



TRADITIONAL FOOD OF ASSAM & GLOBALISATION

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DOI: [https://doi.org/10.56815/IRJAHS.v\(2022\)i2.35-47](https://doi.org/10.56815/IRJAHS.v(2022)i2.35-47)

Abstract: Traditional food in Assam is a living cultural system shaped by ecology, agriculture, fisheries, seasonality and community knowledge. Rice-based foods, fish, vegetables, leafy plants, fermented and dried foods, pitha and banana-based preparations form important elements of the culinary landscape. Assam-specific studies document traditional rice preparations, wild leafy vegetables, banana-based foods and community food practices (Bora, 2020; Das et al., 2020; Sarma et al., 2020; Boro & Bhattacharjee, 2020). Globalisation, urbanisation, migration, commercial food outlets, packaged foods and digital communication are changing the settings in which these foods are produced and consumed. This article examines these changes using evidence available by 30 November 2021. It combines official Assam agricultural and fisheries statistics, NFHS-5 nutrition indicators and published scholarship on food culture and globalisation. The Statistical Handbook, Assam-2021 reports 5,213,852 tonnes of rice, 5,486,598 tonnes of total foodgrains, 1,096,170 tonnes of banana and 392,652.49 tonnes of fish production in 2020-21 (DES Assam, 2021). NFHS-5 reports that 8.0% of children aged 6-23 months received an adequate diet, while 35.3% of children under five were stunted and 21.7% were wasted (IIPS & ICF, 2021). The article advocates a preserve, adapt and promote approach for cultural continuity.

Key words: Traditional food of Assam; Assamese cuisine; globalisation; culinary heritage; indigenous food systems; cultural identity; food diversity; urbanisation; commercialisation; sustainable diets; indigenous knowledge; culinary tourism.

Introduction

Food is both a biological necessity and a cultural language. People express identity, belonging, hospitality and memory through what they grow, prepare, serve and eat. Anthropological scholarship demonstrates that food practices are connected with social organisation, economy, identity and power (Fischler, 1988; Mintz & Du Bois, 2002). In Assam this relationship is especially visible because the state contains substantial ecological and cultural diversity. The Brahmaputra and Barak valleys, wetlands, agricultural landscapes, forests and river systems provide varied food resources. Communities have developed distinctive methods of preparing, preserving and sharing these resources. Food therefore provides a useful entry point for understanding both cultural continuity and social change.

Assam's food culture is plural because different communities maintain distinctive traditions. Boro and Bhattacharjee (2020) documented traditional food habits among the Bodos of Udalguri district and linked food with cultural and social identity. Makinei et al. (2021) provide a complementary scientific analysis of Assamese cuisine using 401 recipes and flavour-network methods. These studies support an understanding of food heritage as a collection of living practices rather than a single standardised cuisine.





The agricultural base remains important to this transformation. The official Assam State Profile reports rice production of 5,213,852 tonnes and total foodgrain production of 5,486,598 tonnes in 2020–21 (provisional). It also reports the official fish-production series, fish production of 392,652.49 tonnes in 2020–21 (DES Assam, 2021). These statistics do not measure household consumption directly, but they demonstrate the continuing importance of agricultural and aquatic resources that support traditional diets.

The central argument is that globalisation should not be treated as an inevitable force of cultural destruction. Its effects are contradictory. Commercialisation may weaken some household practices but create income for food producers. Tourism may simplify cuisine but also create incentives for documentation and revival. Digital media may expose young consumers to global foods while simultaneously allowing traditional recipes to circulate widely. The key question is how communities negotiate these changes and whether they retain meaningful control over knowledge, resources and cultural representation.

Literature Review

Food and identity are closely related. Fischler (1988) argues that eating is part of the construction of the self because food becomes incorporated into both body and social identity. Mintz and Du Bois (2002) show that food anthropology examines not only what people eat but also production, exchange, social relations and symbolic meanings. These approaches are useful for Assam because culinary practices communicate community membership, hospitality, festival identity and relationships with land and water.

