

PRESERVING KNOWLEDGE ABOUT INDIGENOUS CUISINE FOR POSTERITY IN ZIMBABWE

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Tell me what you eat and I will tell you what you are (Brillat-Savarin, 1825).

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ABSTRACT

Indigenous cuisine plays a pivotal role in the nutrition and well-being of the Zimbabwean people. Zimbabwe has a wide array of indigenous cuisine which is gradually disappearing. Knowledge of the indigenous cuisine is disappearing due to modernisation and denigration of indigenous knowledge. In the Zimbabwean context, indigenous cuisine dubbed "Zimbabwe Soul Food" includes sadza or, isitshwala or, pap from maize, rapoko, millet and sorghum. Vegetable relishes include green and dried pumpkin leaves, cow peas, umhlabangubo or tsine (black jack) and nyevhe or ulude (spider flower leaves), served plain or in peanut butter sauce. Protein relishes include mopani worms (madora or amacimbi), dried meats and flying ants. Using a qualitative case study method, this study explored how indigenous knowledge of cuisine in Zimbabwe may be preserved. Findings from peri-urban men and women between the ages of 20 and 74 years revealed that the consumption of indigenous cuisine is associated with the old people and those who are socially inferior. It is recommended that the awareness about the preservation of the knowledge of indigenous cuisine should be raised because it has the potential of promoting healthy eating habits and food tourism.

Keywords: Indigenous food, indigenous knowledge, indigenous cuisine and preservation, food tourism, oral traditions, discourses of cuisine, documentation.

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

The two quotations before the abstract above underscore the key role that food plays in shaping humanity. Food is also a reflection of life and cultural inheritance (Kaya and Yurtseven, 2011; Reynolds, 1993). Indigenous cuisine is part of what makes a nation differ from other nations and unifies people in that nation. There is a strong link between cuisine and the construction of identity (Hermansen, 2012; Lyons, 2007). Safeguarding knowledge of the indigenous cuisine in a given context is key to sustainable development, management of cultural heritage, and preservation of social and cultural identity. It is partly for that reason that indigenous cuisine, which has shaped travel and tourism growth in the form

of food tourism, is a topical subject the world over (Bordirsky and Johnson, 2008; Reynolds, 1993; World Tourism Organization, 2012).

Apparently, indigenous cuisine helps by differentiating a country in ways which are important for knowledge preservation and tourism (Kaya and Yurtseven, 2011). There is a great fear that if preservation and codification of indigenous cuisine are not done there will be nothing to hold onto as culture in the next generation, meanwhile the young generation are the pillar of the future. The cuisine of a country can showcase its cultural or national identity (Karim, 2006). For example, the image of France is associated with its food and wine (Karim, 2006).

Meanwhile in sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) and in Zimbabwe to be specific, knowledge of the indigenous cuisine is facing its demise. In fact, numerous forms of indigenous cuisines and expressions have disappeared from Zimbabwe's cultural inventory. Ngulube (2002) and Ngulube, Dube and Mhlongo (2015) posit that indigenous knowledge (IK) faces extinction due to accelerated effects of rapid urbanisation and continuous attrition in the older population. On the other hand, traditional values and beliefs related to food seem to be disappearing owing to various factors, including McDonaldisation, westernisation, urbanisation, globalisation and acculturation (Presenza and Chiappa, 2013).

This partly explains why the Government of Zimbabwe (2007) formulated a policy supporting the preservation and promotion of "traditional and food preparation habits". The preservation of knowledge about indigenous cuisine may enable Zimbabweans to preserve their cultural heritage for posterity. In essence, that will prevent the "slaying of another cultural way of knowing" (Wane, 2014: 8).

CONCEPTUAL CONTEXT

Let us first discuss the various concepts in order to establish a framework for what follows and to raise key issues that are a major concern in this article. Lyons (2007: 347) characterises a cuisine as:

a social and cultural group's specific selection of foods and technologies, as well as perceptions of which categories of individuals have access to skills, techniques and knowledge necessary to produce and to present culturally acceptable dishes.

In essence a cuisine incorporates the social and cultural group's food preferences and methods of how it is served. Indigenous refers to what is inherently for that community. In terms of an indigenous cuisine, it identifies the food particular communities eat. Many communities are identified by the food they consume (Kaya and Lyana, 2014). Therefore, a cuisine can be regarded as an intangible heritage of a country through the use of local traditional food that provides authentic experience of the country (Jahromy and Tajik, 2011).

