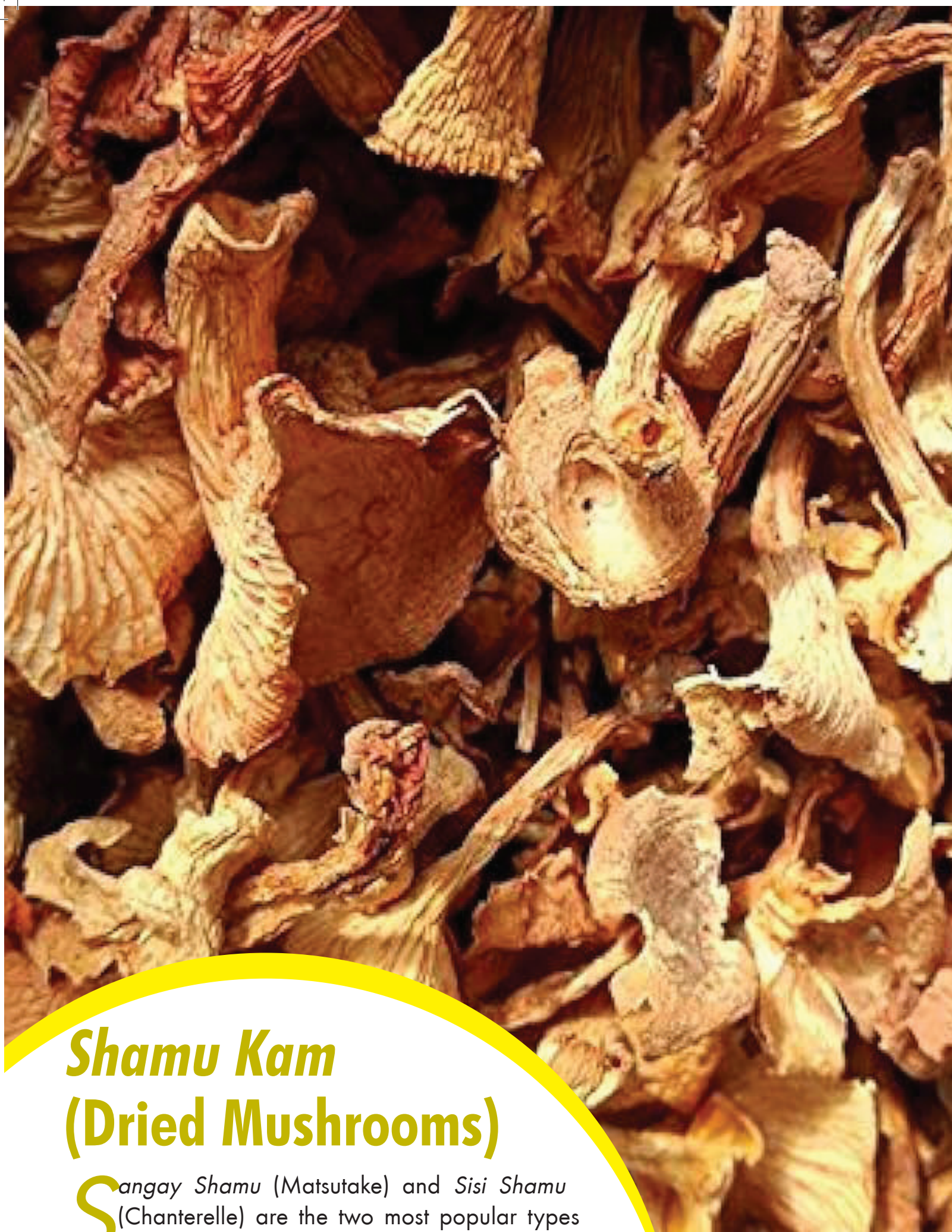
JUNE

འབྲུག་ལྗོངས་ བཞི་པ་དང་ལྗེ་པ།

ཇམ་བུ་ལྷན་པ། SUN	མིག་དམར་ MON	ལྷག་པ། TUE	ཡུར་བུ་ WED	པ་སངས་ THU	སྟེན་པ། FRI	ཉིན་མཇུག་ SAT
༢༩ 30			16 Birth Anniversary of Guru Rimpoche			༢༩ 1
༢༥ 2	༢༦ 3	༢༧ 4	༢༨ 5	༢༩ 6	༡ 7	༢ 8
༣ 9	༤ 10	༥ 11	༦ 12	༧ 13	༨ 14	༩ 15
༡༠ 16	༡༡ 17	༡༢ 18	༡༣ 19	༡༤ 20	༡༥ 21	༡༦ 22
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Fermented and Dried Food of Eastern and Southern Bhutan



