

Gastronomy Of Kerala Community: Ethnic Nutritional Value Of Onam Sadya

A. Karthika Unnithan

Research Scholar

Department of English

Amrita Vishwa Vidyapeetham, Coimbatore

Abstract

As the state (Kerala) is labelled as “God’s own country”, this paper aims to provide some observations on the divinely cuisine of the state, through a gastronomical journey of *Onam Sadya*. The paper aims to appraise as to what extent the gastronomic journey of *Onam Sadya* can be considered not only as a cultural product but also as a healthy and scientifically proven nutritious diet, which may serve as a basis for finding the usefulness of heritage customs and traditional food eating habits for the contemporary times. As the native of the state, the researcher combines various primary and secondary sources for the study, to explain the various ingredients used in the same, and the importance of relationships among them. The findings of the study give an insight into the nutritional value of a cultural cuisine where culinary preferences are changing in present times (moving into a universal culture). The paper makes an estimate of the demand for gastronomical journey of *Onam Sadya*, and no other study on the topic exists due to the complexity of obtaining reliable information. The originality of this paper comes out of the need to forecast and identify the ethnic nutritional characteristics of the *Onam Sadya* cuisine.

Keywords: - Gastronomical journey, *Onam Sadya*, Kerala, tropical climate, ethnic nutrition, native cuisine



Figure 1: Source: <https://indianexpress.com/article/lifestyle/food-wine/onam-special-heres-what-a-traditional-onam-sadya-a-consists-of-3028642/>

I. Introduction

Legend has it that *Onam* marks the day when adored King Mahabali makes a yearly visit to his home state Kerala. Furthermore, in India, there's no better method to commend the arrival of a much-adored legendary figure than by setting up a dining experience fit for the ruler. In Kerala, a state in India, *Onam Sadya* is a grand feast served during *Onam*. Serving the *Sadya* is an art in itself and eating the *Sadya* is an even bigger art. *Sadya* is served on banana leaves and it is laid on the table or ground and the narrow part of the leaf should always be on the left side. This will be helpful for those who are newbies and for all those who are unaware about the nutritional value of such a mixed vegetable cuisine and the importance of such a healthy diet in a tropical climate of Kerala. Since *Onam* falls after *Karkidakam*, the month of monsoon, when individuals are advised

to consume detoxifying foods to let their digestive- related organs a chance to take a break. *Onam* is the genuine meaning of a feast experience to the less-dynamic taste buds, and the rejuvenated organs. The traditional *Onam Sadya*, a feast that consists of 26 dishes, is one of the highlights of the festival with Malayali's cooking it for friends and family. Though the meal may seem indulgent, it is, in fact, one of the healthiest *thalis* one can have.

South Indian food is undoubtedly one of the healthiest cuisines around. And like most Indian regional food, South Indian food, too, is prepared keeping in mind the Ayurvedic way of eating and seasonal cooking. *Onam* celebrations begin on August 15 and go on till August 27. Malayali's across the world celebrate this festival with grand festivities. However, the best part of the festival is obviously the food. It has a great balance of antioxidants, anti-inflammatory foods, high calcium and gut-friendly foods.

The *Onam Sadya* is a buffet of veggie lover flavours covering the six *rasas*, or tastes, as characterized by Ayurveda – spice, salt, bitterness, sourness, pungency and sweet. A typical meal comprises of up to 20 dishes spread out on a banana leaf, including an assortment of appetisers, curry dishes made with coconut and curd, sautéed vegetables, pickles, *sambar-rasam*, Kerala red rice and *Payasam*. The meal is served in a particular order so as to complement and balance the taste and nutrient elements. Snacks, for example, *Upperi*, pickles, *chutneys* and dry vegetables are first spread out on the leaf alongside rice. *Parippu*, a lentil sauce with ghee, is served before *sambar* and *kalan* (a banana-curd sauce dish), and is trailed by *rasam*. An assortment of *Payasams* come straight away, and the feast closes with some curd/glass of buttermilk to support digestion.

The hypothesis of the present study is that how the *Onam Sadya* is a healthy mixture of all things good and to showcase the nutritional value of each dish and why you should have it.

