

# RECIPES FOR ~~CLIMATE~~ CHANGE

## – RECIPES FOR CO-EXISTENCE



Dhaatri

A Resource Centre for Women and Children



## **DHAATRI**

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About Dhaatri:

An NGO working for the rights of women and children in India and the protection of the ecological resources and women's knowledge practices. We are a platform to amplify the voices of women, their struggles and demands for gender equality and environmental justice.



***Gratitude to the Gond women of Panna  
who shared their recipes, walked us through their habitat,  
cooked some of these beautiful recipes and gave us new hopes  
and joys that, as long as the Gond women are rooted to their  
forest, nature will stand nurtured.***





## Recipes

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## Recipes for Climate Change - Recipes for Co-Existence

This is a recipe book of wild foods from the Adivasi Women of Panna. Co-existence with their eco-systems for the Adivasis is communicated in many non-verbal rituals in their daily life. Livelihoods, economics, festivals and food practices are a continuous symbiosis with nature, as Adivasis converse with their wildlife and biodiversity, through the seasons. We present here a few stories from the kitchens of Panna's forests where the challenges of development politics are entwined in the aromas of wild food and the many dilemmas that the Adivasis have to negotiate with, in order to access this food.

We hope to share the joys and travails of wild food gathering before the meal becomes real and the real is told through the meal. It is a story of the recipe and the 'un-recipe' – what cooks and what's cooking with toxins that spoils a good recipe – the eco-politics that impact local habitats and social health.

For Adivasi women, nature-based solutions are laid out in their recipes. Yet, many recipes are going extinct as forests are cut down for mining, infrastructure, tourism and urbanization. Forests are also disappearing as false solutions to climate change are replacing natural forests with artificial plantations and unsustainable conservation agendas. Slowly, the young are unable to forage or experience their diverse nutrition with deforestation and migration being forced upon them.



*A plantation set up to 'compensate' for diverted forest land*

## Diamonds, Tigers & Gond Women's Practices to Sustain Wild Food

The Gonds were once the Rajahs of the Gondwana region in Central India. Panna district is nestled in the picturesque mountain ranges of Vindhyaachal in Gondwana. Gond kingdoms were known for their co-existence with nature, for their knowledge of sustainable forest protection, their prowess of water harvesting systems, and, especially their skills of survival and self-reliance within their eco-system of abundance.

But then, the diamonds and tigers came after the colonial and princely trophies of valour were glorified in the destruction of wildlife and plunder of the natural wealth of Gondwana. The curse of the Gonds since the 13th century continues today as development paradigms continue to demand infinite sacrifices from these nature conserving communities, so that the carbon footprint of external societies grows large enough to stamp out the natives from their own habitat.



*Diamond mines, both legal and illegal, have destroyed the ecology of Panna's forests*



*A stone mine in Panna*

The Gonds of Panna were displaced for the Panna Tiger Reserve (PTR). Their access to their land and also their forest habitat became distant. They also lost large areas of their forest and farms for mining operations, both legal and illegal, which dried up the aquifers, leaving behind huge pits that are a threat to wildlife and to all the flora and fauna.

Adivasi women of Panna question why their habitat is destroyed for diamonds when tiger conservation is claimed to be most critical and urgent. They also question the logic of evicting them for conserving wildlife when Gonds have never killed tigers. On the contrary, the region is, today, flooded with tourist resorts, miners and commercial businesses gobbling up their forests.

The women request you to ruminate on these questions while you chew on the bamboo shoots and munch on the Mahua laddoos. They bring you these tales as their only way of giving a taste of their mouth-watering dishes that hide the woes of many a diamond and tiger trail.

## Recipes from the Forest Kitchens: The Gond Master/Madam Chefs

Food, seasons and forests are inseparable entities to the Gonds as much as their songs and riddles are. We present here a few dishes – please try them out and give us a feed-back if you ever happen to dig up a Suran or climb a Mahua tree or chase the wild boars.

For the Adivasis, a meal does not start with cooking. A big deal happens before and beyond, in the forest and with the community. Hunting, trapping, foraging, digging, plucking, grinding and many more adventures happen before their leaf-plate is filled with the aromas of the game. And then there is singing, riddling and swaying to the drum beats of the season.

The rules of the cook-book are spiritually guided, orally carried through superstitions, beliefs, humour and predictions. The rules follow nature and its seasons as the recipe is not just about how to cook and what combinations of food agree or disagree, but when and how one is permitted to forage, hunt, trap, harvest and also *how to heal*.



*Women in Panna mapping their biodiversity, their recipes and nutrition practices as a way of passing on their oral knowledge to their young*



## Recipes

*Note: The Recipe names given are sometimes in Gondi (the native language of the tribe) and some are in Hindi, as Gondi is fast fading out of usage. The names of most of the wild food presented here are locally used terms as we could not find the scientific names.*

### Sungra ka Gosht (सुंगरा का गोश्त)

#### **Hunting Procedure**

Sungra or the wild boar is hunted by the men of the community mostly during the sowing season of wheat. The boars attack the wheat fields and dig the soil to feed on the seeds.

The Gonds are traditionally adept at laying traps to catch these intruders by using strips of wire. They go in groups and lay in wait for the boars, hiding in the bushes. The trapped boars are immediately bound and hit with an iron rod. The animal is then tied and taken to the village. Sometimes the resistance of the animal takes them a long time to subdue it.

At the village, the animal is prepared for cooking, which is a laborious process. Boiling water is poured over the carcass and then they strip the outer skin along with the hair. The meat is chopped with an axe and cut into small pieces, ready to be cooked. The cut meat is divided and shared among the members of the whole community.

#### **Ingredients**

Sungra ka gosht (wild boar meat), turmeric powder, chilli powder, coriander powder, green



chillies chopped, ginger chopped, garlic chopped, onions sliced, garam masala powder, mustard oil

### **Method**

Boil a pot of water along with salt. Add the meat pieces once the water boils and cook it till the meat is tender. This may take an hour or more. Remove the cooked meat from the heat and set aside. Add mustard oil into a frying pan and bring it on to heat. Add onion, ginger, garlic and fry till the onions become translucent. Add the masala powders and sauté for a few minutes. Now the cooked meat goes into the pan and is cooked for some more time till the meat becomes soft and tender. The curry is now ready to be served. The gosht is eaten with either rice or *roti*.



### **Hard to Digest**

The boar meat is tough and so, not easy to digest. Small portions of this may be consumed at a time.

### **Nutritional Beliefs**

Boar meat is rich in iron, low in sodium, rich in vitamin B6, zinc and other minerals. The skin (*badiya*) of the boar is supposed to have medicinal value and is told to allay general weakness and given to persons with physical debility. It also aids in weight gain, reduces body pain and back pain. The oil/fat of Sungra is used for body massage.

### **Challenges**

The Gond community lives in a Protected Area with many restrictions on their mobility within the limits of the forest. Hunting and even collecting forest produce is a major challenge ever since the Panna Tiger Reserve and National Park status was declared. Since hunting of wild boars is a prohibited and punishable act, this recipe also finds its way to being extinct.

### **The Unspoken**

Sungra is a banned meat and it is considered a punishable offense if found consuming it. So, the meat is cooked and eaten in silence.