Shamu Kam (Dried Mushrooms)

Sangay Shamu (Matsutake) and Sisi Shamu (Chanterelle) are the two most popular types of mushrooms in Bhutan. With hues ranging from yellow to rich orange, Sisi Shamu (Chanterelle) is easily identified from other types of mushrooms. Because of their high protein, fiber, vitamin A, vitamin D, and vitamin B12 contents, Sisi Shamu is thought to be very healthy and can help strengthen the immune system. July and August are the best times to find these mushrooms in the forest. Despite attempts, the cultivation of these mushrooms has not been successful because they require a symbiotic relationship with trees. In Europe these mushrooms are also harvested from the forest, and treated as a seasonal delicacy. Fresh ones are mostly consumed as soup or added in meat, pasta or salad.

The Sangay Shamu (Matsutake) mushroom is as precious in Bhutan as in other countries. The months of July, August, and September are when Sangay Shamu is in season. The fat, thick matsutake mushrooms have a strong, distinct smell. They taste different and have a meaty texture. People characterize the flavor as "piney" or "spicy." As suggested by the name, this mushroom is well-liked not only in Bhutan but also in Japan. This fungus is highly prized in Japan for its flavor, which is enhanced when it is sliced thickly and prepared simply. The Japanese consume them raw, steamed, boiled in soup, or even as skewers. The dried mushrooms are consumed as soup in Bhutan.

2024

Wood Male
Dragon Year

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རང་ལུགས་ གནམ་ལོ་
ཤིང་ལོ་འབྲུག་ལོ།

JULY

འབྲུག་ལྗོངས་ ལྷ་པ་དང་རྒྱུག་པ།

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

10 First Sermon of Lord Buddha

Dried Mushroom Datsi

Ingredients

- Dried Sisi Shamu/ Sangay Shamu - 150 g
- Chili - 300 g
- Cheese - 100 g
- Onion - 50 g
- Garlic - 30 g
- Butter - 10g
- Salt to taste

Direction:

- Soak the dried mushroom in warm water for 10 minutes.
- Chop the chilies, onions and garlic and keep aside.
- Take a pot and add the mushroom, chili, onion and garlic along with butter.
- Simmer for 10 minutes and add cheese and salt to taste and cook for another 5 minutes.
- Serve with rice.



Fermented and Dried Food of Eastern and Southern Bhutan

Ola Choto (Achocha)

Many people adore Achocha, also known as *Ola Choto* in Bhutan. They are members of the cucumber or cucurbit family. These plants quickly take root from seeds when sown in soil, similarly to beans. They are easy to grow into a sturdy, highly prolific vine that offers lovely shade or a windbreak to the garden. Though most often eaten in curry or datsi, they have a cucumber-like flavor. *Ola Choto* seeds are distinct from other vegetable seeds and bear no resemblance to those of the cucurbit family. They look like fragments of burned wood or specks. In Bhutan, *Ola Choto* is consumed dried because drying enhances its flavor. After being harvested, the vegetable is deseeded, sundried, and stored.

In the southern part of Bhutan, the seeds are eaten and made into delicious pickles. The seeds of *Ola Choto* are mixed with pumpkin seeds and ground together to create a distinct spicy *Dhulo Achar* (Dusty Pickle).