Globalisation literature provides complementary perspectives. Ritzer's (1993) McDonaldisation highlights efficiency, predictability and standardisation in modern consumer systems. Food can become standardised through industrial processing, fast-food formats and uniform commercial experiences. Watson (1997), however, demonstrates that global food businesses often adapt products to local tastes. This localisation means globalisation can generate hybrid forms rather than simple replacement. Appadurai (1996) similarly emphasises cultural flows, suggesting that commodities and ideas are continually reinterpreted in new social contexts.

The concept of cultural hybridisation is relevant to Assamese food. Traditional cooking has never existed in complete isolation. Historical migration, trade, inter-community interaction and regional exchange contributed to culinary change. Chowdhury (2022) notes that early Assamese food habits developed through geography and historical cultural interaction. Consequently, a recipe that changes over time is not necessarily a lost tradition. The more important issue is whether the community continues to recognise the food, transmit its knowledge and maintain relationships with its ingredients and meanings.

Research specifically on Assam documents substantial culinary diversity. Boro and Bhattacharjee (2020) examined traditional food habits and preservation knowledge among the Bodos of Udalguri district. Bora (2020) documented traditional knowledge associated with rice preparations. Das et al. (2020) recorded a large diversity of traditionally consumed wild leafy vegetables, while Sarma et al. (2020) documented banana-based foods and ritual uses. Makinei et al. (2021) analysed flavour pairing in Assamese cuisine. Together, these studies show that Assamese food is diverse, knowledge-intensive and capable of adaptation.

Scientific analysis also contributes to understanding Assamese cuisine. A flavour-network study of Assamese cuisine examined ingredient combinations and flavour compounds, showing distinctive patterns in the cuisine and the importance of rice and fermented ingredients (Application of Flavor Network Principle, 2021). Such work demonstrates that traditional cuisines can be studied through social science as well as quantitative food analysis. It also shows that culinary uniqueness can be documented without treating tradition as static.





The literature on indigenous food systems adds an ecological and nutritional perspective. Kuhnlein et al. (2013) emphasise that indigenous food systems can support health, identity and ecological knowledge. FAO (2021) highlights the importance of indigenous food systems for biodiversity, resilience and sustainable diets. UNESCO (2003) recognises knowledge and practices transmitted across generations as living heritage. These perspectives imply that preserving food heritage requires more than recording recipes: it requires attention to people, landscapes, biodiversity and institutions that sustain culinary knowledge.

A gap remains. Many studies focus on particular communities or foods, while official statistics separately report agriculture, fisheries and nutrition. There is limited integration of these datasets with globalisation theory. This article addresses that gap by placing culinary diversity within the broader food system and interpreting official statistics alongside published research.

Objectives of the Study

- (1) to examine the cultural, agricultural and ecological foundations of traditional food in Assam; (2) to analyse the influence of globalisation, urbanisation, migration, tourism, market integration and digital communication on traditional food practices;
- (3) to interpret selected official agricultural, fisheries and nutrition indicators relevant to Assam's food system;
- (4) to identify opportunities and risks associated with commercialisation and wider circulation of Assamese cuisine; and
- (5) to suggest measures for protecting culinary diversity, indigenous knowledge, ecological resources and nutrition-sensitive food practices.

Methodology

Research Design

The study adopts a descriptive, analytical and interpretive research design based on secondary data. It examines traditional food practices in Assam and their relationship with globalisation by integrating official statistical information with published academic literature on food culture, indigenous knowledge, food biodiversity, nutrition, cultural heritage and changing food practices.

Sources of Data

Quantitative evidence is obtained primarily from official publications of the Directorate of Economics and Statistics, Government of Assam. Nutrition-related evidence is drawn from the National Family Health Survey-5 (NFHS-5) Assam Key Indicators published by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare. Qualitative evidence is derived from scholarly studies dealing with Assamese traditional foods, indigenous food practices, food biodiversity, cultural heritage and globalisation.