There was a time when a group of men went into the forest to hunt for Sungra. The forest officials got a whiff of it, raided the village and arrested 7-8 people and sentenced them for about 20-25 years. The main accused, a husband and wife, died during the proceedings of the case leaving behind two children. The community fears to hunt or consume Sungra ever since.



## Dokia ka Gosht (ढोकिया का गोश्त)

### Hunting Procedure

Dokia is a small bird found in the forests of Panna. Dokia is hunted during the Mahua season (March - April) when Adivasis go to collect Mahua flowers. These birds nest on the lower branches of the tree and are found easily.

They use slingshots (*gulel*) with small pebbles to fell the birds. Wooden traps and ropes are also laid to catch the birds but this is done in farms.

### Ingredients

Turmeric, coriander, chilli, onion, garlic, ginger, garam masala, salt, mustard oil

### Method

Place the bird in the fire to burn the feathers. Remove it and skin the bird. Cut the meat into small pieces. In a frying pan, pour mustard oil and fry onions, garlic, and ginger and sauté till the raw smell goes. Add the powdered/crushed masalas into the mix and fry for a few minutes. Now add the meat and mix it with the masala mixture for few more minutes. Add water to this and cook it till the meat becomes very tender.

This curry can be consumed with rice or *chapati*.

Dokia's eggs can also be boiled and eaten.

### Cultural Significance

On the day after the festival of Holi, Dokia meat is given as an offering to the local deity -- Chota Dev. This is a favourite dish of the Nand and Sore Gond community.



## Unlucky Mascot

The Gonds believe that if the 'Dokia' perches itself on the head of a person, it brings bad tidings.



## Singan Machli (सिंगण मछली)

### Hunting Procedure

This single bone, black and slippery fish (species of *Clarias*), is caught using locally made bamboo fishing rods (peacock feathers are used as a float attached for visibility of thread above water).

It takes around 4-5 hours to catch 1 kg of fish. Fishing is done mostly in the evening (between 3-7 pm). The fish come out for their prey in the evenings since the water remains hot during day time.

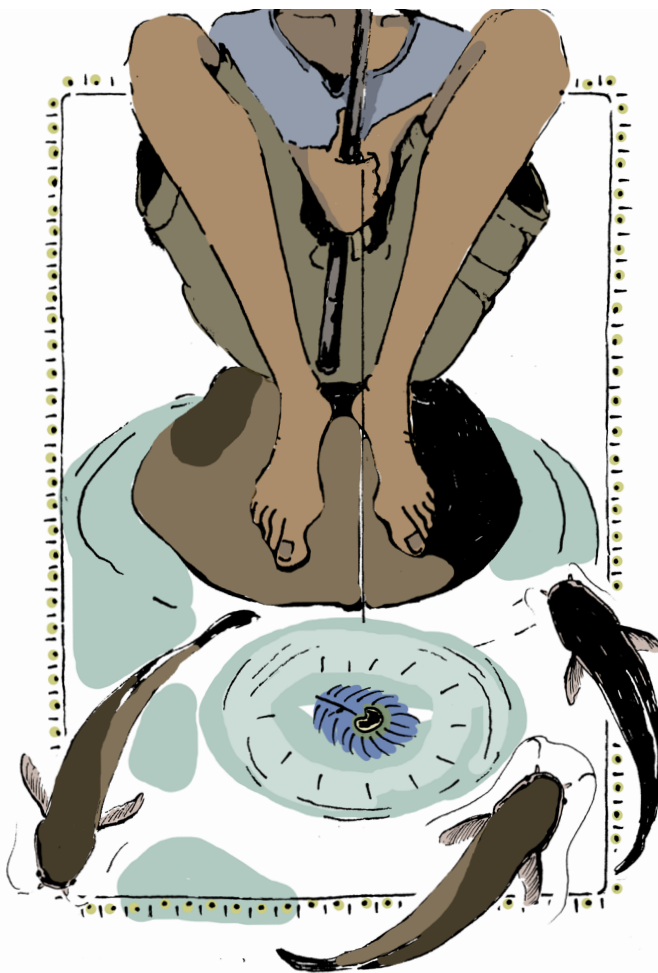
This fishing is primarily done by teenagers in groups on a leisurely day or on their way back from grazing their cattle.

### Ingredients

Mustard oil, onion, garlic, ginger, turmeric, coriander, garam masala, salt

### Method

Clean, wash and cut the fish into small pieces (even if the fish has a single bone, it is hard to remove since the meat is quite tough). Fry the fish pieces in hot mustard oil and keep them aside. To the remaining oil add the onion, garlic, ginger and the spices and sauté till the raw smell disappears. Add the fried fish pieces and let it cook for 10 more minutes.



## Note

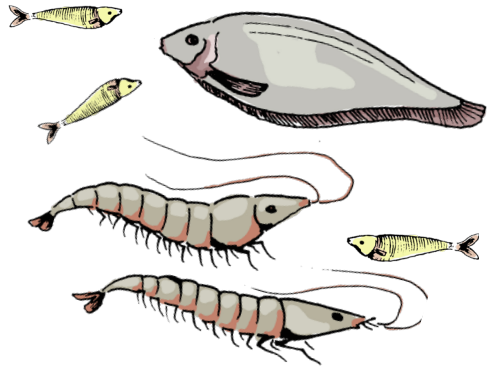
Cooking is done by teenagers themselves in open fires in the forest and the dish is eaten as their afternoon 'snack' when they are out grazing their cattle. Women also are adept at catching these fish while foraging in the forest for firewood, and they bring the fish home to cook.

## Challenges

Adivasis are not allowed to enter the forest and catch the fish any more as many of their water bodies are in the restricted reserves. Now this recipe is slowly getting extinct. In the past, there were many incidents when the forest department caught hold of the young men who were fishing and in one such incident, they were arrested and put in jail for 15-20 days. Hence, this fish is caught only discreetly or not at all and has become a rare delicacy.

### Oral narratives from women

Earlier, there were 4 springs (Ganga, Kunda, Ramsheela, Jhirni) and 6 talaabs (Masaan, Bhamur, Bengali, Bajrangi, Umar Jali, Patrohi) in just two villages of Bador panchayat, all badly damaged due to extensive diamond mining. In the entire panchayat, there were several more of these water bodies. The women shared how they used to find fishes and crabs like Bam, Sor, Golu, Khadia, Katol, Manjgura, Geeka, Jhinga, Mangoor, Chikni, and other aquatic species like turtles, frogs and insects in these waters. Now there are only two varieties of fish that can be found and not a single species of prawns. Around these water bodies, their forest had Badi Bhilai, Choti Bhilai, Udaar, Kalseru, Bakura, Satuwan, Chalari, Bariori and other trees and medical plants. There were insects like Tiliya Keede which were nature's water cleaning agents. Others like Makuval, Bichi, and several ant species were abundantly found. Their forest was rich in wild food like Menar, Keta, Bidari, Paank, Gulchakor, Mukhayya, Angeeta, Harra, Behara, and trees like Karonda, Mahua, Tendu, Chironji, Amla and many others that women regularly collected for food and medicines. They complain that today they do not find most of these as easily and if they do, they are not allowed to enter the forest.



## Kekde ka Gosht (केकड़े का गोश्त)

Crabs are found in abundance under the stones in the local streams. They are mostly found after the rainy season during winter (October-November).