Dhulo Achar (Dusty Pickle) from the seed of *Ola Choto* (Achocha)

Ingredients

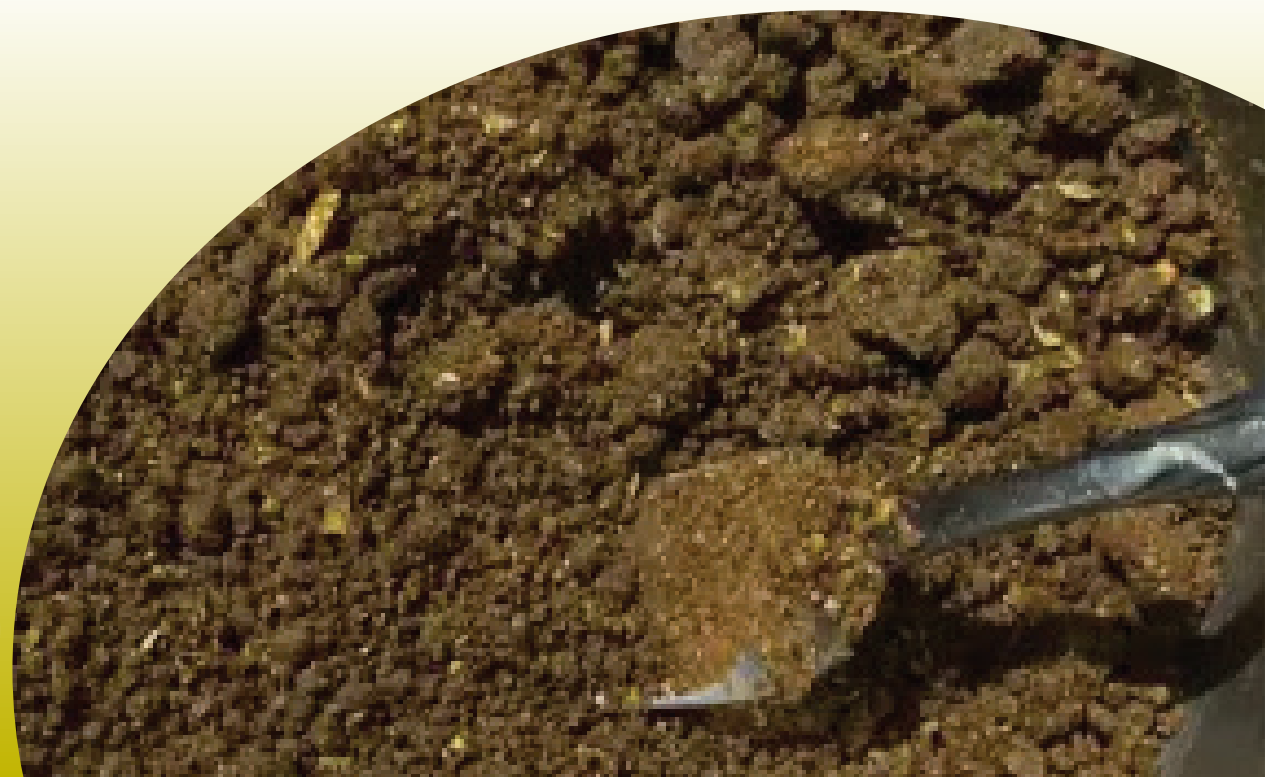
- *Ola Choto* seeds - 150 g
- Pumpkin seeds - 150 g
- Dried red chilli - 100 g
- Ginger - 50 g
- Lemon juice - 30 ml
- Salt to taste

Direction:

- Sun dry the *Ola Choto* and pumpkin seeds for 2 to 3 days.
- Once the seeds are dried, take a pan and dry-roast the two types of seeds one after the other. The *Ola Choto* seeds gets

roasted quicker whereas the pumpkin seeds need longer. Both the seeds need to be roasted well.

- Next dry roast the dried chilies and keep them aside.
- Take a grinder and grind all the dry-roasted ingredients *Ola Choto* seeds, pumpkin seeds along with ginger into fine powder.
- Take the powder out, add lemon juice and salt and mix well.
- Serve it with rice and curry or some *Sel roti* (ring shaped fried dough from rice flour). It goes very well with *Sel roti*.



