



RESEARCH PAPER

Traditional Food Delicacies across the Balochistan

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PAPER INFO	ABSTRACT
<p>Received: October 03, 2020</p> <p>Accepted: December 25, 2020</p> <p>Online: December 31, 2020</p> <p>Keywords: Baloch Food Patterns Balochistan Festive Food Food Delicacies Pakistan</p> <p>*Corresponding Author: sarfraz@qau.edu.pk</p>	<p>The current paper highlights the traditional food delicacies available in various parts of Balochistan province in Pakistan. An emphasis is given to the traditional food production and consumption with an especial focus on the role of culture and the festivities in the food preparation and consumption. The current research was conducted by using ethnographic research techniques such as; (a) key informant interviews (KIIs), (b) participant observation method (POM), and (c) in-depth interviews (IDIs) to get a comprehensive understanding about the food preparation and eating patterns in the sampled region. The ethnographic data reveals that most of the food is in practice since ages and the Baloch people process and consume in the same way as it had been done by their forefathers. The Baloch people feel it pride in cooking traditional delicacies for their guests and on special occasions. The food is prepared with full zeal and zest and consumed with sheer joy.</p>

Introduction

Food eating practices can vary from one region to another purely depending on the environment, culture and the stock of food availability. As food is necessary for the human survival in various cultures, the inhabitants living in distinct geographical and environmental conditions prefer different types of foods. Anthropologists, since the subject's inception, have been focusing on the traditional food practices in the traditional societies. The research produced by Mallery (1888) is one of the pioneer works in the subject which focused on the "manners and meals". In addition to that another anthropologist, Smith (1889) on his "Lectures on the Semites" contained an important chapter on food. Cushing's (1920) little monograph on Zufii breadstuffs and Franz Boas's (1921) treatment of Kwakiutl salmon recipes are other examples of early anthropologists' especial focus on food and eating. In addition to that Lévi-Strauss (1965) and Douglas (1966) paid a structuralist perspective on food and eating. Later on, Goody (1982) produced a book entitled "Cooking, Cuisine, and Class: A Study in Comparative Sociology" seemed to mark a turning point. Since then, as the world that anthropologists chose to study became different, so has their work on food and eating. The anthropological study of food today has matured enough to serve as a vehicle for examining large and varied problems of theory and research methods (Mintz & Du Bois, 2002).

The Balochistan province is very rich in traditional feasts. Baloch people normally eat thrice a day; (a) breakfast (*Sobarag*), (b) lunch (*Nari*) and (c) dinner (*sham*). One can find a variation in such meals across locations and tribes within the province. The interesting thing among Baloch people regarding their meals is that they regularly follow the meal timings. Contrary to that in other parts of country, people usually eat in between the regular meal timings which leads them to skip the main course meals. Yet, in Balochistan, people can carry a hunger until the proper meal timings since they have learnt it in the same way from their families and communities. The meals are prepared for the whole family and preferred to have it in two combinations; in some locations men and women eat separately but in others they prefer to have jointly. In the case if a family head or an elderly man is absent at time of the feast the others wait for him and prefer to have meal with him.

In the case of Balochistan the most important grain is wheat, but millet and rice are also eaten in some places. Grain is grinded into flour and made into unleavened bread which is baked in mud ovens. Sometimes people go for hunting and picnic and then they make *Kaak*(stone bread) instead of normal bread baked on a flat pan. *Kaakis* prepared by heating a round stone in fire. When the stone is warm enough, a dough is covered around the stone which is kept at the side of fire so that the bread (*kaak*) is baked from both sides i.e. inner and outer. In this way, they make as many *kaak* as they need.

Meat is an important part of the diet in Balochistan. Balochi *Sajji* is a favorite dish that is often served to the respected guests or during special feasts. A sheep is slaughtered, skinned, and carved from the joints. The meat is sprinkled with salt. This is very beneficial for them because they get their food from the reared herd of the cattle. The concept of rich and poor is defined by the numbers of cattle that one has. People think if anyone has cattle that person or the family is not poor. The people feel proud on their cattle. Milk is consumed in different forms and tastes, normally people make fresh cheese and butter. In summer, sweet whey (*lassi*) is made with milk and sugar. Curd is the basis of most of the food preparations. Dates, wild fruits and vegetables are form an important part of the diet in Balochistan.