### **Nutritional Beliefs**

It is considered both nutritious and as having medicinal properties. When a person gets fever and loses appetite, then Kekde ka gosht is suggested. It helps in both gaining appetite as well as bringing the fever down.

### **Hunting Procedure**

Stones are lifted or removed slowly from the stream so that the water doesn't get muddy. Then slowly they catch the crabs from behind so that they don't attack them. Once caught, they clip/break the claws to avoid getting bitten. The crab doesn't die immediately. The same claw is inserted into the stomach to kill the crab.

To catch 1 kg of crab, it may take around 2-3 hours.

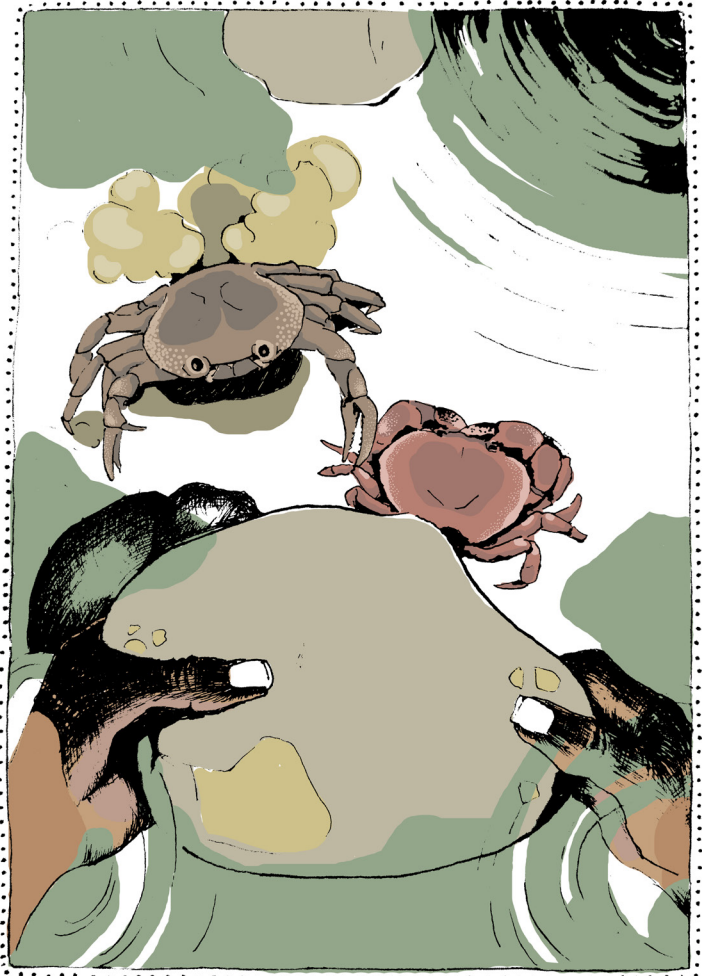
### **Ingredients**

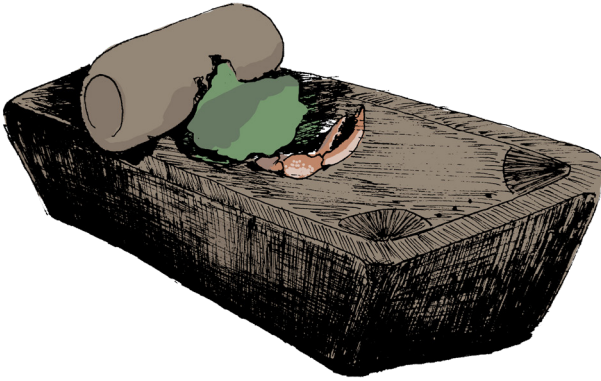
Crab meat, mustard oil, onion, garlic, ginger, turmeric, coriander, garam masala, salt

### **Method**

Clean the crab well till all the mud is removed. Prise open the shell and discard the outer layer. The meaty part of the crab has to be washed and cleaned properly to remove the residual dirt. Heat a pan, pour oil and add the onion, ginger and garlic and sauté it. Add the spices and fry for some time. To this mixture, add the crab meat and cook adding a small quantity of water.

This is served best with *chapati*.





The Gonds also make ***Kekda ka Chutney***. For this, grind to a paste coriander leaves, chilli powder, salt and crab using *sil-batta* (stone hand grinder). They say it tastes better than fish.

### **Challenges**

The Forest Department stops people from entering the forest even to catch crabs. Hence the Gonds miss consuming this delicious food. Besides, the local tribals observe that due to the diamond

mining in this forest, mine effluents are contaminating the streams and killing the fish and crabs. The local springs are drying up due to accumulation of mine tailings and groundwater depletion is leading to reduction in the flow of water into the streams. Over a period, this has resulted in the aquatic life slowly dying and getting extinct. Earlier there were several native varieties of fish and crabs that were traditionally caught and consumed. Now only two varieties of fish are available but these have been introduced from the market.



## **Sore Machli (सौर मछली)**

### **Hunting Procedure**

This fish is found throughout the year in standing water, and is caught using a net. These days, in villages they use a mosquito net. In summer, when the water level is reduced, a small mud barrier is created. The water is emptied and a net is placed at a small opening to catch the fish.

It is a group activity and at least a group of 2-5 is required to do the fishing. Patience is the catch word.

### **Ingredients**

Sore fish, mustard oil, onion, garlic, ginger, turmeric, coriander, garam masala, salt



### **Method**

Cut the fish into pieces after washing them thoroughly to remove all the dirt. Into the frying pan, pour mustard oil, add the onion, ginger, garlic mix and sauté. Add the masalas and fry for a few more minutes. To this mixture, add the fish pieces and a small quantity of water. Bring it to a boil and cook for about 10 minutes.

This is served with rice.

### **Cultural Significance**

When a baby is born in the Sore Gond tribe, a feast is arranged by the family after a few days of birth. During this festivity, this fish is served with special rice. The Sore Gonds mainly eat this fish during this celebration. Other sub tribes like the Raj Gonds also consume this fish.

According to the beliefs of Sore Gond, it is the regular consumption of this fish that gave their tribe the name Sore Gond.



## **Gutua Machli (गुटुआ मछली)**

This fish, along with Sore Machli, is found throughout the year in standing water.

### **Ingredients**

Gutua fish, mustard oil, onion, garlic, ginger, turmeric, coriander, garam masala, salt

### **Method**

Since the fish is caught from muddy waters, they need to be washed thoroughly to remove all the dirt. Wash and clean the fish and cut them into pieces. Into the frying pan, pour mustard oil, add the onion, ginger, garlic mix and sauté. Add the masalas and fry for a few more minutes. To this mixture, add the fish pieces and a small quantity of water. Bring it to boil and cook for about 10 minutes.

This is served with rice.

### **Challenges**

Once the water from the standing puddle is emptied, walking into the mud is difficult as there are sharp stones or thorns that can hurt. Even during creating a temporary mud barrier one





has to constantly keep the mud padding, as the strong gush of water keeps breaking the dam. It is a laborious task all through the fishing.

### **Cultural Significance**

During festivals, this fish is served with special rice and other ingredients like jaggery, ghee, *khajur* (dates), raisins, *makhana* (fox nut), coconut, chironji, and other herbs.