2024 Wood Male Dragon Year

༢༠༢༤ རང་ལུགས་ གནམ་ལོ་ ཞིང་ལོ་འབྲུག་ལོ།

AUGUST

འབྲུག་ལྗོངས་ ལྷ་པ་དང་རྒྱལ་པ།

ཇམ་བུ་	མིག་དམར་	ལྷག་པ་	ཡུང་བུ་	པ་སངས་	སྟེན་པ་	ཉི་མ་
SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
				༢༧	༢༨	༢༩
				1	2	3
༣༠	༡	༢	༣	༤	༥	6
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
༡༡	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31



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Fermented and Dried Food of Eastern and Southern Bhutan



Nya Doseam (Smoked Fish)

The demand for smoked fish has increased recently in Bhutan. Smoking fish is a traditional method of preservation that is gaining popularity. In Europe, smoking is not just associated with fish but also with all types of meat.

Originally fish smoking started in the Wangdue district of Bhutan, but is now processed as far as the east of Bhutan like in Zhemgang. The smoked fishes are very popular and the people in eastern Bhutan raise fishes in ponds. When the fishes are grown, they are harvested, cleaned and processed.

After starting a small fire, the fish are arranged in several grill layers. The national research and development center for riverine and lake fisheries under the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock has begun processing smoked trouts to meet the growing market demand. Smoked fish are very popular in star rated hotels in Bhutan. Most often, they are consumed as a soupy dish.

2024 Wood Male Dragon Year

༢༠༢༤ རང་ལུགས་གནམ་ལོ་
ཤིང་ལོ་འབྲུག་ལོ།

SEPTEMBER

འབྲུག་ལྗོངས་འབྲུག་པ་དང་བརྒྱུད་པ།

ཇམ་བུ་ SUN	མིག་དམར་ MON	ལྷག་པ་ TUE	ལྷན་བུ་ WED	པ་སངས་ THU	སྟེན་པ་ FRI	ཉིན་མེད་ SAT
༡	༢	༣	༤	༥	༦	༧
༨	༩	༡༠	༡༡	༡༢	༡༣	༡༤
༡༥	༡༦	༡༧	༡༨	༡༩	༢༠	༢༡
༢༢	༢༣	༢༤	༢༥	༢༦	༢༧	༢༨
༢༩	༣༠					

09 Thimphu Drubchoe (Thimphu Only)
13 14 15 Thimphu Tshechu (Thimphu Only) 23 Blessed Rainy Day

Nya Doseam Tshoem (Smoked Fish Curry)

Ingredients

- Smoked fish - 250 g
- Onion - 100 g
- Chili - 100 g
- Cottage cheese - 50 g
- Tomatoes - 30 g
- Garlic - 20 g
- Oil - 30 ml
- Salt to taste

Direction:

- Soak the smoked fish for 10 minutes in warm water. Once soaked rinse the fish and keep aside.
- In a pot heat the oil and add the onions, garlic and chili and fry for 5 minutes.
- Add the fish and some water and simmer for 15 minutes.
- Now add the tomatoes, cottage cheese and salt to taste and simmer for 10 minutes.
- Serve hot with choice of rice.



Fermented and Dried Food of Eastern and Southern Bhutan

Yak Shakam (Dried Yak Meat)

Yaks play a crucial role, especially in the Bhutanese Brokpa tribe, since yaks are their primary source of income. For centuries, the highlanders raised yaks for their milk, butter, cheese, meat, and wool. Yaks are pastured at different altitudes in the summer and winter. The winter pastures are typically used from November to April and are situated at elevations between 3000 and 3800 metres above sea level. In contrast, the elevation of the summer pasture ranges from 3500 to 5000 metres.

Yaks are also bred with cattle to produce offspring for meat. The cross breed of yak and cattle is called Zoe and Zomey. Yak meat is sold for a premium price compared to other meats like beef. When the yaks migrate to the lower elevation in October and November, yak herders slaughter some of the animals. Yak meat is sun-dried during this period and kept as a year-round supply. Most people in Bhutan prefer dried yak meat. The gorgeous clothing that Brokpas wear during the cold winter months is made from yak wool. Their clothing is striking and has a very distinct, vibrant, and exquisite appearance.