Data Selection and Analysis

The analysis uses official statistics as descriptive indicators rather than causal variables. Agricultural production is considered an indicator of the material food-resource base, while fisheries production indicates the importance of aquatic resources to the food system. NFHS-5 indicators are used to provide a broader nutritional context. The published literature is analysed thematically to examine cultural continuity, changing consumption, commercialisation, culinary tourism, digital influence, biodiversity and the opportunities and challenges associated with globalisation.





Limitations

The study has certain limitations. State-level agricultural statistics measure production rather than household consumption, and NFHS-5 does not distinguish between traditional and globalised foods. There is also limited longitudinal evidence on changes in household consumption of specific traditional Assamese dishes. Consequently, the study provides an evidence-based interpretation of the relationship between traditional food and globalisation rather than a statistical test of causality. Future household surveys, dietary assessments and ethnographic research can provide more detailed evidence.

Traditional Food Culture of Assam

Traditional food culture in Assam is diverse because food practices are closely connected with local ecology, agriculture, fisheries, seasonality and community knowledge. Rice-based foods occupy an important place in household and ceremonial life, while fish and locally available vegetables contribute to everyday meals. Assamese culinary traditions also include leafy vegetables, bamboo shoots, fermented and dried foods, pitha and other rice-based snacks, and foods prepared from banana and other local resources. Bora (2020) documents traditional knowledge associated with different rice preparations, while Das et al. (2020) recorded 100 wild leafy vegetables belonging to 43 families and 84 genera. Sarma et al. (2020) documents the use of banana fruit and other plant parts in Assamese cuisine and ritual practices. Community-specific traditions add further diversity, as demonstrated by research on Bodo food practices (Boro & Bhattacharjee, 2020). These traditions should therefore be understood as a plural and living food culture rather than as a fixed list of dishes. Globalisation is changing the circumstances in which this knowledge is practised, but adaptation does not necessarily mean disappearance. Traditional foods can remain meaningful through household use, festivals, restaurants, tourism and digital circulation when communities retain knowledge and cultural recognition.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

Traditional food systems depend on local ingredients. Assam's agricultural and fisheries statistics demonstrate the continuing importance of rice, other foodgrains, banana and fish. The Statistical Handbook, Assam–2021 reports rice production of 5,213,852 tonnes, total foodgrain production of 5,486,598 tonnes, banana production of 1,096,170 tonnes and fish production of 392,652.49 tonnes in 2020–21. These indicators establish a substantial material foundation for foods based on rice, fish, fruit and associated agricultural products (DES Assam, 2021).

Table 1 should not be read as a direct measure of what households eat. High production does not automatically mean equal access or consumption. Production is influenced by market demand, farm size, prices, weather and commercial channels. Nevertheless, the statistics are relevant because traditional food practices cannot be sustained at scale without continuing supply of ingredients. Rice and fish provide an important bridge between agriculture, markets and culinary culture.

The available secondary datasets do not directly measure household consumption of specific traditional Assamese foods or establish the causal effect of globalisation on dietary behaviour. Agricultural statistics measure production rather than household consumption, while NFHS-5 does not classify foods as traditional or globalised. Accordingly, the study provides an evidence-based analytical interpretation rather than a statistical test of causal effects.



Indicator	Official value	Year
Rice production	5,213,852 tonnes	2020–21
Total foodgrain production	5,486,598 tonnes	2020–21
Banana production	1,096,170 tonnes	2020–21
Fish production	392,652.49 tonnes	2020–21

Source: Directorate of Economics and Statistics, Government of Assam (2021).