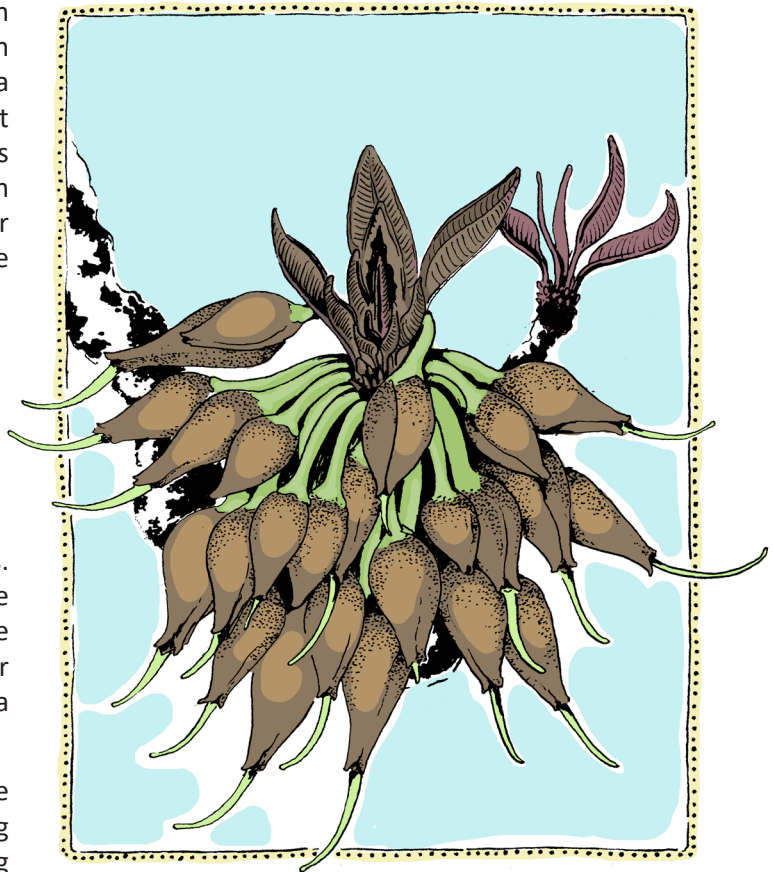
## **Mahua (महुआ)**

Mahua (*Madhuca Indica*) is an important tree found abundantly in the forests of Panna. It is a traditional source of nutrition, income and healing for many ailments. Different parts of the tree have different uses. It also has spiritual significance around which many songs, stories, and oral histories are intertwined.

Mahua trees bloom in mid-March to mid-April. Women and children go into the forest to collect Mahua flowers early in the morning, at around 4-5 am. It takes 1 - 1½ hours to collect around 4-5 kg of fresh Mahua flowers. However, after drying, it gets reduced to half the weight.

Mahua trees are planted by tribals and each family claims ownership to a set of trees. Many families have been displaced from their villages and have lost ownership of the trees as they are unable to grow them in their relocated sites. This has destroyed a major source of their income and nutrition. Some families return every year to their native village during the Mahua season.

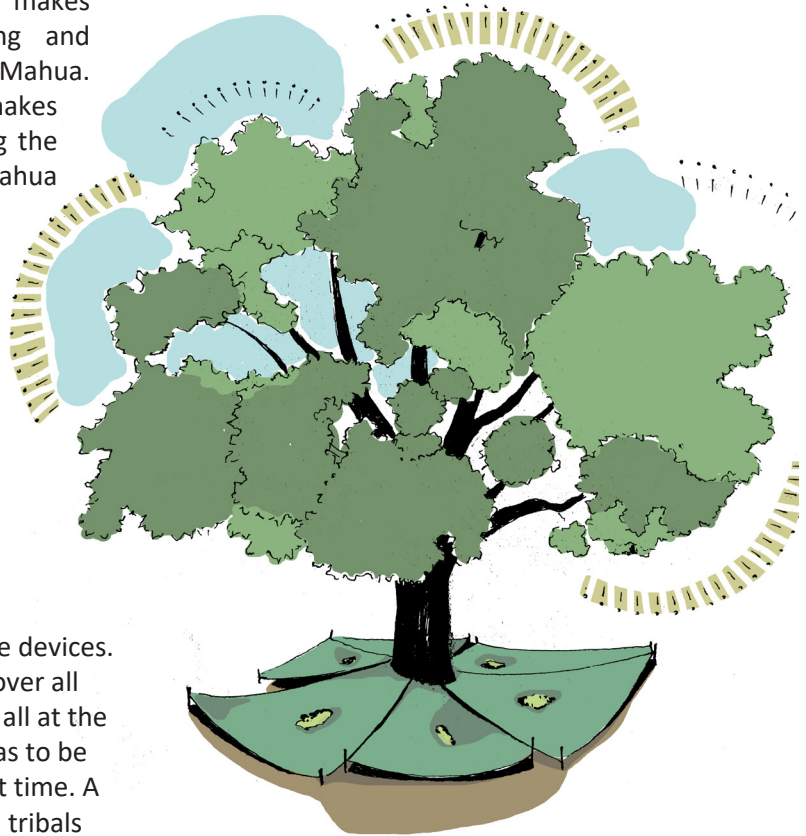
Those who have remained in the village host their relatives and during the season, the villages are buzzing



with many families, much like in earlier times. Even after they vacate the village, the trees continue to be informally owned by the original families.

The forest department does not stop the tribals from collecting Mahua directly. But tribals have a hard time picking the Mahua from the ground as they get mixed and soiled with fallen leaves, twigs and undergrowth. To make their picking easier, sometimes they burn the leaves to clear the ground faster. This sometimes leads to the trees catching fire and destroying the tree cover. It also leads to lesser flowering the following season. Hence, burning leaves is often prohibited. This makes it more time consuming and difficult for picking the Mahua. The dangers of insects, snakes and other creatures biting the tribals while collecting Mahua is high and they often get injured.

These days nets are being provided to some families by the Forest Department or local NGOs, in order to prevent burning of undergrowth and soiling of the Mahua. It has solved the problem to some extent, but not all have access to these devices. They need many nets to cover all the trees, and Mahua falls all at the same time, so gathering has to be done quickly within a short time. A new problem posed to the tribals are the plantations under CAMPA (compensatory afforestation plantations). They are not able to enter these forest areas. They complain that not many Mahua trees are planted in these sites, so they have less forest spaces to collect or to grow Mahua.



It is a major worry for the tribals for whom Mahua is their main source of cash income. Loss of this resource means more days of migrant labour. It is also a legal violation as most families eligible for recognition of their rights under the Forest Rights Act have lost their land without proper settlement of rights, to the national park, mining, CAMPA and climate (mis)actions. Besides, each year, due to other environmental factors unknown to them, the tribals complain that Mahua is flowering less and hence they are collecting less of it.

## **Cultural Significance**

Mahua trees are sacred to the Gonds in Panna. Many rituals are associated with this important tree. Different parts of the tree are used during *Harchat Puja*. Mahua Dubri is eaten in plates made from Mahua leaves during fasting. Mahua twigs are used for brushing teeth, Mahua oil is used for cooking, Mahua is brewed into liquor and is an important part of marriage functions and celebrations.

## **Nutritional Beliefs**

Mahua is a nutrient-rich tree with a long range of medicinal uses, with all parts of the tree – leaves, flowers, bark, roots – having different benefits.

