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This document shares some notes from a workshop titled '**Mixed Cropping of Millets & Companion Crops**' that included a session on '**Millet nutrition and recipes**' held on 8th and 9th July 2023, at Vanvadi, Neral, Karjat taluka, Maharashtra. This was the fourth in the series of six weekend workshops planned for this year's monsoons, across the themes of permaculture and food forests, natural farming, millets and nutrition, ecological regeneration and water harvesting, with national and international expert practitioners of these themes.

Photo: Jacob Nellithanam (Chattisgarh) and Nilima Jorwar (Kalsubai Millets, Nashik) with workshop participants



Our ancestors grew and ate millets as the grains of choice. Millets offer wholesome nutrition: fibre, proteins, carbohydrates. Most millets grow easily compared to rice and wheat and are hardy. Shouldn't we then aspire, how to bring the miracle of millets back to our diet?

Day one started with a breakfast buffet where a 17-year old participant cooked कोदो millet noodles, prepared कोदो husk millet tea, and shared a *bhel (chiwda)* of foxtail millets [1] as well as crackers of another minor millet. These were served with sweet porridge made from ragi - finger millet as well as delicious upma and an organic ragi cake brought in and sent in by workshop participants.

We then learnt the history of millet growing through Jacob as well as saw him explain the method of cultivating finger millet through SRI (System of Rice Intensification). He explained the importance of preparing raised beds for making nursery for millet and transplantation into a field with ridges alongside burrows for water draining. These are to be dug up along the contour of the land. Smothering the transplanted grass around the 15th, 30th and 45th days helps in increasing yield as well as de-weeding simultaneously. In an unconference style, one participant held an evening session on his learnings of the permaculture design approach to food forest for the interested fellows.

Day two of the workshop saw us do a trail of forest foods (indigenous / native/ wild foods) through a forest walk along with two women from the neighbouring village and Nilima Jorwar [2][3] of Kalsubai Millets. For lunch, we cooked seasonal greens of राजगिरा माठ, हिरवा माठ, गिदवड in mustard oil. A millet dessert, sweetened with dried mahua flowers harvested earlier this year, was relished by the participants.

Millets have a low glycemic index and high fibre content, and are understood to help reverse contemporary lifestyle diseases like diabetes, obesity. Foxtail, Barnyard, Little, Kodo, Proso are popular minor millets in Maharashtra, while browntop and job's tears millet that grow in some other parts are in high demand. Making पेज (salty) and आंबिल (sweet, fermented) from any of these millets are healthy recipes that can be incorporated in our diet. Grains should constitute less than 25% of our daily diet, while greens, lentils, salads, fruits should add into the majority. Consuming only a single grain a day is suitable, thereby avoiding multiple grains in a day. With economies of scale, millets ought to become more affordable.

Here is a list of twenty five edible and non-edible species we noted during the **forest food walk** at Vanvadi:

1) करवंद (fruit, almost end of its season, pickle, chutney, curry),
2) लोथ (green stems and green leafy vegetable, no bitterness like elephant yam),
3) गुडवेल (medicinal drink),
4) कोवळा (green),
5) गोंडली (leaves),

6) वळ कंद (ol-kand, yam boiled with salt, to remove bitterness boil for 4 hours with ash in water, लापसी, can fry like राताळु),
7) तेलपाट (leafy, when it has grains called gabholi, tender stems can be cooked, can make ladoos, leaves have hydrophobic appearance),
8) काळी मूसड़ी (medicinal)

9) पळस (flowers have medicinal value, towards women's health, flowers tea gives cooling effect)
10) धावड़ा (डिंक from this tree used for laddoos, extraction can be done in माघ month)

11) महुआ (flowering in वसंत month, dried flowers are eaten, alcohol made, fruits used to make vegetable, cooking oil extracted from seeds, useful tree for entire human lifecycle)
12) कुड़ा (flowers and seed pod prepared into vegetables, good for stomach ailments)
13) गौरी (non-edible, flower has a गोमुख like appearance)
14) जंगली हळद
15) साग (teak, large sized leaves used as a food-serving plate)

16) सावर (fruits edible,leaves non-edible)
17) चंद्रबोली (bubble formation from stems of leaves, jatropha-useful for making biofuel, sap can be applied on teeth for gargling to counter toothache, and spitted out to prevent stomach trouble)
18) पानफुटी
19) चिंच (tamarind)
20) कंटुली (edible vegetable, spine gourd)

21) गिदवड
22) काकड़
23) गोमेट (edible fruit)
24) करंदा (dioscorea bulbifera, aerial potatoes)
25) Trametes betulina (mushroom, non-edible, medicinal value)

Further reading
1) **Store:** Nature's bloom - organic store in Thane
https://www.facebook.com/naturesbloom.in/ and https://naturesbloom.in

2) **Store:** Kalsubai Millets - https://www.facebook.com/kalsubaimillets/

3) **Book**: Bakhar Ranbhajyanchi | बखर रानभाज्यांची : प्रवास रानभाज्यांच्या शोधाचा, January 2018
Amazon

4) **Video**: Zeenath Mustafa, on the scientist's explanation of millets and nutrition
मिलेट्स का महोत्सव (TIFR HBCSE), 09.07.2023, 63 minutes
https://www.youtube.com/live/i6LfjaqL_M8

5) **Video:** National Science Day Talk: "Millets: A Small Grain to confront big challenges." by Dr Amrita Hazra, IISER Pune, 48 minutes
https://youtu.be/N-94zD9B_TY

Link to this document:
https://docs.google.com/document/d/1U07RcIod30RSeCHRO8dsiJh5VY8SI_JmUrKjXSSGvS0/edit?usp=sharing

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