

TRADITIONS OF FISH UTILISATION FOR RECIPES IN NIGERIA

T. O. Ayansanwo: A. A. Falana: and B. U. Aderele
Ogun State Agricultural Development Project, Abeokuta.

INTRODUCTION

Fish utilisation for traditional recipes dates back to ancient times, and major instances of these are mentioned in diets (Bascom, 1951a). The use of fish for stews in cooking has also been cited as a major feature (Bascom, 1951b). Most of the activities of women-in-fisheries centres around utilisation (Ayansanwo, 1992). Most of such fish products are first subjected to smoke-curing (or smoking Iredale and Roberta, 1985) in order to arrest spoilage. This is essentially a gender-specific activity dominated by women (Adekoya, 1988).

Apart from the use of fish in basic stews and soup preparation in Nigeria, it is as well included in traditional recipes in different forms all over Nigeria. (Aderele, 1992). Variations in utilisation of fish in recipes is culture-dependent and alongside other feed materials.

METHOD

Some recipes in particular zones in Nigeria are assessed with details of their modes of preparation. The zones of consideration include:

- (i) North West Zone
- (ii) North East Zone
- (iii) Middle Belt Zone
- (iv) South East Zone
- (v) South West Zone

The variety of preferences are examined against the background of the convenience of procurement.

RECIPES IN THE ZONES

I. North West Zone: "*Fish dambu*"

This is prevalent in the northern states of the North-West Zone, particularly in Kaduna Zone. The major aspects of preparation include: pieces of fish, large peppers, some salt, onions, water and groundnut oil. The fish is gutted, washed and cut into pieces. These fish pieces are then boiled with peppers and onion for a short while. This is followed by mashing of the pieces of fish after allowing to cool. The mashed fish is then fried with groundnut oil until a golden brown colour is achieved.

II. North East Zone: "*Shimbe soup dish*"

This is common in the North Eastern zone of Nigeria, especially in Taraba State. Fresh fish, palm oil, ground pepper, onions, potash, salt and local spices are the major ingredients. Washed, gutted fresh fish is cut into desirable pieces and placed on cut

vegetable leaves (Shimbe) in a pot and cooked with water, palm-oil, spices and salt. Potash is added as tenderizer. The "Shimbe fish soup" is ready for consumption in about 30 minutes.

III. Middle Belt Zone: *Vegetable/fish dish*

Vegetable preparations with fish are common in the Middle belt zone, especially as in Niger State. Here, smoked fish, is boiled until tender and added to boiled, washed vegetable leaves with such a condiments as "Ayu" with palm-oil, small peppers (ground) and onions added. The "Ayu" helps this smoked-fish in vegetable recipe to acquire a peculiar flavour which goes well with other feed materials.

IV. South East Zone: (i) *"Nsola soup"*

This is very common in parts of Imo State. Smoke dried fish, peppers, ground crayfish, uziza and uda, small uziza leaves, salt and yam (pieces) (for thickening soup) are the major ingredients. Washed smoked fish pieces are boiled with water, with the addition of pieces of yam, ground pepper, uziza and uda, crayfish, uziza leaves and salt. The recipe goes well with pounded yam.

(ii) *"Achicha azu" (Fish cake)*

This is prevalent in some parts of Abia State. The essential ingredients include: dried fish, cooked yam, eggs, bread crumbs and flour, chopped onion, peppers, oil (for frying), and salt.

Skin and bone is removed from the fish and chopped into pieces or flakes. This is mixed with one beaten egg, seasoned with salt and pepper, and mashed with yam. This is then spread on a flat surface tray sprinkled with flour. The mixture is rolled lightly over flour and cut into shapes and coated with egg and bread crumbs, fried in hot oil till golden brown. The recipe is served with salted ugu or lettuce.

V. South West: *"Ikokore" dish*

This is very common in Ogun State. Smoked fish, ground pepper, water yam, palm oil, crayfish and salt.

