



'GRUELIXIR': CONCEPTUALIZING A DISTINCT 'TRAVEL FOOD'

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Introduction

'...A hungry traveller who has had nothing to eat for a long while. He asks various people if they could share any of their food with him, and he is always turned away until he finds a person who only has some water to share. The traveler stated that he would then be able to make some stone soup over the fire. He added a stone that he had carried with him for a long time. As more people heard about the soup, they gathered around the fire asking questions about the taste of it. The traveler stated that it would taste better if it had different ingredients in it, and the other people began to add other ingredients such as onions, carrots, and potatoes. They were amazed at what they had created, and they all enjoyed the feast.'

- 'Stone Soup' by van Gorp, 2002

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Hunger: An Area for Concern

Along with Travel Hunger, Swaminathan (2004, pp. 535) emphasizes the felt need for solving the problems of:

- o Endemic hunger, caused by poverty and lack of access to balanced diets;
- o Hidden hunger, caused by deficiency of micro-nutrients in the diet;
- o Transient hunger, caused by natural calamities or ethnic calamities.

The Tenth Five Year Plan (2002–07) stresses the need for food security at the household level and nutrition security at the level of each individual (Swaminathan, 2004, pp. 532).

Millets: An Answer to Hunger

Amongst all food grains, millets prominently find mention in ancient Indian texts. Barley is one of the oldest cultivated millet species in India dating back to 6000 B.C. In the last stage of *vanaprastha*, people were expected to decrease consumption of food and systematically detach themselves from worldly affairs. Even in that period of decreased consumption, consumption of barley was considered acceptable (Vajpeyi, 2002).

Millets are important resources in times of hardships like drought or famine and are known as the food of the poor. Millets can withstand harsh climatic conditions like little rain and soil fertility and hence, can be grown in semi-arid and arid

Proximate Composition of Small Millets, Wheat and Rice (per 100 gm)

Name	Protein (mg)	Fat (mg)	Minerals (mg)	Fibre (mg)	Carbo-hydrates (mg)	Calcium (mg)	Phos-phorus (mg)	Thiamine (mg)	Edible Matter (gm)
Finger Millet	7.3	1.3	2.7	3.6	72.0	344	283	420	100
Proso millet	12.5	3.1	1.9	7.2	70.4	14	206	400	59
Foxtail millet	12.3	4.3	3.3	8.0	60.9	31	290	590	79

Proximate Composition (Contd.)

Name	Protein (mg)	Fat (mg)	Minerals (mg)	Fibre (mg)	Carbo-hydrates (mg)	Calcium (mg)	Phos-phorus (mg)	Thiamine (mg)	Edible Matter (gm)
Little millet	7.7	4.7	1.5	7.6	67.0	17	220	300	66
Banyard millet	6.2	2.2	4.4	9.8	65.5	11	280	300	65
Job's tears (milled)	17.5	6.0	1.8	0.5	63.4	23	480	310	100
Rice (milled)	6.8	0.5	0.6	0.2	78.2	45	160		100
Wheat	11.8	1.5	1.5	1.2	71.2	41	306		100

Source: Adapted from Anjali and Krishnan, 1995

zones. Further, with short span required for crop maturity and with a long shelf life, millets serve as a primary and cheap source of proteins and energy for people. Some of the millets are even nutritionally superior to wheat and rice.

A Case Menu

The women of *Konda Reddy* tribal group in Andhra Pradesh are very knowledgeable about the value and sustainable harnessing methods of agricultural biodiversity. Women belonging to *Konda Reddy* tribe prepare a kind of gruel with pounded flour of maize (*Zea mays*) and finger millet (*Eleusine coracana*). The porridge, once prepared, lasts for upto two days and is generally prepared during drought situations. The porridge is stored in gourds made from *Lagenaria ciseraria*. (Ravishankar et al. 2003, pp. 111)

Developing a 'Travel Food' Brand - 'Gruelixir'

Food and beverage items such as stimulants (tea, coffee etc...), hot chocolate, cocoa, fizzy drinks, non-organic juices, diet drinks, fast food and a variety of cuisine are the current options available for travellers. However, the food served

is not the food recommended during travel. While consumption of stimulants and many of the soft drinks put stress on adrenal glands, the high content of sugar or the sweetener Aspartame, used in diet drinks, are very harmful. Soft drinks and fruit juices carry additives and colours are avoidable (Velhos, 2005). Further, the cuisine served may not often match the requirements from the point of view of the health and the associated hygiene requirements. Can there be a food to combine all the properties of the individuals items procured for consumption during travel?

'Gruelixir', a concept brand, combines the role of stimulants, energy drinks and balanced diet. Whole grains are excellent source of slow release of energy, thereby keeping body's energy levels stable throughout the day, as well as helping in digestion. Travel Food is conceived as a distinct category of food having the three main qualities of a stimulant, a nutrient and a food source. The obvious answer for this is 'gruelixir'.

For the travellers on move, for the professionals experiencing unsocial working hours at BPOs / ITES / IT Companies and for meeting the food requirements of late night arrivals at airports, there is a need for a product to be promoted as 'Travel Food'. Gruel / Porridge made out of combination of millets and cereals can be spiced up through ingredients, as in 'Stone Soup'. The product may be promoted in the form of disposable travel tetra packs and powder formulations. Can 'Gruelixir' be a brand name is an area of opportunity to be explored?

References

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