

Wild foods festival, yum!

Author - Ashish Kothari, Published on - 13.9.2017

Lucky to participate in the first of three Wild and Uncultivated Vegetables Festivals, held at Bhorgiri village, in Bhimashankar Wildlife Sanctuary, Maharashtra. Organised by women's self-help groups (Jaisadguru, Sahkari, Tathavadi Devi, Mirabai, Ramabai & Kalbhairavnath) of Bhorgiri and Bhivegaon villages, with help from Kalpavriksh, the colourful festival witnessed 34 types of wild vegetables, cooked into about 75-80 recipes by 59 women. Tree nuts, tubers, flowers, leaves, and other parts of plants that have been traditionally eaten featured; the women spoke about how these used to be very important for nutrition, health, and cultural purposes. They and Kalpavriksh members Pradeep Chavan and Neema Pathak Broome told over 100 gathered participants that the aim of these festivals was to relive and revive local diversity, bring back its importance to local communities (especially women and children), and sensitise city people both to these issues and to the possibilities of doing such conservation and regeneration even in their own urban surrounds.

At lunch we got to taste many of the recipes; on my plate I had about 20 of them! It was almost too much of a good thing...

The presence of the local Block Development Officer, local Sarpanch and panchayat members of nearby areas, a senior police officer, principal and faculty of the KFI Sahyadri School, journalists, and others was a boost to the women's efforts at showcasing their biodiversity and knowledge, and attempts to conserve these. The BDO admitted that till she saw these programmes, she did not have an idea of such diversity and its importance, and suggested that the diversity of other forest produce such as natural soaps rather than artificial products found in the market, be incorporated into future programmes.

Two video clips:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=clZSCyewbMo>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LEZ5d6mhF4M>

Two more festivals are coming up: on 17th at Kharpuj and 24th at Bhomale (Varche); contact Pradeep at 9881240472 or Subhash Dolas at 9552809784.

Local residents Subhash Dolas and Manda Kaathe, involved with Kalpavriksh's ongoing work here, and with SHGs, helping document the diversity

The Bhima river, with forests of the wildlife sanctuary, near Bhorgiri

Roasted 'Kombal', from a tree, tasted a bit like corn

Nachani (ragi) rotis with four wild vegetable dishes

Block Development Officer Indira Aswar addressing the gathering

My lunch! About 20 different recipes, at least 15 different wild vegetables.

Rice cultivation against the backdrop of the Bhimashankar Sanctuary

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author's blog

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