Whereas, in the coastal areas of Southern Balochistan, fish is commonly used as a major food. People prefer dried and boiled fish. In those areas people do not rear a large number of cattle so they rely much on fish and vegetables. They buy a little amount of meat from the market rather than buying a complete goat for consumption purposes. They slaughter goats and cows on Eid-ul-Azha(an annual religious festivity) but they do not commonly facilitate their families to enjoy a larger amount of meat with different taste. Apart from that the richer families slaughter goats and sheep for themselves and for guests. The people however are fond of vegetables and pulses but chicken is also consumed on regular basis. Coastal area has a variety of fish and seafood from tunas, shrimps and caviar to snappers, sardines, and skates. Old people eat simple food but the young generations sometimes prefers the *Sajji* and *kadab*. *Lassi* is also very common because in summer the weather becomes much hotter in the coastal areas. Buttea is still liked very much by the people, especially (*Sabzchai*) green tea and (*Sulemanichai*)black tea.

Besides the regular meals, people make other particular dishes on particular occasions, such as birth celebration, circumcision, marriage, and during death rituals etc. Food plays a very vital role in such occasions because these occasions are the moments

which bring people closer to each other in contrast to their daily busy routines. So, when such an event takes place people leave their daily work aside and try to reach out to the particular gathering to enjoy the moment.

Material and Methods

The current research study was conducted in various locations (Barkhan, Makran and Quetta) of Balochistan while using the ethnographic technique for data collection. The focus of the research was made to the food delicacies prepared and consumed by the common Baloch people for their routine meals and for the special occasions. The study used three key methods; (a) key informant interviews (KIIs), (b) participant observation method (POM), and (c) in-depth interviews. The researchers started collecting data during the first phase of the research in which they conducted three KIIs with selected informants who had a better knowledge about the food delicacies of the region. The selection of these informants was made through the referral/snowball sampling technique in which the first informant informed about the rest. The same selection approach was used for the selection of respondents for IDIs.

In the second phase of the research, researchers used participant observation method as it was very necessary to do so to get a detailed understanding about the food delicacies preparation and consumption. In the last phase of the research, the key informants helped the researchers in identifying the possible respondents for IDIs. In the initial phase the researchers set a target to conduct approximately twenty IDIs but in the research execution stage we reached to the saturation point after sixteen IDIs. So, we stopped at the same number since no new information was coming from the interviews. The data collected through the three qualitative methods mentioned above was coded and themes were generated keeping in view the forms of food delicacies, the daily life meals and meals prepared for the festivities/special occasions.

Baloch Food Delicacies: Main Meals

Balochi Sajji

One of the renowned Balochi cuisines is Lamb-skewed generally known as *Sajji* (see Fig. 1), it is made of lamb or goat and chicken. It is very famous in Balochistan as well as in the rest of the Pakistan. The *Sajji* has gained massive popularity in different parts of Pakistan in the recent past. In Balochistan, *Sajji* is made on special occasions like Eid, picnic, guest arrivals, during *Marka* or *Jirga*. Yet, in other parts of the country it is served in all the food hubs especially in crowded food streets. Outside Balochistan people prefer to eat *Sajji* when they eat out. The major reason of preference is the popularity of this particular cuisine and the unique style of making of it.



Fig. 1 Balochi *Sajji*

Mostly goat or lamb is preferred for *Sajji*, areared young male goat/lamb is slaughtered, skinned and carved from joints. The meat is sprinkled with salt. The pieces of meat are spitted on green twigs, which are stuck into the ground in front of blazing logs. Once cooked, this dish served to guests in pieces; otherwise commonly among friends and relative the entire piece is kept in front and every one eats with their hands.