Mahua, which is rich in healthy fats, is seen as a source of energy. Different parts of Mahua have healthy amounts of protein and carbohydrate, along with calcium, phosphorus, iron, and vitamin C.

For the Adivasi communities, Mahua is treasured as a panacea for all ailments – for immediate relief as well as for chronic and long term diseases – from common cold to epilepsy.

Mahua is believed to help in recovering from/preventing:

Weakness, impotence, cold and cough, miscarriage, piles, blood pressure, excessive body heat, diabetes, inflammation, itchiness, epilepsy, irregular menstrual cycles, constipation, pustules, and sores.

Apart from the above, consumption of Mahua is highly recommended for women as it helps the body absorb minerals from food and also aids in the production of healthy breast milk for lactating mothers.



(Note: Most of the ingredients used for Mahua recipes are either collected from the forest or grown in this region)



## Mahua ki Dubri (महुआ की डुबरी)

### Ingredients

*Chane ki daal* (Bengal Gram Split), coconut, homemade wheat *semaiya* (*vermicelli*), chironji seeds, wheat flour, dried Mahua

### Nutrition Beliefs

It helps in regulating sleep disorders. This dish has a cooling nature, and is hence mostly cooked in summer. This preparation is used for treating heat stroke / sunstroke.

### Method

Dried Mahua needs to be beaten with small wooden sticks to remove the *tili* (anther/ पराग-कोश) since this part is not eaten. Dried and cleaned Mahua flowers need to be washed with cold/hot water.

Put water to boil, then add *Chane ki Daal* (Split Bengal Gram) to it. Add Mahua after some time and then cook it for 30-40 minutes.

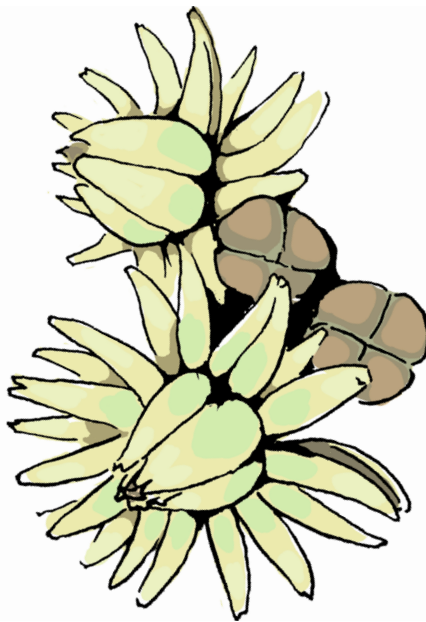
Stir continuously to avoid the Mahua settling down to the bottom of the vessel and getting burnt. Mix the boiled Mahua and hot water together in the same vessel with the help of a wooden churner. To this, add homemade and handmade wheat *semaiya*, dry coconut powder and chironji seeds. Keep stirring, and cook it for 10-15 minutes. It is served hot.

### Song

तबक-तबक रे महुआ तोरे आ गये लिबाउआ ।  
तबक-तबक रे महुआ तोरे आ गये लिबाउआ ॥

*Tabak-Tabak re Mahua Tore aa Gaye libauyaa*  
*Tabak-Tabak re Mahua Tore aa Gaye libauyaa*

*The song translates to: 'Oh Mahua... your gatherer is here.'*



## Challenges

Women prefer to go in groups and not alone, ever since the tiger reserve was declared. Early mornings are also a hazard when the wild bears come strolling, the bears being extremely fond of Mahua flowers. Bear attacks are common in this season if one is not alert.



## Mahua ka Laddu (महुआ का लड्डू)

### Ingredients

Dried Mahua flower (1 kg), peanut/groundnut (250gm), jaggery (750 gm - 1 kg)

### Method

In a clay pan, roast the dried Mahua and keep aside. Roast the peanuts in the same pan. Leave it to cool for some time. Take a mortar and pestle and pound both the peanuts and Mahua to a powder. Make sure the peanuts are broken into very fine pieces. Add the jaggery in portions while you are pounding the mixture (jaggery binds the Mahua and peanut mixture). Once done, take small quantities of the mixture and roll into the shape of laddus with your hands.

Sweet Mahua laddus are ready to be consumed.



## Nutrition Beliefs

Children are given this since it keeps them warm during winter.



## Mahua ka Murka (महुआ का मुरका)

### Ingredients

Dried Mahua flower, sesame seeds

### Method

Roast dried Mahua flowers and break them into very small pieces using mortar and pestle.

Repeat the same process for sesame seeds and mix with the Mahua.

It is eaten as powder during winter.

### Challenges

It is tasty and has been a staple food item in the past. Its popularity has reduced now due to the external social influences and non-availability of Mahua in the relocated sites, ever since the Adivasis were displaced. The young generation that has no access to Mahua or are studying in hostels don't get to eat this often, and with changing food habits, not many want to eat it.



## Mahua ka Laata (महुआ का लाटा)

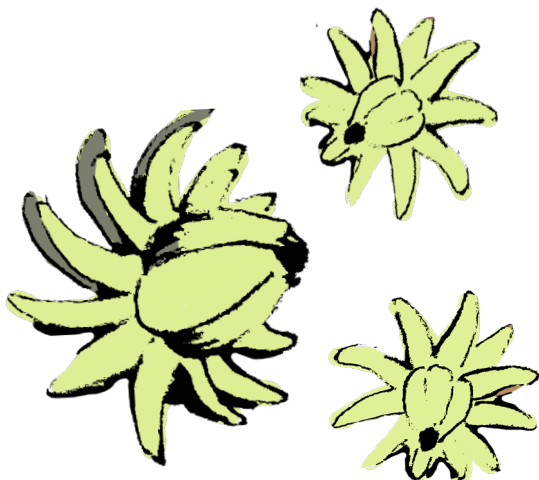
### Ingredients

Dried Mahua flower, oil

### Method

Clean the dried Mahua and pound it into a powder using a mortar and pestle. Add very little water (at room temperature) while pounding the Mahua. Knead it into a dough and roll it into flat, round layers like *parathas* (Indian flat bread). Toast the *parathas* on a pan with some oil.

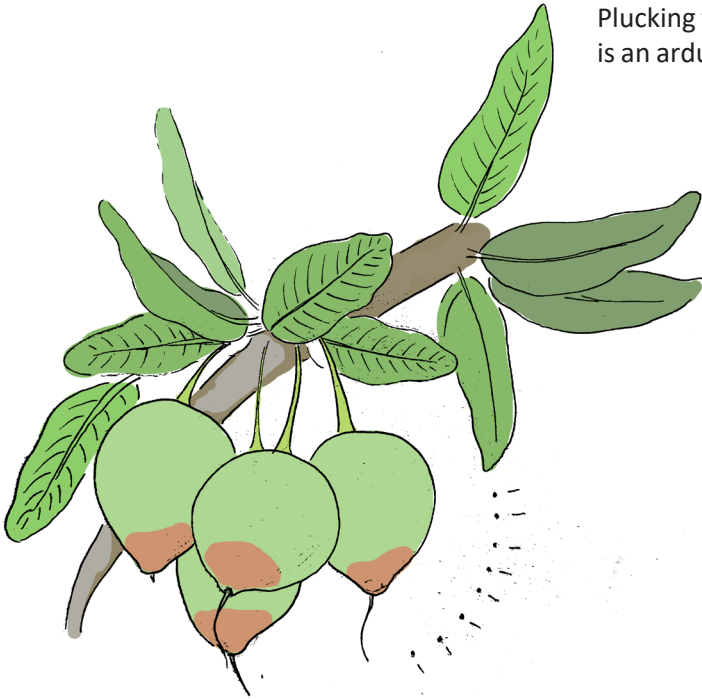
Mahua ka Laata is consumed during winter and can be preserved for 3-4 days in normal room temperature.