In Zimbabwe, indigenous communities mostly consume dishes of grain, meat, milk and vegetables, as well as fermented grain and fermented milk products.

The art of preservation of the knowledge of indigenous cuisine by local communities in Zimbabwe is a culmination of experiential knowledge passed down from generation to generation, without much emphasis on patenting or codification (Mapara, 2009). Hence, there is a need to preserve such a unique culture that is pertinent to a societal identity for future generations and sustainability before it is fully eroded.

IK is a complex subject which has not found a universal definition (Ngulube, Masuku and Sigauke, 2011; Ngulube and Onyanha, 2011). For instance, the World Intellectual Property Organization as cited in Saurombe (2013: 28) states that:

IKS or traditional knowledge means, the content or substance of knowledge resulting from intellectual activity in a traditional context, and includes the know-how, skills, innovations, practices and learning that form part of traditional knowledge systems and knowledge embodying traditional life styles of indigenous and local communities, or contained in codified knowledge systems passed between generations. It is not limited to any specific technical field and may include agricultural, environmental, and medicinal knowledge associated with generic resources.

On the other hand, Chiwome, Mguni and Furusa (2000: 2) define the term indigenous knowledge systems as:

Localized African systems developed over long periods and whose patterns are based upon local knowledge systems and expressed in local languages... would generally be in balance with the local environment or would have sought such balance... the accumulated knowledge, science, technology and environmental understanding in non-western rural societies.

It is evident from the definitions that indigenous knowledge systems (IKS) are a cumulative representation of several generations and their experiences, observations, trial and error experiments, and the different ways of living as suggested by Ngulube and Onyanha (2011), and Shava (2005). IK can be viewed as cultural knowledge which consists of the social, political, economic and spiritual aspects of a community. IK as part of fundamental information for a society enables communication and decision-making pertaining to health care, food preparation, education, natural resource management, agriculture and a host of other activities in local communities.

Following Presenza and Chiappa (2013), indigenous cuisine in this study refers to food that has been prepared and eaten in a local community from time immemorial and has become associated with that group in the context of a particular geographic area. A cuisine includes a social and cultural group's choice of food and how it is prepared. That includes knowledge associated with the beliefs, values, and institutional and technological practices involved in the preparation and utilisation of indigenous cuisine. A cuisine is a social and cultural practice that every individual embodies during the course of daily routine and ritual practice (Lyons, 2007).

Preparation is an important way of making a cuisine identifiable with a certain people. In that regard, preserving the information about the cuisine is key to its promotion and preservation for posterity. However, most of the cuisines of indigenous people in Africa are largely not recorded (Lyons, 2007). Knowledge of the indigenous cuisine is disappearing with limited documentation. Institutions that are mandated to manage the documentary heritage of the country such as the National Archives of Zimbabwe (NAZ) have not made any significant inroads in preserving information pertaining to indigenous cuisine.

Since its inception in 1968 (Chaterera and Mutsagondo, 2015; Moyo, 2013; Murambiwa *et al.*, 2012) the focus of NAZ's documentation programme was on oral history and that excluded the documentation of oral traditions including the knowledge of the indigenous cuisine. It was not until recently that the thrust of the documentation programme was extended to oral traditions and intangible cultural heritage (National Archives of Zimbabwe, 2013). There is hope that the little that is left of the information and knowledge about the indigenous cuisine will be salvaged. The information professionals can play a role in harnessing, preserving and providing access to knowledge about Zimbabwean cuisines.

Indigenous cuisine is dying a natural death with the passing on of the older generation. Lyons (2007) noted that African cuisines were conspicuous by their absence in African food consumption. It has been noted by Majova (2011) that in many societies in SSA indigenous cuisine is treated as inferior to the western cuisine. Many western researchers lack interest in African cuisine (Lyons, 2007). There is a misconception that the African food was just prepared to fill the belly (Goody, 2006). Furthermore, in most of the literature indigenous cuisines in the southern part of Africa are associated with poverty (Gomez, 1988; Lyons, 2007; Majova, 2011).

Moreover, there has been a distinct visible decrease of indigenous cuisine in which rural communities are no longer producing the crops such as sorghum millet in preference of maize. For instance, the communities interviewed by Shava and others (2010) in the Sebakwe area in the Midlands area of Zimbabwe indicated that indigenous cuisine was treated as inferior by the communities as they had been engrossed in westernised foodstuffs. The authors noted that as people moved away from rural areas to urban areas they tend to consume less traditional foods.