As it is very famous in Baloch culture, in fact the preparation of the *Sajji* takes 3-4 hours and a healthy goat/lamb is prerequisite for the preparation of *Sajji*. It is cooked in fats. As the goat and lamb are expensive, people in other parts of Pakistan opt for chicken *Sajji* and it is served in most famous food streets in affordable prices and is prepared with ease. The chickens are put on the rods and they are cooked slowly on the heat of fire. The urban people prefer to use special spices, and lemon juice to garnish it while they use mint *chatni* (sauce) and salad with it while originally it is eaten with bread.

Tandoori Kababs

Kababs are an essential item in Baloch cuisine and one can find countless varieties of kababs in especially in Quetta and also in some other parts. Each region has its own varieties of kababs but some like the *Seekh* kabab, Chicken Tikka, and *Shami* kabab are especially popular varieties throughout the area. Generally, kababs from Balochistan and the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa tend to be identical to the Afghan style of barbecue, with salt and coriander are used for seasoning. The tandoori kebab is also made like the other kabab but it is made in the tandoor (clay oven). The mouth of the tandoor is closed with the wet mud. It takes 4-5 hours to cook completely. This kabab is mostly made on the marriage occasions and Eid-ul-Azha.

Kori Mahi (River Fish)

It is another famous Balochi food which is almost made all around Balochistan. It is basically made from the fresh water fish (river water). Fish hunting is very common everywhere. People catch the fish with the help of net and some time they use poisonous powder which is very dangerous for marine life. After catching the fish there are various

methods of cooking. In Makran region there is one unique method of cooking the hunted fish which gives it a delicious taste. People put the fish in *Pishor* palm leaves and tie it hard in it and then put it on fire or burning coals, just like Tikka. In the process it is turned upside down again and again so that the fish is cooked properly. It takes at least half an hour. The fish become so soft and tender that it can be eaten with the bones and this is the specialty of this food. It is sometimes cooked in the oil as well. In addition to the family consumption, some people have adopted fish hunting as a profession for their earning since the demand for fish is there. So, majority of the vendors across the Makran region and particularly in Quetta they sell fish on regular basis.

Khaddi Kabbab

In this cuisine the Baloch people cook a whole lamb or goat on fire. Usually, the raw rice are filled in the empty stomach of the lamb/goat which cook with the help of stomach fats. The lamb/goat is cooked on fire for about three to four hours. It is usually eaten with rice already cooked in the stomach which would become tastier than the meat. This dish is most famous in Pakhtun populated areas of Balochistan. This is a kind of food which is not simply made on a particular occasion rather when people gather to make this dish the environment automatically turns into a special occasion. They usually enjoy the laud music and dance until the cuisine is prepared.

Landhi (Dry Meat)

This is a very historical and traditional dish made in most parts of the Balochistan. It is especially made in winter season. The name varies among the tribes, in Makran region it is called *Tabaheg* whereas in Barkhan, Dera Bhugti, Kohlu and the surroundings it is called *Siyala* or *Landhi*. It is also a meat which is very famous in the rest of the Balochistan. It is made through the meat of sheep or goat yet there is little difference in the making process.

In Makran region people use the mixture of crushed *Anardana* (pomegranate) and salt on the meat. The dried pomegranate is backed on fire and then crushed in Harsh (*Chaki*) or grinder then it is mixed with the salt. They peel the meat of the bones and cut it into flat thin pieces then the mixture of salt and pomegranate is sprinkled over the meat and kept for while so that the water of the meat comes out.

Whereas in Barkhan and its vicinity, people use red pepper on it instead of salt and pomegranate powder. After that each piece of the meat is pierced from both edges with the help of a knife and then it is tied and hanged on a rope out in dry weather (see Fig. 2). It approximately becomes dry after one month but people usually let it hanged and dried for a longer period so that it becomes tenderer and aged to the perfection.