## Gulenda ka Sabzi (गुलेंदा का सब्जी)

### Foraging

The Mahua Fruits are plucked when they are small in size and unripe. The most efficient way to pluck the fruits is with the help of a stick and cloth. A saree-like cloth is first spread across below the trees and tied just above ground level. A stick is then waved around to tug at the stems of the fruits, which once detached, drop down and get collected on the cloth.



Plucking the Mahua fruits at the correct stage is an arduous and time-consuming task. Since

birds like to feast on the fruits when they are unripe, the perfect gulendas are rarely spotted. With only a few unripe fruits remaining on each tree, women have to cover long distances to collect enough gulendas.

### **Ingredients**

Gulenda (Mahua fruits), oil, garlic, tomato, onions, dried red chillies, cumin, turmeric powder, coriander powder, mustard seeds, salt

### **Method**

Soak the fruits in water for 5-10 minutes to wash away the *doodh*

(milky white sap) from the outer skin. Once cleaned, peel and cut the fruits into small pieces.

Fry the cut gulendas in oil and keep aside. Grind the onions, red chillies, garlic, tomato and the masala powders to a paste. In the same *kadhai* (Indian wok) used for frying the gulendas, add mustard and cumin seeds to the remaining hot oil. Once it stops spluttering, pour in the ground paste and the gulendas. Fry them for a few minutes and add salt towards the end.

### **Nutrition Beliefs**

Gulenda is believed to prevent fever, along with serious ailments like jaundice and even heart attack.

Since the unripe fruit builds appetite, it helps in reducing weakness.

### **Challenges**

Only a few women continue to cook this curry, as almost the entire younger generation does not know the recipe. Since gulenda is slightly bitter in taste, the younger generation does not prefer eating the curry, resulting in the dish slowly fading away from public memory.





## Suran (सुरान)

### Foraging

Suran (*Amorphophallus Campanulatus*) is a tuber and since it grows underground, one has to be experienced in assessing when it is ready for digging. We have to wait for the leaves to turn yellow in colour and then only it is considered ready for harvest. After taking out the Suran from the ground, it is kept under a natural spring where water falls on it constantly. We have to leave the tuber for 3-4 hours in the running water before one thinks about cooking it, as it has an itchy taste and can give you trouble after eating. To avoid the itchiness, the Gonds sometimes use *Bidachi* (tea) leaves for washing the Suran first. [All plants/tubers of this family have toxic principles (oxalate crystals) that need to be neutralized, by washing or adding a souring agent (tamarind, lime, etc.)]

### Ingredients

Turmeric, coriander, chilli, salt, onion, garlic, garam masala, mustard oil



## Method

Boil the Suran, peel the outer layer of the skin and cut it into small pieces. Pour oil into a pan and fry the Suran pieces till they turn slightly darker in colour. Remove from fire and keep aside. Add the onions, garlic, ginger and the spices to the oil and fry.

To this, add the fried Suran. Keep frying for the next 20 minutes and add water, cook it for some time and it is ready to be served.

Traditionally, the Suran used to be boiled or steamed and eaten without adding any spices.

## Song

According to their traditional knowledge and local saying, most of the medicinal herbs sprout during Janmashtami (August).

कदरे बोले : कादा रे कादा कदरे आउ थे

कादा बोला : बूढ़े है या जवान

कदरे बोले : कुछ बूढ़े हैं और कुछ जवान

कादा बोला : लड़कन में पहचानत नइयाँ और बूढ़े मुझे छोड़त नइयाँ

*Kadere Bole: Kaadaare Kaada Kadere Aau The*

*Kaada Bola: Budhe Hai ya Jawan*

*Kadere Bole: Kuch Budhe Hai aur Kuch Jawan*

*Kaada Bola: Ladkan ko Main Pehchaanat Naiyaan aur Budhe Mujhe Chodat Naiyaan*

In this song, one tuber is saying to another that people, both young and experienced, have come to dig them out. The other tuber replies that youngsters can no longer identify Surans, while the experienced never miss out on a good Suran.



## Bamboo (बाँस)

New bamboo shoots grow in the month of July-August, when the shoots are soft and can be freshly cooked. These shoots can also be pickled and stored.

### Foraging

Men collect bamboo shoots early in the morning from the forest. It is a time-consuming process since shoots are in a grove and hence, need to be carefully picked.



## Bamboo Pickle (बाँस का अचार)

### *Ingredients*

Bamboo shoots, salt, turmeric, mustard oil, pickle spice mix - salt, turmeric, red chilli powder, coriander powder, mustard powder, garam masala, cumin, fenugreek (*methi*) seeds

### *Method*

Remove the scaly layers from the shoots and then cut into smaller pieces. Wash the cut shoots thoroughly with water and then mix together with turmeric and salt. Leave the mixture out in the Sun for one hour.

Add the pickle spice mix to the sun-dried shoots and mix them together properly.

Pour mustard oil in a glass jar, then add in the mix of shoots and spices.

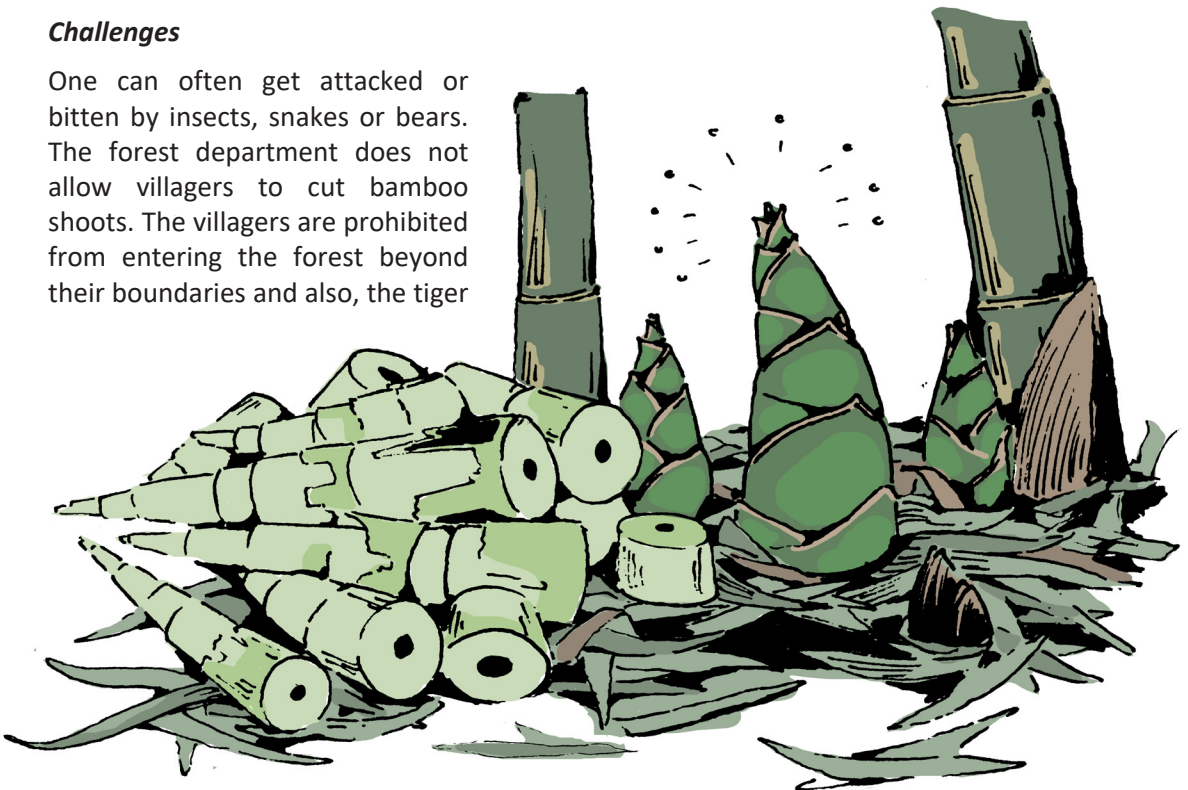
Leave the jar aside for two months, with occasional stirring, to let the pickle mature. Once the pickle is ready after two months, it can easily be stored for 1-2 years without it going bad.