There are so many health benefits which can be derived from the consumption of indigenous foods. One school of thought underscores the health related benefits that are derived from eating the indigenous cuisine as compared to modern genetically modified foods. Ohtake (2014) posit that there are many reasons for consumers to stay away from genetically modified foods and move to indigenous cuisine that is healthier than the latter. The consumption of indigenous cuisine such as wild fruits that are good sources of antioxidants (phenolic compounds, ascorbate and carotenoids), are associated with lowered incidences of degenerative diseases such as cancer, heart disease, inflammation, arthritis,

immune system decline, brain dysfunction and cataracts (Leong and Shui, 2002; Shava, 2005).

There is also a need to promote the consumption of indigenous cuisine in local hotels and its preservation. The demand for ethnic or local foods has increased, worldwide, due to the influences of ethnic diversity (Sriwongrat, 2008). As a result many destinations are turning to offering local or indigenous cuisine in hotels and restaurants. Zimbabwe may also use indigenous cuisine to augment its tourism offerings.

Cuisines can differentiate destinations since they are branded by nationalities, for instance, French, Chinese, Italian, Mexican or Turkish. While cuisines are growing in importance in the role they play in drawing tourists to destinations, Zimbabwe has not capitalised on this aspect. There are several factors contributing to this situation, including lack of awareness of the tourism potential of indigenous cuisines.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

Knowledge about indigenous cuisine is crucial for the sustainability of indigenous rural communities and a key cultural emblem for national identity. In Zimbabwe, there is very little research on the preservation of knowledge of the indigenous cuisine yet, "Cookery is naturally the most ancient of the Arts, and of all Arts it is naturally the most important" (Ellwanger, 1902: 74). IK related to indigenous cuisine is recognised worldwide as a unique cultural element of a national identity, requiring preservation for sustainability (Di Giovine, 2009; World Tourism Organisation, 2012). The notion expressed is that an extinction of the knowledge of indigenous cuisine is looming with the demise of the older generation if something is not done soon.

The past decade has seen a lot of interest and increased popularity in indigenous knowledge, specifically regarding indigenous cuisine, from both the public and academic fields (McEntee, 2010). However, in Zimbabwe indigenous cuisine and its grounded preparation seem not to be of significance (Shava, 2005; Majova, 2011). If the lack of awareness of the value of indigenous knowledge related to indigenous cuisine persists in Zimbabwe, cultural heritage will disappear. The next generation will have a cultural shock instead of cultural appreciation. In addition, an alternative form of tourism that holds economic value will be neglected.

The study is foregrounded on the preservation of knowledge of the indigenous cuisine. It is hoped that the study will encourage Zimbabweans and other indigenous communities to appreciate the importance of preserving indigenous knowledge of the cuisine as part of their cultural heritage and identity. The research questions that guided the study were formulated as follows:

- What is the Zimbabwean indigenous cuisine?
- Who are the main consumers of the indigenous cuisine?

- What is the role of information professionals in the preservation of knowledge about the indigenous cuisine?
- What factors are causing the decline of the knowledge of the indigenous cuisine?
- What recommendations can be made from the findings?

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The qualitative case study based on interpretivist assumptions sought to explore the preservation of knowledge about indigenous cuisine in Zimbabwe. Data was collected by use of unstructured interviews and non-participant observation during the economic meltdown in 2008, when Zimbabwe experienced the worst economic decline ever in its history. Non-participant observation and interviews were conducted at Ultra City Moyondizvo Farm, a peri-urban area where people were resettled after 1980 through the land redistribution programme. The resettled people comprised of former farm workers and landless people from the administrative districts of Marondera, Murehwa and Goromonzi.

Observation and unstructured interviews were also used for triangulation purposes and to identify some of the indigenous foodstuffs sold at Mbare Musika, a market place that specialises in indigenous food products in Harare. Unstructured interviews were mainly based on the checklist of indigenous foods compiled by Shava (2005).

Following Miles and Huberman (1994: 28) convenience sampling was used to recruit informants for the study. The ages of the interviewees ranged from 20 to 70 years old. The sample consisted of thirteen men and seven women. The interviewees were recorded and some of their responses were included in this study.