Dried Yak Paa

Ingredients

- Dried yak meat - 200 g
- Radish - 150 g
- Dried red chili - 100 g
- Onion - 50 g
- Garlic - 30 g
- Oil - 30 ml
- Salt to taste

Direction:

- Pressure cook the dried yak meat to soften the meat.
- Cut the onions, radish, dried red chili and garlic.
- Take a pot and add the yak meat, onions, chili, garlic and oil.
- Simmer cook the yak meat and other ingredients for 15 minutes and add salt to taste.
- Serve it with red rice.

2024 Wood Male Dragon Year

༢༠༢༤ རང་ལུགས་གནམ་ལོ་
ཤིང་ལོ་ལྔ་ལྔ་ལོ།

OCTOBER

འབྲུག་ལྗོངས་འབྲུག་པ་དང་བརྒྱུད་པ།

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



Fermented and Dried Food of Eastern and Southern Bhutan

Zoedey (Rotten Yak Cheese)

Produced in Merak and Sakteng of Trashigang in Eastern Bhutan, Zoedey is a very special cheese. The word "rotten" cheese literally translates to "Zoedey." It is well-known for having a strong flavor and a strong aroma. In order to make Zoedey, yak cheese is fermented, tightly wrapped in cattle hide, and then kept in a warm location for at least six months to a few years. The stench of the cheese increases with the length of fermentation. For most Bhutanese, this fermented cheese is a delicacy.

Casu marzu, an Italian fermented cheese made from sheep, is similar to Zoedey. Eaten in sandwich, casu marzu is rife with cheese maggots. Sometimes, after being fermented for a long time, even Zoedey gets infested with maggots. While there are regional and family variations in Zoedey preparation, adding vegetables or dried meat is the most common method to consume it. In eastern Bhutan, Zoedey is used to make popular dishes like kupa, serkong, and datsi.

Zoedey Datsi

Ingredients

- Zoedey - 30 g
- Dried red chili - 200 g
- Onion - 100g
- Cottage cheese - 100 g
- Butter - 30 g
- Garlic - 20 g

Direction:

- Chop the chilies, onions and garlic.
- Take a pot and add the chilies, onions, garlic and butter and boil the to cook.
- Once the ingredients are half cooked add the cottage cheese followed by zoedey and simmer for 10 minutes.
- Serve it with red rice or dengo.

2024 Wood Male Dragon Year

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རང་ལུགས་གནམ་ལོ་
ཤིང་ལོ་འབྲུག་ལོ།

NOVEMBER

འབྲུག་ལོ་བརྒྱུད་པ་དང་དགུ་པ།

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



Fermented and Dried Food of Eastern and Southern Bhutan

Chugo/Churpi (Dried Cheese)

Chugo, also known as Churpi, is indeed a popular food item in Bhutan and some other Himalayan regions. It is known for being a hard, dried cheese that can be chewed for a prolonged period, somewhat akin to chewing gum. The process of making Chugo is laborious and time-consuming, as it involves the traditional method of cheese preparation, followed by a drying and hardening process that can take several weeks.

Yak milk is commonly used for making Chugo, and the cheese is cherished for its rich, distinctive flavor. It is believed by some that chewing Chugo can help keep the body warm, which could be particularly beneficial in the cold climates of the Himalayan region.

Chugo/Churpi (Dried Cheese)

Ingredients

- Raw Milk - 1000 ml

Direction:

- Take half the amount of raw milk (500 ml) and let it ferment in a warm place for 2 to 3 days. Take fresh raw milk (500ml) and add to the fermented milk.
- The milk coagulates and once it is coagulated, the milk is churned to separate the butter from the rest of the milk.
- The liquid part of the milk after churning is poured into the pot and brought to boil. Stir occasionally. Stirring is important part of the process as it yields the cheese slowly.
- The cheese starts to form and this cheese is strained out and wrapped in a cloth made of yak wool and pressed between two stones to squeeze the water.
- After the cheese is squeezed well, it is sliced and strung with yak hair and smoked over fire until dry (rock solid).
- Enjoy once dried.

