

## Traditional/Indigenous Knowledge on Processing of Different Traditional Flour Varieties and Their Food Applications in Rural Communities in Sri Lanka

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### Abstract

Traditional flour based foods have been consumed by Sri Lankans for centuries especially due to their uniqueness and nutritive value. The traditional and indigenous knowledge on usage of natural resources for processing of traditional food is passed from generation to generation. However, this knowledge and skills appear to be rapidly disappearing due to contemporary life styles of the people. Therefore, the present study focused on documentation of traditional food resources used to formulate different traditional flour varieties and their food applications. A number of visits were paid to randomly selected villages within selected divisional secretariat divisions based on agro ecological zones in Southern, Central and Sabaragamuwa provinces in Sri Lanka. Information was collected from purposively selected women, elders over 65 years and farmers through face to face interviews. According to discussions, 20 edible plant species were identified as natural resources for the preparation of flours. Grains (Rice, *Oriza sativa*; Finger millet, *Eleusine coracana*; Foxtail millet, *Setaria italic*; Millet, *Panicum miliaceum*; Sorghum, *Sorghum bicolor*; Kodo millet, *Paspalum scrobiculatum*; Maize, *Zea mays*), tubers (Elephant yam, *Amorphophallus campanulatus*), roots (Cassava, *Manihot esculentus*, Hulankeeriya, *Maranta arundinacea*), fruits (Beraliya, *Shorea megistophylla*), seeds (Madu, *Cycas circinalis*; Hal, *Vateria copallifera*; Green gram, *Vigna radiata*; Black gram, *Vigna mungo*; Horse gram, *Dolichosbiflorus*; Nelum, *Nelumbo nucifera*), palm cabbage (Sago palm, *Caryota urenes*; Tala, *Corypha umbraculifera*) and flowers (Mi, *Madhuca longifolia*) were identified as commonly used natural resources for formulation of different flour types in the experimental area. The mostly used traditional method of formulation of flour is wet, semi-wet grinding by using mortar and pestle at the households. Millet grains are milled by a non-motorized grain mill by hand, called "kurahan gala". The traditional way of producing flour from palm cabbage is by pounding the pieces of inner core of the tree using a mortar and pestle. Widely consumed flour based traditional breakfast meals include 'roti', 'pittu', 'thalapa', hoppers and string hoppers made out of rice, finger millet, millet, foxtail millet, 'kithul' and 'hal', and gruels made from finger millet, millet, foxtail millet, and 'kithul' flour. A large range of sweetmeats including 'Kewum', 'Athirasa', 'Aluwa', 'Welithalapa', 'Kokis' and 'Naran kewum' are prepared by using all types of flours. The findings of the present study will benefit the future society in preserving and sustaining the traditional food preparation and creating awareness among Sri Lankans.

**Keywords:** Indigenous knowledge, Natural resources, Traditional flour, Traditional foods

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