Interviews were also conducted with two oral history archivists at NAZ and two officers from the National Library and Documentation Service of Zimbabwe (NLDSZ) to establish the extent to which these two institutions, which are pivotal to the management of the documentary heritage of the country, document indigenous knowledge in general, and the knowledge of the indigenous cuisines in particular. The data was analysed through thematic analysis as recommended by Ngulube (2015a).

FINDINGS

The findings resulted from the literature review, unstructured interviews and non-participant observations. These findings are preliminary as this is work in progress. The findings are organised according to the research questions that guided this study.

ZIMBABWEAN INDIGENOUS CUISINE

Zimbabwean traditional food is found among ethnic groups such as Ndebele, Kalanga, Budya and Shona, to mention a few. Shava (2000) noted that traditional foods consist of millet, green leafy vegetables, roots and tubers, fruit, legumes, palm oil, wild animal meat and maize. Nesamvuni (2000) and Shava (2000) pointed out that traditional foods offer healthy, balanced diets but most of the cuisine has not yet been widely publicised.

The interviews with the informants revealed that the indigenous cuisine consisted of brown pap (*sadza rezviyo/isitshwala samabele*), maize meal pap (*sadza rechibage/isitshwala somumbu*), pap from sorghum (*sadza remapfunde/isitshwala samabele*). The readers should note that the names in brackets denote the equivalence of the terms in the Shona and Ndebele languages, respectively. These languages are widely spoken in Zimbabwe. The literature confirmed that thick porridge or pap (*sadza/isitshwala*) was the staple food of indigenous communities in Zimbabwe (Gomez, 1988; Shava, 2000).

The informants revealed that the relish which was served with the pap or thick porridge included mopani worms (*mashonzha/amachimbi*), small fish in peanut butter sauce (*matemba anedovi/amatemba aledobi*), fresh meat (*nyama/inyama*), dried meat (*chimukuyu/umhwabha*) with or without peanut butter, vegetables such as black jack (*bonongwe/umhabanguvo*), pumpkin leaves (*muboora/ibhobola*) and spider flower leaves (*nyevhe/ulude*), insects and ants such as (*ishwa/inhlwa, tsambarafuta/amahlabusi*) (see Figure 1 for other examples), fermented sour milk (*mukaka wakavodzekwa/amasi*) and wild mushrooms.

The informants also pointed out that traditional fruits and vegetables were used to augment the food dishes according to personal preference. There are many examples of vegetables and fruits which were pointed out that have not been singled out in this study. Dwebaa and Mearns (2011) and Majova (2011) provide a useful list of vegetables and fruits that form part of the indigenous cuisine. Though the studies were done in South Africa there are certain common traditional food products that are also found in Zimbabwe.

It was also interesting to note that the informants emphasised how the forests played a role in sustaining them and supporting their eating habits. The forests provided them with fruits and various insects and ants that were rich in proteins, and constituted part of their traditional cuisine. The utility of insects in the food value chain was confirmed by Allotey and Mpuchane (2003) and DeFoliart (2005) who found out that insects such as *ishwa/izihlwa, tsambarafuta/amahlabusi, harurwa, madumbudya* and *mhashu/intete* were high in protein, energy and various vitamins and minerals.

Figure 1 illustrates some of the insects that were eaten in indigenous Zimbabwean contexts.