### *Myths*

People refrain from consuming or even touching the pickle without taking a bath. Further, menstruating women are also not allowed to touch the pickle.

### *Challenges*

One can often get attacked or bitten by insects, snakes or bears. The forest department does not allow villagers to cut bamboo shoots. The villagers are prohibited from entering the forest beyond their boundaries and also, the tiger



population having increased, the fear of tiger attacks is restricting the movement of tribals.

Whether for their food or for their domestic uses, the Gonds are unable to collect bamboo these days and often have to 'steal' a few poles for their household needs.

### **Cultural Significance**

Bamboo grass and baskets (सूप) are used for rituals and religious ceremonies during *Harchat Puja*. Only women having sons fast on this day (the Gonds in Panna have for long come under the influence of the Hindu social bias, customs and rituals, and one finds Hindu gods and bhajans, have replaced Gond practices and songs - it is nearly impossible to bring oral memories of Gond practices today in this region).

Bamboo is also used for other religious or cultural activities and festivals, in different forms.



## **Bamboo Curry (बाँस की सब्ज़ी)**

### **Ingredients**

Bamboo shoots, salt, turmeric, mustard seeds, mustard oil, green chillies, tomato, onions, garlic

### **Method**

First the excess layers from the shoots need to be removed and then cut into smaller pieces. Salt and turmeric is added to the cut shoots, following which the mix is washed thoroughly with water. This is done to remove some of the bitterness from the shoots.

In a *kadhai*, heat mustard oil and into it add mustard seeds. Once it stops spluttering add garlic, onions, and cut green chillies. After a few minutes, tomatoes and the bamboo shoots are added. The ingredients are fried together for 15-20 minutes.

Once ready, the curry is served hot with *rotis*.



## Tendu ke Beej ki Kheer (तेंदू के बीज की खीर)

During *Aasaad* (June-July), the seeds of the Tendu (*Diospyros Melanoxylon*) fruit when it is still green, are used to cook *Kheer* (Porridge).

Tendu leaves are also used to make *Bidi* and its ripened fruits are consumed raw. Villagers use Tendu tree branches to keep away bandicoots from the farm. Farmers put sticks inside rat holes, the rats mistake the poles for snakes and never come back to the farm.

### Ingredients

Tendu ke beej (Tendu seeds), milk, sugar, dry fruits

### Method

Separate the seeds from the Tendu fruit and wash them properly. Boil the milk and add the Tendu seeds to it; stir in other dry fruits along with sugar and cook for 15-20 minutes till it thickens.

### Nutrition Beliefs

The Tendu fruit is rich in iron and is believed to be beneficial in the treatment of lung diseases. It also works as a relief for sore throat. Consuming the fruit when it is smaller in size helps in controlling the blood sugar levels of diabetic patients.

### Cultural Significance

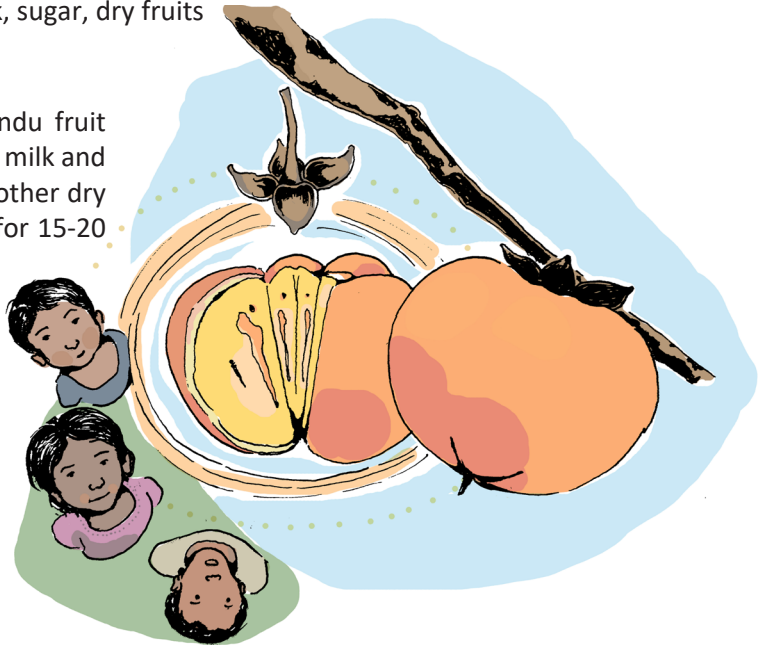
It is also a ceremonial food. Tendu kheer is used as offering during Harchat Puja.

### Riddle

अगधर बगधर सोने का गगधर उसमें घुसे चार बगधर मैनमै का ढक्कन लगा!  
बताओ क्या है उसका नाम!!

*Agghar Bagghar Sone ka Gagghar Usmein Ghuse Chaar Bagghar Mainka Dhakkan Laga!*  
*Batao Kya Hai Uska Naam!!*

This riddle is posed to the children while handing out the ceremonial offering to them during *Harchat*, and also while they eat the fruit. The riddle asks to identify a fruit (Tendu) by describing its appearance – golden coloured, having four holes, and with a lid (calyx) on top.



## Phang Bhaji (फांग भाजी)

Phang (*Rivea Hypocrateriformis*) is a creeper, which climbs on shrubs. Phang's leaves are similar to the shape of a human heart.

### Foraging

Phang Bhaji is collected by women and it takes 30-60 minutes (depending on availability) to collect 1 kg of Phang Bhaji.

### Ingredients

Phang Bhaji, any dal (lentils), garlic, ginger, salt

### Method

Remove the *nathua* (petioles) of the Phang Bhaji.

Make a paste of the leaves on a *sil-batta* (flat stone grinder). Boil water in a pan with salt. Add the lentils (dal) and cook it. When the dal is cooked, add the ground Phang Bhaji and boil it for



another few minutes. Add garlic and ginger once the Bhaji is cooked and boil for another two minutes. The Phang Bhaji is ready to be served.