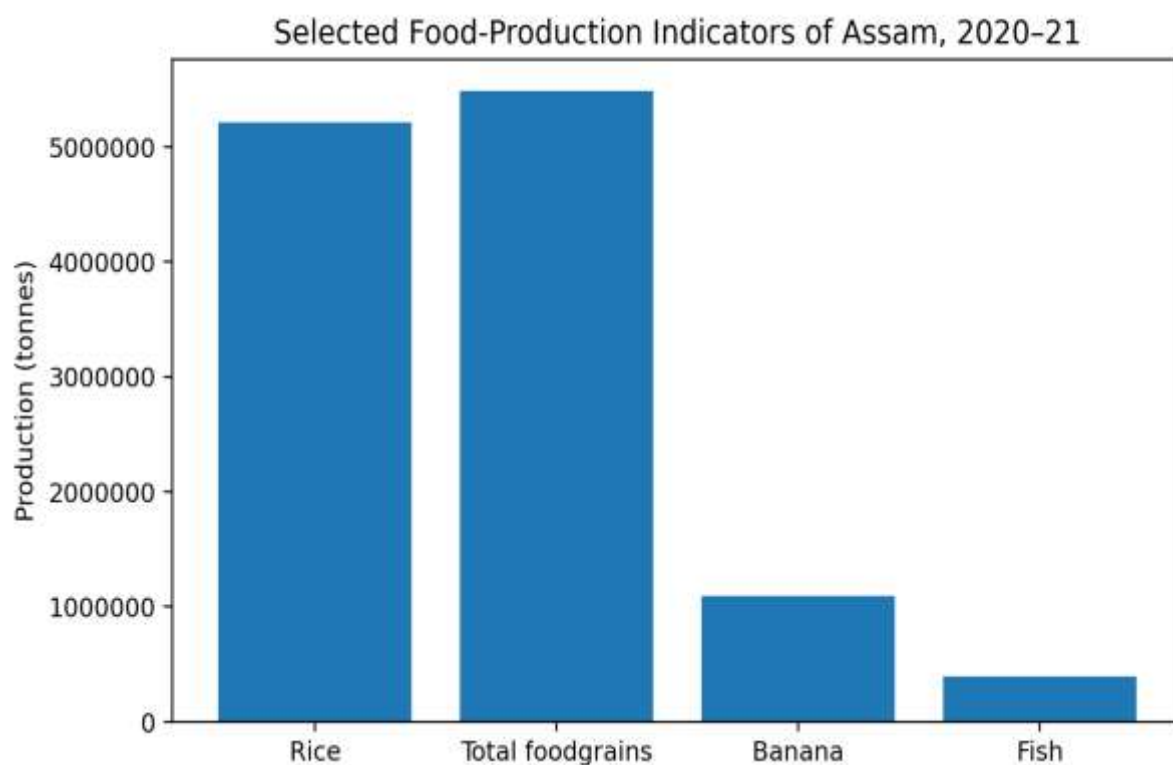


Figure 1. Selected Food-Production Indicators of Assam, 2020–21.

Source: Directorate of Economics and Statistics, Government of Assam (2021).

Agricultural Foundation

Rice is not merely a commodity in Assam. It is embedded in household meals, festivals, hospitality and agricultural calendars. Diversity of rice varieties contributes to culinary variation. Bora rice is associated with sticky preparations, while aromatic varieties and other local types have distinctive uses. Traditional rice foods demonstrate how crop diversity can become culinary diversity. Continued rice production therefore matters not only for food supply but also for cultural practices associated with preparation and consumption.

Fish adds an aquatic dimension to the food system. The 2020–21 production figure of 392,652.49 tonnes indicates the economic scale of fisheries in Assam (DES Assam, 2021). Rivers, wetlands and ponds have historically provided resources for local diets, and fish may be prepared fresh, dried or fermented. The existence of fish production at state level does not guarantee equal access, but it confirms fisheries as a major component of Assam's food economy.



Food Biodiversity

Preservation techniques are central to food heritage. Drying, smoking, fermentation and other processing methods extend seasonal resources and create distinctive flavours. These techniques represent accumulated knowledge about ingredients, temperature, moisture, storage and timing. Their cultural value is therefore greater than the final product alone. When a preservation practice disappears, a set of environmental and culinary skills may disappear with it.

Studies of Assam document fermented and dried foods. Boro and Bhattacharjee (2020) recorded traditional foods and beverages among communities of Sadiya, while Boro and Bhattacharjee (2020) examined food practices among the Deori. Such research demonstrates that community food systems cannot be represented adequately by a short list of restaurant dishes. Less visible foods may be particularly important for cultural identity because they are tied to household knowledge and local ecological resources.