Mashed (grated) water-yam is boiled with smoked fish, crayfish, pepper, palm-oil, water and salt for about 30 minutes until an amalgam of paste and yam nodules emerge. This is left till salted to taste and served either with eba, or other foods or eaten alone.

DISCUSSION

Generally, the use of the fish products in these recipes appear to depend on the culture of the zone or area of derivation.

I. North West Zone

Fresh fish and large peppers used in the "fish dambu" are overly available in the North West Zone of Nigeria. Use of these peppers and onions in foods is also a habit of people in these areas. The traditional occupation of women-in-agriculture in this zone is posted largely on the production of peppers in the "Fadama" areas especially, in this zone. Thus, ingredients for this desired recipe are traditionally available.

II. North East Zone

Fresh fish is a major product of the major rivers in this zone: Benue River, Gongola River etc. The onions, spices, "shimbe", and peppers are largely produced by women-in-agriculture in their farming practices. The access to potash, mainly from Lake Chad has afforded a habit of frequent tenderizing in recipes of this nature. Hence, the "shimbe" soup is traditionally a prevalent recipe.

III. Middle Belt Zone

Vegetable preparations with fish is a major frequent love of the Nupe of Niger State mainly due to the successful propagation of leafy vegetables in this zone and the abundant fish resources of the rivers: Niger River, Kaduna River, Wuya River, and a few man-made lakes. "Ayu", onion, peppers, are prevalently cultivated by women-in-agriculture as sources of seasoning for recipes of this type with good results. This thus makes the vegetable fish recipe convenient to make in this zone.

IV. South East Zone

The preparations of "Nsala" and "Achicha" soups is convenient in this zone based on available food products. The inclusion of "aziza" leaves, ugu, peppers, uda, is based on their prevalent cultivation in this zone. Yam that is used for thickening of "Nsala soup" is major crop in the zone. Crayfish added alongside fish is a preferential combination in this soup. East zone from the Igbo to the Efika and Ibibio; the latter two groups having successfully promoted popular vegetable fish recipes like "Edi kang ikong" and "Afang" onto Hotel menu table.

V. South West Zone

The preparation of the "Ikokore recipe" in this zone (common among the Ijebus) is convenient because of the tradition of water-yam propagation alongside fish which is available from riverine, lagoon and marine fishing. The abundant production of palm-oil by women-in-agriculture in the zone has also afforded its frequent use in this context.

CONCLUSION

The traditions of use of fish in recipes in Nigeria as shown in this paper seem to be based on the successful agricultural practices in particular zones and areas. This has helped to promote taste and values since easily procured food items are cheaper for use in particular areas than others.

The use of such fish items on recipes are useful for promoting protein intake and stemming of malnutrition especially in the rural areas as well as helping to improve the incomes of women-in-agriculture.

REFERENCES

- Adekoya, B. B. (1988): "*The Role of Women in Fisheries in Ogun State*".
Contribution to a research option at O.A.U.; (Dept of Agricultural Economics), Ile-Ife Nigeria.
- Aderele, B. U. and O. Bello-Oniyo (1992): "*Nigeria Indigenous Fish recipes*
Contribution at the Women-in-Agriculture Workshop at NIFFR, New Bussa.
- Ayansanwo, T. O. (1992): "*Comparative Smoke-curing indices of the cut-out drum kiln on Clarias gariepinus (Mudfish) and Oreochromis niloticus (Mangofish)*".
Paper presented at the Annual Conference of the Agricultural Society of Nigeria at the University of Agriculture, Abeokuta (2nd - 6th November, 1992).
- Bascom, W. (1951): "*Yoruba Food*". Africa Vol. XXI pp. 41-53.
- Bascom, W. (19516): "*Yoruba Cooking*" Africa Vol. XXI pp. 125 - 137
- Iredale, D. G. and Roberta, K. Y. (1985):
A Guide to Handling and preparing fresh-water Fish. Ocean Fisheries (Canada.)