### **Challenges**

It is difficult to collect Phang Bhaji since it climbs over shrubs which have thorns. While plucking it, one can get pricked or women's clothes get torn if they are not careful. It is totally dependent on heavy rains and due to unpredictable rainfall these days, it is getting difficult to find Phang Bhaji. If there is less rain, there will be no Phang Bhaji that year.

### **Local Belief**

Phang Bhaji starts growing in *Aasaad* (June-July). According to local belief, Phang Bhaji is only consumed in *Aasaad*. If consumed in *Sawan* (July-August), it can lead to blurred vision.



## **Bodi (बोडी) / (Mushroom)**

### **Foraging**

According to local belief, when thunder strikes during the Hindu month of *Shravan* (July-August) after *Nag Panchami*, the Bodi (mushrooms) grow in abundance in the Bamita (termite mounds). When Bodi grows, the whole Bamita looks completely white. But not all Bamitas have Bodi. Bamita also attract snakes.



When there is rain with thunder at night, villagers go to collect Bodi the next morning. Bodi which are still in button stage and not formed (pinhead and look like umbrella) are collected for consumption.

In one Bamita, one can get 4-5 kg of mushrooms. It takes time to find Bamita in the forest as well as expertise in identifying the right one.

### **Ingredients**

Bodi, mustard seeds, onion, coriander, chilli, turmeric, garlic, ginger, garam masala

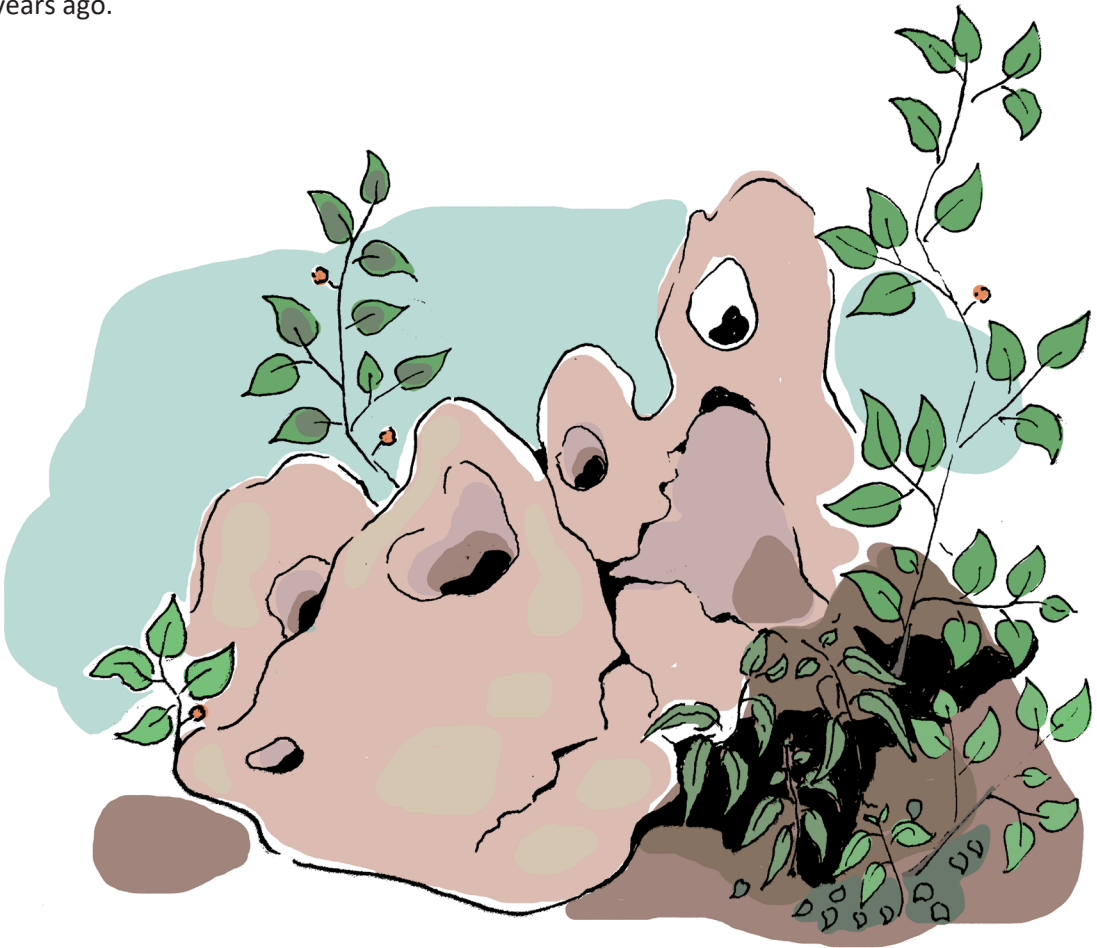
## Method

Wash the mushrooms and cut them into smaller pieces. Pour oil into a heated frying pan and add mustard seeds. Fry onion, garlic, ginger and the spices. Sauté. Add the mushroom pieces and cook in its juice till it becomes tender.

## Challenges

Since Bamita also attracts snakes, there is always the fear of snake bite. There are also shrubs growing around the Bamita which adds an additional challenge due to the thorns and other insects in it.

Since the wild mushrooms are highly dependent on thunderstorms and rain, due to fluctuations in rainfall, the Gonds say that they are not finding as many mushrooms these days as a few years ago.







*And there are many more recipes from the forests of Panna. These wild foods, their collection and cooking, are critical to ensuring food security and health of the Adivasis, and thereby, co-existence and biodiversity of Panna's forests.*

*Ironically, this landscape of abundant wild food, today faces a health crisis. Malnourishment, tuberculosis, silicosis loom large over these villages, so much so that many villages are now called 'widow villages' – the price that Gond women have paid for the demands of 'development'.*

*As we complete this book today, we get news of the death of a village elder, having succumbed to the deathly silicosis. With this death, we have lost a much valuable living archive of the biodiversity of Panna.*

*We hope that, as the global powers move forward in their pledge to deal with climate crisis, the co-existence of indigenous and rural communities with their eco-systems and knowledge practices are recognized as most critical to saving our planet.*

*The recipes of indigenous women carry the wisdom of sustainable living on this earth. This book is a small token of our gratitude to them.*



## Glossary

**Adivasi** - Indigenous People in India also called Scheduled Tribes (STs) or Tribals

**Bamita** - Ant hill

**Baas** - Bamboo

**CAMPA** - Compensatory Afforestation Fund Management and Planning Authority

**Chapati** - Indian flat bread also called **Roti**

**Garam Masala** - Blend of ground Indian spices

**Gonds** - One of the largest Adivasi groups in India. They are mainly spread across Central India.

**Kadhai** - Indian wok

**Kekda** - Crab

**Laddu** - A round sweet, with variations found across India

**Machli** - Fish

**Masala** - Indian spices

**Matka** - Mud pan

**NTFP** - Non Timber Forest Produce

**Paratha** - Indian layered or stuffed flat bread

**PTR** - Panna Tiger Reserve

**Sabzi** - Curry

**Sungra** - Wild Boar

**Talaab** - Pond







# DHAATRI

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