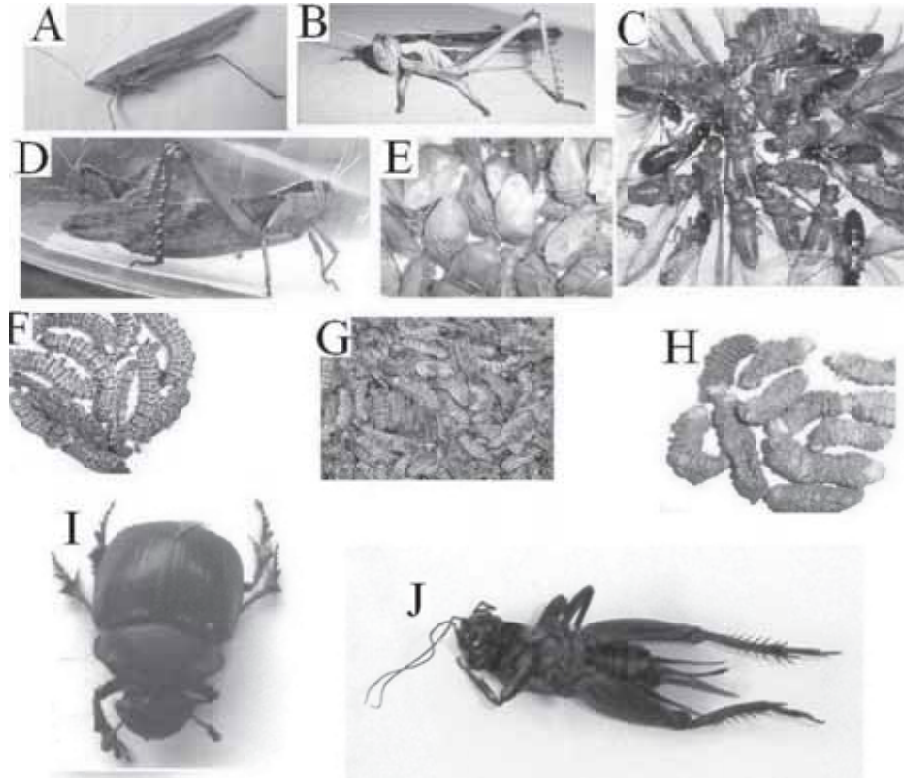


Figure 1: Some insects consumed in Zimbabwe (Dube, Dlamini, Mafunga, Mukai and Dhlamini, 2013: 7248).

Legend: A *Ruspolia differens* (*dumbudya*); B *Locusta* sp. (*mhashu/intethe*); C *Macrotermes natalensis* (*ishwa/izintshwa*); D *Locusta migratoria* (*mhashu/intethe*); E *Encosternum delegorguei*; F *Imbrasia belina* microwaved (*madora* or *amacimbi*); G *Imbrasia belina* boiled and salted (*madora* or *amacimbi*); H *Gyanisa maia* (*madora* or *amacimbi*); I *Eulepida anatine* (*isigiqhathuvi*); J *Brachytrupes membranaceus* (*gugwe*),

These insects were eaten raw, roasted or dried and complimented other foods as part of the meal. Interviews revealed that insects were once in abundance and contained useful nutrients, such as proteins and calories, which were crucial in their diet and indigenous cuisine. The insects may contribute to solving the problem of malnutrition in Africa if the younger generation continues to appreciate the consumption of local cuisine and also helps to promote its preservation. These local foods are in abundance Africa-wide but their continued consumption partly depends on codification and preservation of this indigenous knowledge for posterity.

The informants also pointed out that mixed ground nuts, and round nuts maize and beans (*mutakhura/inkobe*), pumpkin porridge (*nhopi*) with or without peanut butter or mixed with maize were also part of the indigenous cuisine. Shava (2005) confirms the widespread consumption of these foodstuffs that constitute the indigenous cuisine in Zimbabwe.

The cuisines which stem from insects and fruit are not well documented. The absence of a long history of codification of classical local foods, recipes and preparation has since affected the promotion of Zimbabwean cuisine. Arguably with tourist interest in, and the acceptance of, indigenous cuisine continuing to expand worldwide, Zimbabwe cuisine may be competitive if properly preserved and marketed.

PRESERVATION AND CODIFICATION OF THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE INDIGENOUS CUISINE: ROLE OF INFORMATION PROFESSIONALS

The preservation of the knowledge of the indigenous cuisines may be guaranteed within reasonable limits if the knowledge were to be codified and possibly patented. Institutions such as archives and libraries which have capabilities of documenting information on indigenous cuisines should adopt strategies for ensuring the preservation of the knowledge of the cuisines. According to Ngulube, Masuku and Sigauke (2011) all forms of indigenous knowledge should be incorporated into the archives since they constitute an oral record which can be utilised for different worthy reasons. Consequently, the archivists at NAZ should not treat IK and oral recordings as augmenting archival sources but as sources in their own right. The preservation of knowledge about indigenous cuisine can be ensured if the archivists collect, arrange, describe, communicate and preserve IK as other sources of historical evidence (Ngulube, Masuku and Sigauke, 2011).

Ngulube (2002) explains that all information professionals have a role to play in documenting IK for posterity. In-depth interviews to ascertain the extent to which IK was codified in Zimbabwe were conducted at NAZ and NLDSZ, the two institutions which are the major players in the management of the documentary heritage of the country. Data revealed that NLDSZ did not document any IK.