Food and Nutrition Context

NFHS-5 provides important context for discussing food. Only 8.0% of children aged 6–23 months in Assam received an adequate diet. The survey also reports 35.3% stunting, 21.7% wasting, 9.1% severe wasting and 32.8% underweight among children under five (IIPS & ICF, 2021). These indicators reflect multiple determinants including household food access, maternal health, sanitation, health services, feeding practices and socioeconomic conditions. They should not be interpreted as evidence that traditional foods are nutritionally inadequate.

At the same time, the figures show that cultural familiarity alone cannot be the criterion for food policy. Traditional foods should be assessed for dietary diversity, nutrient density, safety and affordability. Locally available fish, vegetables, pulses, fruits and other foods can contribute to diversified diets when accessible and appropriately prepared. Nutrition education can therefore connect existing food knowledge with contemporary nutritional guidance rather than treating traditional and scientific knowledge as mutually exclusive.

Table 2. Selected child-feeding and nutrition indicators for Assam, NFHS-5 (2019–20)

Indicator	Total (%)
Children age 6–8 months receiving solid/semi-solid food and breastmilk	51.7
Breastfeeding children age 6–23 months receiving an adequate diet	8.1
Total children age 6–23 months receiving an adequate diet	8.0
Children under 5 years stunted	35.3
Children under 5 years wasted	21.7
Children under 5 years severely wasted	9.1
Children under 5 years underweight	32.8

Source: Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Government of India, National Family Health Survey-5, Assam Key Indicators, 2019–20.

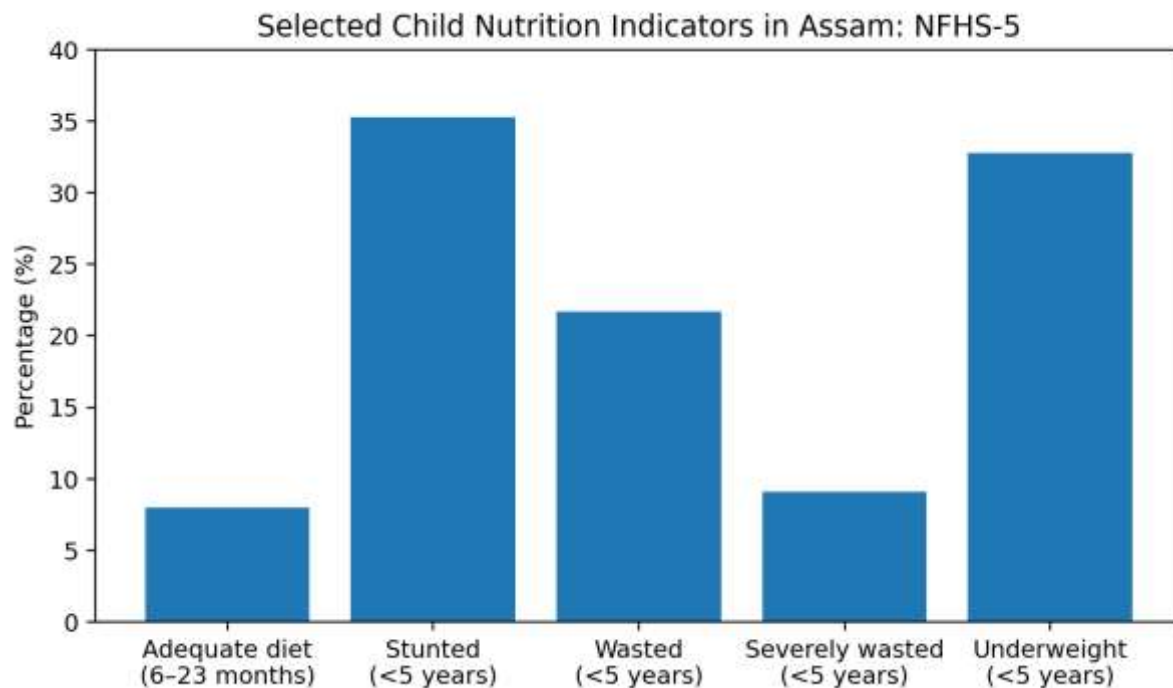


Figure 2. Selected Child-Feeding and Nutrition Indicators for Assam, NFHS-5.