Fig. 2. Landhi



Fig.3.Landhi Chunks on Bread

The interesting thing about dry meat is that you can eat even after a year. It represents the Baloch nomadic culture; with a proper process one can use the dried meat for a longer period of time. You need to develop a taste to consume it as people coming out of the region won't easily eat and digest it. It is very delicious and very easy for the cooking. This dish is cooked in oil and some water is used so that it can boil well and be cooked with gravy. Many people make curry of it by cooking it with tomato, pulses, and vegetables. Otherwise, normally it is cooked with sheep fats. In Makran region especially people like to have this dish with more interest when it is fried in oil. They like to eat it with white boiled rice. This dish is a special one to offer to the guests and can also be gifted to the relatives who live within or outside Balochistan.

One of the respondents, Abdul Qadir Khetran mentioned that "I would love to have *Landhi* every day, I simply prefer to have it in oil fried on plane bread (see Fig. 3). We bring this to Islamabad and offer it to our friends from Punjab, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Sindh but they normally don't eat with passion as its taste is totally different to them. But for Baloch person it is never less than a pleasant treat."

Korno or Kaak (Bread)

Korno or *Keek* is a kind of bread "Naan", which is cooked on a stone while keeping it near to the fire (see Fig. 4). Most of the people residing in the mountains, the shepherd, the travellers, hunters and nomads make this bread on a routine basis. The process of making this kind of bread is very simple as thick and dry wood are burned and round stones of medium size are kept near this fire to heat. Until the stones get hot the wheat flour is wrapped on these stones and are kept near the fire until the bread turns its colour into golden. This process takes a longer time than the usual method of baking bread in *Tandoor* (Oven) or at the flat pan (*Tawa*). It is very tasty and famous in the Baloch culture. People from the different areas visit the villages and remote regions to taste this bread.



Fig. 4. Korno or Kaak, (Stone Bread), Source: Baloch (2020).

One of the respondents, Asif Khetran mentioned that, “originally those were the nomads and shepherds who were wanderers and usually stay out of homes for many months. They created this method of bread cooking with the help of fire and rounded stone as one can find such items easily in the mountains and then started using to cook the bread for their meals.” Baloch (2020) explained the method of cooking *Kaak* and mentioned that it is still cooked during marriage ceremonies and other special festivities in addition to those people who are shepherd and nomads- usually cook for their daily meals.

Sheelanch (Dried Cheese)

It is one of those unique types of Balochi foods many prepared in the Makran region. People love to eat it more than chicken other expensive food items. The cheese is made from the milk of goat or cow which is rounded and dried in the sun. Then it is crushed or grinded and mixed in water. Mostly people prefer to cook it in clarified butter (*desighee*). It purely depends on the availability of the clarified butter if it is not available then people use the vegetable oil.

Baloch Food Delicacies: Desserts

Gwadari Halwa

The Gwadari *Halwa* has a long history as it was first made during the annexation of Gwadar with Oman. As per the local narratives, it was a Hindu shopkeeper named as Bandai who invented the recipe of this *Halwa* and one of his workers Khudabux, who was at that time in his teenage, erudite the recipe in the same way (Aziz, 2019). It is the most delicious sweet in Balochistan which is made in the Gwadar region and replicated in the same way in other regions including Barkhan, Makran and Quetta. It is very famous all over Pakistan and usually gifted on special occasions. This sweet is also easy to make. The clarified butter (*desighee*) is used in this recipe alongside flour and food colour. At the first stage, the ghee is put into a pan and heated with a full flame. Then flour is added and at the

last stage the food colour is added in it. Dry fruits are also used for the seasoning and improving the taste of *Halwa*. Usually, it is made in two colours; (a) green and (b) yellow.



Fig. 5 Gwadari Halwa, Source: Balochistan Info (2012).