On the other, hand NAZ documented limited IK but there was no deliberate effort to target the knowledge of the indigenous cuisines. A content analysis of NAZ oral history holdings revealed that the institution had not documented anything on cuisines. The oral history archivists claimed that their focus was on filling the “gaps” in the documentary heritage of the country held at the institution. However, the documentary heritage held at the institution is mainly on the activities of the colonisers of the country (Ngulube, 2015b). “Gaps” that are being filled are likely to mainly revolve around those activities. That means knowledge of the indigenous cuisine will be lost as it will continue to be neglected unless NAZ changes its documentation strategy.

The interview with the oral historian revealed that although the will to document oral traditions on the indigenous cuisine was there, there were a variety of obstacles that NAZ faced. She explained the difficulties faced in the following words:

There are innumerable challenges NAZ is facing such that oral history programmes are becoming expensive endeavours. There are several topics NAZ has collected oral narrations on but indigenous cuisines are not so pronounced. Interviews were carried out on how beer is brewed and NAZ actually recorded how beer is brewed. There are so many topics which NAZ is interested in covering but our handicap is mostly funding. Oral history projects are expensive.

The lack of documentation puts knowledge of indigenous cuisine in Zimbabwe at a disadvantage in the information society and global economy. Zimbabweans must emulate their Botswanan counterparts who have started an inventory for IK in general, and indigenous cuisine in particular (Kayombo, Tshoko, Semetsa and Malepa, 2014). Information professionals may also assist with knowledge and skills required in establishing IK centres, and providing building blocks for holding indigenous food festivals that may promote the preservation of knowledge of the indigenous cuisine.

MAIN CONSUMERS OF THE INDIGENOUS CUISINE

Interviews revealed that the consumption of indigenous cuisine is associated with those who are old, without class and inferior. The observation was conducted at Ultra City Moyondizvo Farm where over 50 people per week came to the grinding mill to grind their grains. A receipt book used to capture data on the daily transactions was used to identify the number of people who came to grind their grain and the type of grains they brought to the grinding mill. The records reflected only two buckets of sorghum were ground in one month out of 50 buckets of maize. The reason for this pattern may be that all households in the area were so used to using maize meal. People no longer produced indigenous crops such as sorghum, millet and *rapoko* in favour of maize.

Although, these grains tend to be drought resistant, as explained by some of the informants, many people shied away from them for a variety reasons. Interviewee A, a 32 year-old woman explained that, "My three children and my husband do not like sorghum sadza because of its colour and the taste. So I do not waste my time and resources cultivating it." She further stated that "We feel the meal from sorghum is like it is some traditional medicine of some sort and it tastes like sand, and as for millet you will be eating cement you have so see the colour of the sadza".

Given the economic hardships and food shortages that Zimbabwe was facing during the time of the study one would have expected the respondent to opt for looking for food in the natural environment where leafy vegetables, mopani worms and other insects were available at no financial cost to them. The

researchers asked for the view of the participants about going back to the basics and also eating traditional types of pap (*sadaza/isitshwala*). Of the 13 men interviewed they all said maize pap was readily available and less costly as compared to small traditional grains such as millet and *rapoko/uphoko*. Most of them were of the view that collecting “wild” vegetables, insects and worms was too primitive for them in this day and age. They argued that they were not going to stoop that low irrespective of the hardships they were facing.

Interviewee B, a 39 year-old man explained that, “Us men love maize pap because it is cheap, readily available and our wives can prepare it than the other types of meal mill. The methods of cooking and the knowledge of the way cuisines are prepared have been eroded over time so it will be a challenge for our young wife to prepare sadza from traditional meal mill.” This interaction highlighted the fact that the scarcity of other grains, although easy to grow, determined people’s preferences. A lack of knowledge on how small grains pap was prepared was also a contributory factor.

Interviewee C, a man who was about 70 years old was very pessimistic about the state of the preservation of knowledge about the indigenous cuisine and stated that:

The world is coming to an end as our indigenous foodstuffs are sinking into oblivion yet they are filled with nutrients which have given me the chance to be alive up to now. Look at me, I still look young at the age of 70 because of this nutritious foodstuffs. My wife prepares a lot of indigenous meals like millet pap and pumpkin leaves in peanut butter sauce and dried kapenta (sardines) in peanut butter sauce. It is so sad that the young generation is not documenting how these meals are prepared and our children are not taught how to prepare the meals. I wonder what will happen when our generation goes.