Source: International Institute for Population Sciences (IIPS) & ICF (2021).

Changing Food Consumption

Urbanisation changes not only what people eat but where they eat and with whom. A household meal may be replaced by food purchased outside the home. Traditional dishes requiring several hours of preparation can become occasional foods, while quicker foods become routine. Hussain (2019) identifies modernity, commerce, urbanisation and market competition as forces affecting Assamese food practices. The significant change may therefore be in the social setting of food rather than complete disappearance of particular dishes.

Digital media produces a complicated outcome. Social networks, video platforms and food blogs allow traditional recipes to reach audiences outside the community. Younger people can learn preparation methods without living in the same household as older knowledge holders. At the same time, digital food culture promotes global trends and consumer pressure for novelty. Global communication therefore creates both a mechanism of cultural loss and a mechanism of cultural revival.

Globalisation and Traditional Food of Assam

Commercialisation also creates risks. A complex food tradition may be reduced to a few easily marketable dishes. Ingredients may be substituted to reduce cost, recipes modified for external consumers, and cultural meanings simplified. If knowledge is used without recognition or benefit-sharing, communities may lose control of culinary heritage. Responsible culinary tourism should therefore provide accurate interpretation, community participation and fair economic benefits.

The restaurant environment can become a bridge between tradition and modernity. Younger consumers may encounter traditional foods outside the home and later reproduce them domestically. Modern presentation does not automatically destroy authenticity. What matters is whether the dish remains connected to its ingredients,



preparation knowledge, cultural context and community recognition. Culinary innovation can be legitimate when transparent and respectful.

Household Knowledge and Intergenerational Transmission

Traditional food knowledge is transmitted through practical participation. People learn to select ingredients, control heat, ferment, dry, season and serve through observation and repeated practice. This tacit knowledge is vulnerable when household structures change. Migration, education, employment and reduced cooking time may limit intergenerational learning. A restaurant can preserve a recipe, but it cannot by itself guarantee that knowledge remains embedded in community life.

Women have historically played major roles in household food preparation and transmission of culinary skills in many societies, although the division of labour varies. Food heritage programmes should recognise women, elders, farmers, fishers, processors and other practitioners as knowledge holders. Documentation should record local terminology, explanations and experiences rather than treating people merely as recipe sources. Recognition can strengthen cultural dignity and improve heritage documentation.

Younger generations should not be viewed only as agents of cultural decline. Students, young entrepreneurs and digital creators can document recipes, establish food enterprises and promote local ingredients. The goal should be to create conditions in which young people can adapt traditional knowledge to contemporary contexts while retaining meaningful links with community heritage.

Cultural Hybridisation and Culinary Identity

Assamese cuisine developed through interaction among communities and regions. Historical exchange means culinary boundaries are not absolute. Globalisation adds another layer. New ingredients, cooking equipment, packaging and presentation styles can be incorporated into local food. Hybridisation is not necessarily cultural failure. It becomes problematic when adaptation is imposed by market power and results in disappearance of local knowledge or loss of community agency.

A useful distinction is between adaptation and displacement. Adaptation occurs when communities modify a practice while retaining identity and meaning. Displacement occurs when the original practice becomes difficult to reproduce because ingredients, knowledge or social settings disappear. The same commercial process can produce both outcomes. A restaurant may popularise a dish while simplifying its recipe. Research should therefore measure not only popularity but depth of knowledge and community participation behind the food.

Biodiversity, Sustainability and Livelihoods

Traditional food is connected to biodiversity because culinary practices depend on local crop varieties, fish, vegetables, herbs, fruits and wild resources. When biodiversity declines, culinary diversity can decline with it. FAO (2021) emphasises indigenous food systems' contribution to resilience and biodiversity. Protection of wetlands, fisheries, agricultural diversity and local plant resources is therefore also a form of cultural preservation.