Madar (Date Halwa)

One of the main desserts used in Balochistan is *Madar* or date *Halwa*. Since, the region produces high quality dates that's why people make many sweet dishes out of these dates. *Madar* is one of such sweet delicacies. The process of the making of *Madar* is very simple at the first stage the clarified butter (*desighee*) is poured into the pan and heated. Then semolina flour is added in it. The mixture is heated till the flour changes its colour and started giving a unique fragrance. In another pan the deseeded dates are put and water is poured in it. The dates are cooked on a low flame for almost ten to fifteen minutes until they turn into a paste. *Desighee* is poured into the mix of dates and then kept it on medium-low flame for ten minutes. After that the semolina roasted mixture is mixed in the date paste. The pan is covered and let the paste mixture simmer for three to four minutes. It can be garnished with almonds or any other dry fruit available.



Fig. 6. Madar (Date Halwa)

Mosh (Rice Sweet)

It is another very famous sweet dish made from rice. First sugar is put into the oil and heated until it is totally dissolved. Then rice is grinded and put into it and cooked until it is ready. It seems to be like Kheer mix, but it is not, in Kheer mix we cook the grinded rice in milk rather to make this particular sweet we boil the rice in mixture of oil and sugar.

Gazaki (Carrot Dates Mix)

It is another sweetdish being made and happily consumed in Balochistan. It is very famous especially in Panjgoor and its neighbouring regions. But occasionally it is also made in some other parts of Balochistan including Barkhan and Quetta. Since the recipe of this dish is mainly depending on the dates, so it is majorly made in such regions in Balochistan where dates are grown. The recipe of this dish is very easy and can be made very swiftly. The large carrots are cut into small pieces and boiled in water with dates. They are intentional boiled together to properly let the taste of dates mixed well in the carrots. They are cooked until the carrots catch the taste of dates. When it is ready, dates are squeezed and taken out and sweet hot carrots are served in a plate or a bowl. The remainder water is not wasted rather another dish is prepared from that which is called as *sheerag*. The remaining water is boiled further for two to three hours and it slowly becomes thicker. When it is converted into syrup then is stored in a bottle or a cane. Many people who produce large amount of dates make this recipe as an alternate to the staple meals.

Shordhu (Sweet Bread)

This is another ceremonial dish prepared in most parts of Balochistan. This particular dish is prepared on ceremonial gatherings of a child birth. It is very common across Pakistan to celebrate the birth occasion by serving varieties of food to the invited guests. In Balochistan, people visit the home of the new born and congratulate the family when they come across the news of the child birth. So, in real sense this dish is made to honour the visiting guests. In some areas, people serve this sweet and delicious bread and some people just rely on the normal tea-biscuits combination. The birth ceremonial gatherings are day specific as in some regions the guests are invited on the 7th day of the birth of a child and in some cases on the 14th day.

The process of making of the *shordhu* is very difficult. Making this to an utmost perfection an experience lady from the close-relatives is called for the kind help. The ingredients are very simple and commonly available which includes flour, water, sugar, black pepper and clarified butter. First the sugar and black pepper are grinded in Harsh(*chaki*) then the flour is put into bowl and water is poured in. The flour is not thickly made like we do for making of bread but excessive water is used to make it very lose. After that the wet flour is put on *Tawa* (a flat pan) using a cup. When the so called bread is cooked then the *desighee* is heated a little to milt or open up and then it is put on the bread. The mixture or the powder of the sugar and black paper is sprinkled on it and then served to guests, household members and children. People who cannot make sweet bread then they simply make *Tasapi* for the people. It is simply made with the crushed or grinded mixture of black pepper and sugar with clarified butter. The *Tasapi* is considered to be

good for cough, flue, and sour throat; people usually make and eat when they suffer from such health issues.

Conclusion

The food delicacies are important part of any culture but the options to cook varies from one region to another purely depending on the environment, agriculture, and availability of the food stock. Normally, the way to cook is learned and mastered over the span of years depending on the common consumption trends among the people. Many of the delicacies, such as *Landhi* and *Kaak*, discussed above, are being processed in the same way as it has been practiced by the forefathers. The pride is also annexed with the processing and cooking of such dishes and normally considered as festive delicacies. Some dishes are only made for the guests and the Baloch people consider it as pride in presenting the dishes like *Landi*, *Kaak* and *Sajji*. These dishes are also gifted to the people from Balochistan and rest of the country.

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