

Food Preservation Methods in the Traditional Sinhalese Society

(with Relevance to Traditional Villages in North Western Province)

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Food security is the reliability of the physical availability of nutritious, safe and culturally appropriate food for all people at all times. Any change that makes a food unfit for human consumption can simply be defined as food spoilage. Food preservation involves the reduction or cessation of the effects of food on its quality, edibility, nutrition, or effects that accelerate spoilage. The purpose of this study is to investigate and study the methods of preserving food in the traditional Sinhalese society. This is primarily a qualitative method-based research which is based on empirical data and secondary sources. For primary data, information was obtained from the elderly living in the villages above 60 years of age through interviews, and as secondary sources, books and research articles were used in accordance with the purpose of the research. Since certain foods are limited to a certain period of time, food safety can prevent food wastage, allow devouring in the off seasons, allow effective usage, and minimise wastage of resources. Prominent among such traditional strategies are the systematic storage methods. *Atuwa*, *Bissa*, clay pots, *Valankuttu*, and bags have been used for preserving grains. Moreover, wood ash and plant leaves have been used. In preserving other types of food, the methods of burying in the soil, drying in the sun, smoking, air drying, using sugar and salty acids, deep frying in oil and using honey have been used. It is important to use natural strategies of food preservation and post-harvest conservation strategies at the household level and the national level as a solution for economic and social problems in the country. Moreover, these conservation strategies, followed by utilising natural resources, will also help to create a healthy society.

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