Sustainability should nevertheless be assessed critically. A traditional practice is not automatically sustainable simply because it is old. Resource pressure may increase when a food becomes commercially popular. Transport, packaging, waste and intensive production can alter environmental impacts. Sustainable culinary



promotion should consider the full food chain and encourage regeneration of resources. This approach combines respect for heritage with ecological responsibility.

Results and Discussion

The first major result is that the material foundation of Assam's food system remains substantial. Official production statistics show large-scale rice and foodgrain production and significant fisheries activity. These figures support the continuing importance of agriculture and aquatic resources to the state's food economy. They do not prove that traditional foods dominate household diets, but they demonstrate that key ingredients remain produced at considerable scale.

The second result is that official production statistics capture only part of food heritage. Community-level studies document fermented, dried, wild and community-specific foods that are less visible in administrative statistics. Food heritage therefore includes an important informal and household dimension. Policy based only on commodities with large production statistics would overlook practices that have high cultural value but limited commercial measurement.

The third result is that globalisation has contradictory effects. It can increase dependence on convenience foods and reduce household preparation, but it can also create new markets and channels for traditional cuisine. This dual effect is consistent with globalisation scholarship that distinguishes standardisation from localisation and adaptation (Appadurai, 1996; Watson, 1997). Assam's experience should therefore be analysed as negotiation rather than a simple transition from tradition to modernity.

The fourth result concerns nutrition. NFHS-5 reveals significant child nutrition challenges. The low adequate-diet indicator highlights the importance of dietary diversity and feeding practices. Traditional-food policy should therefore be linked with nutrition policy. Cultural familiarity can support acceptance, but nutritional adequacy, safety and affordability must also be considered. The promising approach is not to romanticise tradition or reject modern nutrition science, but to integrate the two where evidence supports it.

The fifth result concerns ecological resilience. Food traditions rely on continued availability of ingredients and environments that produce them. River fisheries, wetlands, agricultural land and plant diversity therefore have cultural as well as economic significance. Environmental degradation can indirectly become cultural loss. Culinary preservation should consequently be integrated with biodiversity conservation and sustainable agriculture and fisheries.

The sixth result concerns commercialisation. Commercial markets can help sustain food practices by increasing economic value, but they can also standardise and simplify them. Community participation is essential. People who maintain knowledge should have a voice in how foods are represented and marketed. Benefits should be distributed across producers and knowledge holders rather than concentrated only among downstream commercial actors.

The seventh result is that authenticity should be understood dynamically. A cuisine does not remain authentic because every preparation remains unchanged. Culinary traditions have always adapted to new environments and social conditions. Authenticity is better understood through continuity of knowledge, meaning, recognition and community agency. This perspective allows innovation without equating every change with cultural loss.

The eighth result concerns intergenerational transmission. Traditional food is most resilient when younger people learn not only recipes but also reasons, techniques and cultural meanings. Schools, colleges, community





organisations and digital platforms can support this process. Documentation should be multilingual where appropriate and preserve local terminology alongside English descriptions.

The combined evidence indicates that traditional food in Assam rests on a substantial agricultural, aquatic and biological foundation, while community studies reveal culinary diversity that official production statistics cannot fully capture. Globalisation changes food environments through urbanisation, markets, restaurants, packaged products, tourism and digital communication. These changes may reduce the frequency of labour-intensive household preparation, but they can also create new opportunities for culinary revival, commercialisation and cultural exchange. The evidence supports a balanced interpretation: traditional food should neither be romanticised as automatically healthy and sustainable nor treated as an obsolete practice. Its future depends on biodiversity conservation, safe preparation, nutritional adequacy, intergenerational transmission, community participation and fair economic opportunities. A preserve, adapt and promote approach can therefore connect cultural continuity with contemporary food systems.