II. Discussion

Sadya serving begins from the bottom left half of the leaf. In some areas a pinch of salt is kept on the leaf but some people avoid it. On the bottom left half of the leaf a small banana is placed, next *pappadam*. Then, *sarkaravaratti* /jaggery coated banana chips and *upperi*/banana chips. Next from the top left half of the banana leaf, *Naranga Achar* -Lemon pickle, *Puli Inji* – Tamarind pickle, *Inji Thayir*– ginger curd, *Thoran* /*Mezhupuratti* (vegetable stir fry with coconut), next *Pachadi*'s and *Khichadi*'s, next comes different kinds of side dishes like *Aviyal*, *Olan*, Pumpkin *Erissery*, *Kootucurry*. Presently, banana leaf is loaded up with all the side dishes and a great many people will have plunged their fingers in a portion of the treats to have a taste. The rice is served at the bottom center of the banana leaf. Then *parippu* curry is served along with ghee. Next *Sambhar* is served. Next *Kalan*, *Puliserry*, *Morucurry*. Next served is *Rasam*. Then comes the most anticipated part the Desserts /*Payasam*'s. Normally 2-3 varieties of *payasam* from the below list will be served to make *sadya* delicious: - *Palada*, *Parippu Pradhaman*, *Ada Pradhaman*, *Gothambu Payasam*. The traditional *sadya* is not over yet. Then *Sambaram* /*Curd* /*Buttermilk* is served at the end to help digestion and to complete the meal.

Kerala *Matta* rice (also known as *Red parboiled rice*) is more nutritious than white polished rice because parboiling before milling retains some nutrients. One serving cup of 1/4 size can contain 160 calories and 1 gram of fibre. White rice doesn't contain any fibre. The brown outer layer of the *Matta* rice contains many nutrients and white rice is made by polishing away this valuable layer. One cup of *Matta* rice can contain 84 milligrams of magnesium and one gram of calcium. It also contains vitamins.

Nutritional value of Red Rice

Calories 405 Kcal. Calories from Fat 44.10 Kcal.

Proximity	Amount	% DV
Energy	405 Kcal (1695 KJ)	ND
Protein	7 g	14.00%
Total Fat (Lipid)	4.9 g	14.00%
Carbohydrate	86.7 g	13.55%
Total dietary Fiber	2.7 g	7.11%
Water	1.6 g	ND
Ash	3.4 g	ND

Minerals	Amount	% DV
Iron, Fe	5.5 mg.	68.75%
Zinc, Zn	3.3 mg.	30.00%
Potassium, K	256 mg.	5.45%
Sodium, Na	6 mg.	0.40%

*Percent Daily values are based on 2,000 calorie diet. Your daily values may be higher or lower depending on your calorie needs.

Figure 2: Source:<http://www.oryza.co.jp/html/english/pdf/Red%20rice%20extract%201-1.pdf>

Red rice Quick Facts

Name:	Red rice
Scientific Name:	Oryza punctata
Origin	Tropical Africa, South Africa, and Madagascar
Colours	Red, light-red, dark-red, light-pink-red
Shapes	Length: 3.07 - 4.01mm Breadth: 1.05 - 2.01 mm
Taste	Delicious earthy taste
Calories	405 Kcal. /cup

<p>Major nutrients</p>	<p>Iron (68.75%)</p> <p>Carbohydrate (66.69%)</p> <p>Zinc (30%)</p> <p>Protein (14%)</p> <p>Fat (14%)</p> <p>Fiber (7.11%)</p> <p>Potassium (5.45%)</p>
<p>Health benefits</p>	<p>Contains antioxidants to counteract free radicals,</p> <p>Containing Vitamin B6, Can Lower High Cholesterol, Can Help Prevent Heart Disease, Can Lower Blood Glucose, It lowers the risk of obesity, helps in fighting asthma, fortified</p>

	with powerful antioxidants, good for your bone health, rich in fibre
--	---

Source: Figure 3: <http://www.oryza.co.jp/html/english/pdf/Red%20rice%20extract%201-1.pdf>



Figure 4: Source: Wikipedia (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Matta_rice#cite_note-11)

III. Conclusion

The above-mentioned list is the ingredients and method of commonly used traditional ingredients and their method of preparation during a common *OnamSadya*. Now let's have a bird's eye view on the common benefits of this dietary plan.

(Figures are provided per tablespoon)

- 1) Pickle: 15 calories, Benefits: Enhances digestion

- 2) *Pazham* (Indian yellow banana; small): 15 calories, Regulates bowel movements

- 3) *Pappadam*: 10.5 calories, Asafoetida helps improve digestion

- 4) *Parippu* (Lentil curry): 26 calories, High in proteins and low in carbs

- 5) White rice: 12.5 calories (9 calories if boiled brown rice), Easily absorbable carb

- 6) *Sambar* (Lentil & vegetable curry): 15 calories, Vegetable fibre and anti-oxidant spices

- 7) *Banana Upperi* (deep fried banana chips): 10.5 calories, Rich in carbs and minerals

