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## A recipe book of traditional Sri Lankan food

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### Abstract

Although a number of various traditional foods and diversity of cooking styles and techniques were available in Sri Lanka, today most of them are getting lost as a result of ‘modernization’ dietary patterns. However, in Sri Lanka, a very limited number of researches have been conducted on traditional foods. Therefore, surveys about traditional foods and dishes are essential to cut down many problems related with the modernized foods and to increase use of locally available food sources. In Sri Lanka, there are many recipe books but they do not give an idea about nutrition composition. The survey was conducted to develop a recipe book by including traditional Sri Lankan food recipes and their nutrition composition. Different food recipes were collected from adult women in different areas (08 districts) by home visits, face to face interviews and through telephone calls. Further, available traditional recipes were collected by reviewing the recipe books and searching internet. The amount of ingredients for solid foods were measured by using household measures and home scale and expressed as grams. Liquid foods were measured by measuring cylinder and household measures and expressed as millilitres. The recipes which were taken from telephone calls were prepared at the University dietetics laboratory. Nutrition compositions of recipes were calculated using the Food Base 2000 software. The developed recipe book consists of 50 recipes of Sri Lankan traditional foods, the method of preparation as well as the nutritional composition. The recipes in the book have been presented under five food categories; cereal based foods, sweets, dishes, mullum and kola kenda / herbal drinks. Thus, the developed recipe book provides different recipes with way of preparation and nutrition composition of them. Therefore, this can be used as an educational tool for menu planning.

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## 1. Introduction

Traditional foods include those which have been consumed locally or regionally for many generations. Preparation methods of these local specialties have been passed down from generation to generation and a part of the fabric of life in many communities. In some cases, they are not formally documented recipes, but often associated with positive health benefits and always with local history<sup>1</sup>.

Traditional foods play an important role in keeping people's health in good condition, and also contribute to increasing the value of agricultural products. As a result, they vitalize the rural economy<sup>2</sup>. There are various traditional foods in Sri Lanka such as rice and curry, hoppers, string hoppers, pittu, milk rice, kolakenda, dosi, upma, vadai, roti, herbal aurvedic foods (welpenela, curry leaves, bittergourd, cucumber, nelli, etc), and fruits (mango, rambutan, mangosteen, wood apple- *Feronialimonia*, cashew, beli- *Aeglemarmelos*, delum- *Punicagranatum*, thibiri, hibutu, jackfruit- *Artocarpusheterophyllus*, etc).

In this study, an effort was taken to sustain and protect our traditional foods by preparing a recipe book, because of the fact that traditional food and dishes have been escaping from Sri Lankans. Early Sri Lankans ate traditional foods and dishes, and own foods were prepared by themselves by using available raw materials from the environment. Most of Sri Lankan ate rice and curry as their staple food. Curries were prepared using plant based raw materials by adding Sri Lankans' hot spices. Sweets were prepared using ingredients such as coconut milk, different types of flour and honey. Thus, during old days, health conditions in the villages remained at a high standard because of the consumption of indigenous traditional food.

## 2. Methodology

Primary data of different food recipes were collected from adult women in selected areas of Kandy, Kegalle, Galle, Matale, Jaffna, Embilipitiya, Kurunegala and Anuradhapura by home visits, face to face interviews and through telephone calls. Secondary data were collected by reviewing the recipes from recipe books and internet. The study sample of adult women, age ranging from 55 to 70 years, having knowledge and practices of traditional recipes were interviewed from each area. The women who were available at home during data collection time and willing to give the information on traditional recipes were interviewed. The study sample was selected by purposively.

The amount of ingredients for solid foods were measured by using household measures and home scale and expressed as grams. Liquid foods were measured by using measuring cylinder and household measures and expressed as milliliters. Some ingredients which were not measured, amounts were directly asked from the subjects (E.g. cashew nut, Semolina, etc.). In case the participants gave different information about ingredients used in each food preparation/dish, the average amounts of ingredients of each food item were used. The recipes which were taken from telephone calls were prepared at the University dietetics laboratory. Nutrition compositions of recipes were calculated using the Food Base 2000, software modified with Sri Lankan food composition data.

Recipes were categorized under five groups as (1) Cereal based food products - Pittu, Hoppers, String hoppers, Milk rice, etc., (2) Dishes - Jack curry, Breadfruit curry, Cashew nut curry, Polos curry, Maluambulthiyal, Hath maluwa, etc., (3) Sweets - Kevum, Kokis, Aluwa, Asmi, Welithalapa, etc., (4) Mellum (Green leaves) - Penela kola mellunm, Polpalamellunm, Mukunuwennamellunm, etc., and (5) Kenda / Herbal drinks - Gotukolakenda, Hathawariyakenda, and Elabatu / Eggplant leaves kenda.

Recipe analysis database was used, and weight changes during cooking were entered according to the food varieties. Ingredients for each recipe were arranged according to the decreasing order of amounts/ volume. Ingredients of each recipe were given in the recipe book as proportionately to the main ingredient.

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