Findings

The study identifies ten principal findings. First, traditional food in Assam is rooted in a diverse ecological and agricultural base. Second, rice and fish remain important components of the material food system. Third, culinary diversity extends beyond foods visible in official statistics. Fourth, fermentation, drying and seasonal preparation represent important knowledge systems. Fifth, globalisation produces both cultural pressure and new opportunities. Sixth, urbanisation can reduce household preparation and alter the social setting of meals. Seventh, tourism, restaurants and digital media can create channels of culinary revival. Eighth, nutrition indicators demonstrate that food heritage must be connected with dietary adequacy and public health. Ninth, ecological conservation is inseparable from long-term culinary preservation. Tenth, community participation and fair benefits are essential if commercialisation is to support rather than weaken food heritage.

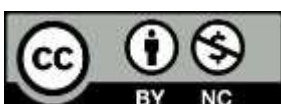
Scope for Future Research

Future research should collect primary household data on frequency of traditional-food consumption, changes across generations, differences between rural and urban households, and relationships with income, education and employment. Comparative studies could examine different communities using common indicators of culinary continuity. Researchers should document foods poorly represented in official statistics, including seasonal vegetables, wild plants, fermented products, indigenous rice varieties and community-specific beverages.

Nutritional studies should examine nutrient composition, cost, safety and environmental footprint of selected traditional foods. Such research could identify foods suitable for culturally appropriate nutrition programmes. Market studies should examine prices, supply chains, packaging, consumer preferences and distribution of economic benefits. Tourism research should assess whether culinary tourism supports community livelihoods and accurate cultural representation. Digital ethnography could examine how young people use social media to preserve, modify and circulate food knowledge.

Suggestions

First, community-led digital archives should document recipes, ingredients, local names, preparation techniques, seasonal calendars and food histories. Second, government and development agencies should support farmers, fishers, processors and small enterprises that maintain local ingredients. Third, nutrition programmes should identify culturally familiar foods that can improve dietary diversity while meeting safety





and nutritional requirements. Fourth, wetlands, fisheries, indigenous crop varieties and edible wild plants should be treated as resources of both ecological and cultural value.

Fifth, culinary tourism should be developed responsibly, with community participation, accurate interpretation and fair distribution of benefits. Sixth, schools and colleges can conduct oral-history and documentation projects with elders and local food practitioners. Seventh, culinary education should use Assamese and other relevant local languages where appropriate. Eighth, local food enterprises should receive assistance with hygiene, packaging, storage and branding without losing community ownership of knowledge.

Ninth, universities can build interdisciplinary partnerships among social scientists, nutritionists, agricultural researchers, food technologists and cultural organisations. Tenth, culinary promotion should avoid reducing Assam's diversity to a small set of standardised dishes. Eleventh, policy should recognise women, elders, farmers, fishers and small entrepreneurs as knowledge holders and economic actors. Twelfth, public procurement and institutional food programmes could explore appropriate local foods where nutritional, safety and cost evidence supports their inclusion.

Conclusion

Traditional food of Assam represents a complex relationship among ecology, agriculture, fisheries, community identity, household knowledge and cultural memory. Official data show that the material foundation of the food system remains substantial, while community studies demonstrate a much wider culinary diversity than production statistics alone can capture. Globalisation has altered the context of this food system through urbanisation, markets, tourism, migration, restaurants, packaged foods and digital communication. Its effects are neither wholly destructive nor wholly beneficial.

The most important conclusion is that cultural continuity can coexist with change. A traditional food may survive through adaptation, commercialisation, ceremonial use, restaurant presentation or digital circulation. What matters is whether communities retain knowledge, recognition, cultural meaning and meaningful participation. At the same time, nutrition and sustainability cannot be separated from heritage. NFHS-5 indicates significant nutrition challenges, while ecological dependence makes biodiversity protection important for culinary continuity.

Assam therefore needs a policy approach connecting cultural preservation with sustainable agriculture and fisheries, nutrition, education, tourism and local enterprise. Community-led documentation, ecological conservation, responsible commercialisation and nutrition-sensitive food promotion can strengthen resilience. Globalisation should not be approached as something Assam must either completely accept or reject. The constructive objective is to enable communities to participate in global food networks on terms that protect cultural identity, ecological resources, knowledge and livelihoods.

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