

***You Like Bananas?
You Will Love
Banana Flowers,
too!***



The Regional Food Program (RFP) of the SHINE project aims at promoting indigenous cuisines of eastern Bhutan among both tourists (to visit Bhutan in the near future) and the locals who would like to experience unique crops and dishes. Special dishes made of the fresh ingredients are revived or newly introduced. Since May 2022 the SHINE Team has invited 20 pioneering restaurants in Thimphu to participate in the first RFP trials.

For the first pilot program, banana flower was selected in the midst of its season, and Hotel Desa and Hotel Ramen Bhutan developed special dishes for their own guests who participated in a tasting. Banana flowers, patsha and dhamroo were freshly harvested in Zhemgang and delivered for the program.



The chefs were excited to develop their own signature recipes. Hotel Desa prepared and presented an Indo-Chinese dish and named it "Banana Flower Manchurian", which was served to the local customers as a side dish. The guests liked the new addition to the menu and described it as scrumptious, with an intensive taste and a well balanced combination of spices and herbs.

The chef of Hotel Ramen Bhutan prepared banana flowers with cheese in a more traditional eastern Bhutanese style, and named it "Moyo Mom (banana flower curry)". Dhamroo (a variety of edible nettle) and patsha (a cane shoot from the edible Himalayan rattan palm) were used as ingredients for the famous soup Jaju, which is an integral part of Bhutanese meals served on special occasions. These exotic dishes were served to the staffs of the National Biodiversity Centre (NBC) during a team event, and was highly appreciated by the participants.



Banana flowers peeled and cleaned



Dhamroo



Patsha



Moyo mom



Banana flower manchurian



Jaju from dhamroo and patsha



All participating guests were invited to express their opinion about the dishes with the help of a simplified sensory evaluation form. Around 90 % of them gave a positive feedback about the foods served. One said “I felt I was taken back to my childhood and served directly by the forefathers”. Several participants said that they never had a chance to try banana flowers as such a special dish. Some said “the dishes would enhance my appetite”, “food was so yummy and it adds diversity to the Bhutanese cuisine”. Others said that these new recipes could diversify the hotels’ menu, especially for vegetarians. The Programme Director of NBC, Dr. Karma Dema Dorji, was highly impressed by the initiative and the unique taste of the local crops.



Participants also appreciated that the RFP has the potential to contribute to better livelihood of rural communities in Bhutan, by encouraging more consumption of indigenous crops and establishing better supply.

The next RFP trial is already being prepared with different crops from eastern districts, such as papaya flowers. If you are interested in participating in the program as a registered or new member, please contact the SHINE Team.