- 8) *Beetroot Pachadi* (Finely grated beetroot in yoghurt): 7.5 calories, Rich in iron

- 9) *Thoran* (Vegetable and grated coconut dish):10.5 calories, Rich in proteins

- 10) *Erissery* (Pumpkin and kidney beans in grated coconut gravy): 11 calories, Reduces gastric irritation and sugar levels

- 11) *Rasam* (Watery tomato broth with spices): 2 calories, Rich in anti-oxidants and eases constipation

- 12) *Puli inji* (Ginger curry in tamarind base): 4.5 calories, Good for digestion

- 13) *Olan* (Pumpkin and black-eyed beans in coconut milk): 7.5 calories, High in proteins

- 14) *Sambharam* (buttermilk with ginger and green chilies): 3 calories, Rich in lactose

- 15) *Avial* (Vegetables and grated coconut in yoghurt): 10.5 calories, Rich in fibre

- 16) *Paalada pradhama* (Thick, sweet porridge): 21 calories, High in proteins, carbs and fat

17) *Pal payasam* (Dessert): 18 calories, High in proteins, carbs and fat

The items are usually served in the same order for consumption. The complete nutritional value of the *Sadya* can be understood by looking at the dishes: Rice and lentils provide the required carbohydrates for our body. Sambar is full of seasonal vegetables which take care of our vitamin requirements. Avial also has seasonal vegetables and coconut that are rich in dietary fibres aid digestion. Rasam, moru and jeera water also improve digestion. Kaalan and Pachadi have curd/yogurt as an ingredient which soothes the stomach. The pappadam and pickles provide the required amount of sodium for the body. Payasam meet the sugar requirements (carbohydrates) while also appeasing the sweet tooth. So, the *Onam Sadhya* is not just about the feast it is a balanced platter packed with nutrients and promise of good taste.

Thiruvananthapuram- based dietician and yoga trainer Uma Kalyani says that *Onasadya* is a good example of phytonutrients. “It is said that dishes should be colourful because colourful vegetables mean they are rich in phytonutrients and contain anti-oxidants that are good for health. So, in *Onasadya*, avial, kichadi, thoran, sambar et all are rich in nutrients and vitamins,” she says. (<https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/kochi/how-to-have-a-guilt-free-onasadya/articleshow/70924632.cms>)

A major change that many nutritionists suggest is to opt for *Chemba* rice as there refined white rice has more carbs, and its overconsumption could lead to diabetes and hypertension. Compared to white rice, the brown variety is rich in fibre and B vitamins. Clinical dietician Mini Mary Prakash says, “Our forefathers might have consumed the same *sadya* we have now, but they were also engaged in strenuous physical activities like farming. Even the women were busy with household chores such as grinding and collecting water from wells that burnt the extra calories. Even the

Onam activities were designed to burn away the calories and make the body fit after the sadya.”(<https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/kochi/how-to-have-a-guilt-free-onasadya/articleshow/70924632.cms>)

Presently, a rich *sadya* is around 1800 to 2000 calories that is all that anyone could need to meet a day’s calorie utilization. A simple method to hold the calories within proper limits, rather than having more rice, we could stack up on the curries, for example, *thoran*, *olan*, *kalan* and *avial* as they are probiotic. A typical individual ought to devour 400g of vegetables daily and these curries will do the trick. The buttermilk and banana help your processing. By chance, the green plantain leaf on which *Sadya* is served has high dietary benefit as it contains immense measures of iron. Santos and Leal (2012) indicate that “as a spoken language, the food system contains and carries the culture of those who practice it, it is the guardian of the traditions and the identity of a group.” (5) Therefore, tourists are involved with the entire set of a culture which involves the preparation of a dish when they consume a food product from a specific place. Individuals are neglecting to perceive nourishment shared trait even inside Kerala, crosswise over networks, 'overlooking' that nearly everybody’s day by day based diet depends upon coconut, coconut oil, curry leaves and solid spicing. Malayalis endeavour to make distinction in this regard.

Declaration of conflict of interest: - There is no conflict of interest.

Works cited: -

U.R, Arya. “How to Have a Guilt-Free Onasadya?” *Times of India*, Times of India, 1 Sept. 2019, <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/kochi/how-to-have-a-guilt-free-onasadya/articleshow/70924632.cms>.

Santos, K. & Leal, R. (2012), “Santa Salu Candy Cooperative: Tradition Generating Income”, in:
Traditional Food and Cultural Manifestations Seminar-Sergipe Federal University, São
Cristóvão, SE - 21 to 23 May 2012, pp. 1-10.