2024 Wood Male Dragon Year

༢༠༢༤ རང་ལུགས་ གནམ་ལོ་
ཤིང་སྐྱེ་ལྷ་སྲུག་ལོ།

DECEMBER

ལྷུག་ལྷ་ དགུ་པ་དང་བཅུ་གཅིག་པ།

ཇམ་བུ་ SUN	མིག་དམར་ MON	ལྷག་པ་ TUE	ཕུང་བུ་ WED	པ་སངས་ THU	སྟེན་པ་ FRI	ཉི་མ་ SAT
༣༠ 1	༡ 2	༢ 3	༣ 4	༤ 5	༥ 6	༦ 7
༧ 8	༨ 9	༩༠ 10	༩༩ 11	༩༢ 12	༩༣ 13	༩༤ 14
༩༥ 15	༩༦ 16	༩༧ 17	༩༨ 18	༩༩ 19	༢༠ 20	༢༡ 21
༢༢ 22	༢༣ 23	༢༤ 24	༢༥ 25	༢༦ 26	༢༧ 27	༢༨ 28
༢༩ 29	༣༠ 30	༡ 31				

17 National Day of Bhutan



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Fermented and Dried Food of Eastern and Southern Bhutan

Since the beginning of human history, drying and fermentation have been vital for food preservation. These methods date back to dates 12,000 BC. In absence of other ways to preserve food, people have used fermentation and dehydration (drying) to conserve food for extended periods of time and to change its characteristic and composition.

Fermentation has been used by many cultures, from ancient Mesopotamia to China, to create a variety of foods and drinks, including bread, beer, wine, cheese, and pickled vegetables.

The process of fermentation involves the breakdown of carbohydrates by microorganisms such as bacteria, yeast, or fungi, leading to the production of alcohol, acids and gases. This not only helps to extend the shelf life of perishable food items but also contributes to the development of unique flavors, textures, and nutritional benefits. Certain minerals, such as magnesium, vitamin K, and vitamin C, are more abundant and more accessible for human consumption after the fresh food has undergone fermentation.

Furthermore, the proliferation (growth) of probiotic bacteria during fermentation can strengthen the immune system and greatly improve digestive health. Owing to its numerous benefits, fermentation has continued to be an important culinary technique across various cultures worldwide, helping to create a wide variety of aromas and textures in cuisines while also preserving food without any chemical additives.

Drying is another traditional conservation method that has been used by in many cultures for thousands of years especially in regions with high temperatures and low humidity. Sun drying, the most basic form of dehydration can still be found today in Bhutan, making for beautiful pictures of red chilly drying on the roofs of village houses.

Due to its affordability and ease of use, sun drying is still a common practice not only in Bhutan but other countries like India and Nepal as well. . More advanced forms of dehydration increased the speed of drying while reducing the exposure to sunlight and dust by using solar and electric dryers.

With the help of solar dryers, food products can be dried using the sun's energy, but in a controlled environment therefore lowering the possibility of contamination and offering more reliable drying conditions.

Electric dryers, on the other hand, use electrical energy to generate the required heat for the drying process. They provide accurate humidity and temperature control, guaranteeing ideal drying conditions for various food kinds.

The goal of these improved drying techniques is to prolong the shelf life of food products without sacrificing their color or nutritional value. Food that has been properly dried and stored can be kept for years, which makes it an essential method for food security, particularly in areas where access to fresh produce may be restricted during certain seasons.

The SHINE project revives and promotes traditional Bhutanese food both nationally and internationally in combination with tourism and hospitality. Bhutan, has a rich tradition of dried and fermented food products with great cultural and historical significance. By showcasing these products to a wider audience, the project not only helps the preservation of Bhutanese culinary heritage, but also fosters economic growth through increased export opportunities.

Tourism, as a vehicle for cross-cultural interaction, plays a pivotal role in introducing foreign guests to the rich and authentic tastes of Bhutanese cuisine. Visitors aside from experiencing the unique taste gain knowledge of the procedures involved in the preparation of traditional dishes made of dried and fermented ingredients.