Many respondents looked down upon the indigenous cuisine. It was evident that old men and women continued to utilize their knowledge of the indigenous cuisine to benefit from its nutritious value and the healthy possibilities that it offered. It seems knowledge of indigenous foodstuffs is going to face its demise when the older generation passes on. Young people should be exposed to the flavours of the indigenous cuisines so that they appreciate them. Furthermore, the consumption of some indigenous food has been known to be therapeutic, for example, black jack has a high iron content which is an important component in the production of blood (Uys, 2012).

FACTORS CAUSING THE DECLINE OF THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE INDIGENOUS CUISINE

A lack of awareness of the advantages that indigenous cuisine may offer to a community was the major reason for the neglect of such an important source of sustainable development. Interview data showed that people are not fully aware of the economic value that indigenous cuisine may bring about in any society.

They were not familiar with its potential for tourism development. It was evident that the participants failed to realise the value of traditional foods beyond filling their bellies.

Cuisines may be a primary or secondary motivator for one's destination (Okumus, Okumus and McKercher, 2007). Tourists may get to experience the authentic cultural heritage of a society through the consumption of food (Okumus, Okumus and McKercher, 2007). Some tourists specifically visit a destination in order to experience the indigenous cuisines served in restaurants and food outlets. Research demonstrates that more and more people are being drawn to different destinations because of gastronomy (Okumus, Okumus and McKercher, 2007).

Older women and men who were interviewed were of the opinion that the knowledge of indigenous cuisine was declining because the younger generation failed to recognise the contribution of indigenous foods to food security and the construction of identity. They blamed it on the colonial and post-colonial marginalisation of indigenous food systems. The colonial food systems deliberately side-lined indigenous cuisines in favour of western ones. This undermined the food security of the indigenous people and brought about dependency on the western food system which was not sustainable. Studies by Vorster, Stevens and Steyn (2008: 85) show that "traditional leafy vegetables (TLVs) have formed part of rural household food security strategies for generations". The cultural identity of indigenous people was also lost as the indigenous cuisine was undermined by modernisation.

The informants also blame the education system as one of the factors causing the rapid decline of the knowledge of the indigenous cuisines. One informant explained it as follows:

In most high schools and colleges students are taught how to cook a three course or four course westernised meal and there is nothing on indigenous cuisine. There is a need to preserve and promote the indigenous cuisine in the education system and have it documented so that Zimbabwe can be identified by a typical cuisine different from any other country.

Although educational institutions seem to be the weakest link in the preservation of the knowledge of the indigenous cuisine there is evidence that something is being done to redress the situation. Shava and others (2010) noted that at policy level efforts were being made to incorporate indigenous knowledge into the formal school curriculum. The third authors of this article also highlighted that Chinhoyi University in Zimbabwe and the University of Zimbabwe were at the elementary stages of designing curricula on indigenous cuisine. These efforts are commendable as they may lead to the promotion and preservation of the indigenous cuisine. However, the teaching of the knowledge of indigenous cuisines should be promoted at all levels of education, that is, from community level to tertiary education. There is need to revisit and revive the knowledge of indigenous cuisine, and put it in a cultural context that would promote sustainable development.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The indigenous cuisine of Zimbabwe is very diverse. There is limited awareness of the benefits of indigenous cuisines. The colonial and postcolonial systems undermined the knowledge of indigenous cuisine. The major consumers of indigenous cuisine are elderly men and women. Many people still look down upon those who consume indigenous cuisine. There is limited documentation of the knowledge of indigenous cuisine by heritage institutions such as libraries and archives. Preservation for posterity should be the major emphasis of all documentation activities so that a legacy of the traditional cuisines consumed is left for generations to come. Information professionals have not done a lot in ensuring the sustainability and the preservation of the fast declining heritage. It is recommended that:

- Communities should be educated on the cultural and nutritional values of the food they consume, and an appreciation of the contribution of indigenous cuisine to the whole context.
- Zimbabwe should promote the indigenous cuisine as a tourist attraction.
- Information personnel and universities should undertake programmes which identify different foodstuffs which form the knowledge base of the indigenous cuisine and document the information.
- Knowledge of the indigenous cuisine should be incorporated into the curricula at all levels of education.
- Young people need to be exposed to the indigenous cuisines so that they appreciate its value in various aspects of their lives.
- Research should be conducted on the strategies of reviving and revitalising indigenous cuisine.

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