

INDIGENOUS FOODS IN AWGU LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA OF ENUGU STATE AND THEIR SOCIO-CULTURAL CONTEXT.

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Abstract

Despite the rich nature of indigenous foods and how well it contributes to the promotion of cultural identity in different societies, they are not upheld and valued as they should. Most of these delicacies have many cultural significance and roles which they play in society. However, the study uncovers that Nigerians consume a lot of foreign packaged foods at the expense of local delicacies. In order to highlight local prospects and encourage the recognition of indigenous foods, this qualitative research focused on Awgu local government indigenous food system in Enugu state. Through interviews and direct observations, information was elicited from the people, and over ten varieties of these foods were documented with their preparation processes well described. The research also went further to find out what the people believe are the reasons for the neglect of these foods and most of them are of the opinion that this worrisome trend could be traced to modernization and the quest for easy ways of doing things.

Keywords: Food, Indigenous foods, Socio-cultural significance, Awgu

Introduction

Food is a necessary part of human existence; as long as man continues to exist on earth, the food he eats will continue to make great impacts on his life and wellbeing as a whole. The food a particular group of people or tribe eats define them, this is why archaeologists study man's diet. Early men in their struggle to survive had always considered the availability of food in a given environment before they settled there. Food is a source of life; little wonder it is only earth that is habitable among the nine planets because earth is the only planet that supports life and production of food. Man and food are like two sides of a coin that can never be separated. Everything that man toils for in life primarily boils down to being able to find what to eat for sustainability. Scientifically, food has been seen as a substance that is composed of six classes, namely: carbohydrate, protein, water, fat, oil, and minerals. Food is one of the basic necessities of life which provides the body with nutrient that aid in energy production, tissue synthesis repair, and maintenance of the body functions, Awan and Okaka (1985). When describing the culture of a people, their food is one of the most important things to consider; indigenous foods of a people are major part of their culture and existence. Indigenous food refers to that food that originates from a particular place, which the people produce for their consumption. In Awgu local government, there exist several indigenous foods like: asaja, asacha, ji naakpaka (yam and oil bean sauce), ede, ofe achara, ona, abachaakpakana, etc. Most of these dishes are prepared during occasions like festivals, marriages, burials,

and naming ceremonies, among other cultural events. Traditional dishes are highly delicious and nutritious, and therefore, should be promoted and eaten.

Research Method

Adopting a qualitative approach, the researcher elicited data through in-depth interview, direct observation, and focus group discussion.

Literature Review

A lot of studies have been carried out on indigenous food, and a review of these studies will be important to establish the gap this study intends to fill and its contribution to the literature on indigenous food. Indigenous foods have been an integral part of the food systems of many communities in Africa (Demi, 2014). In Nigeria, indigenous people from lush rainforest communities in the south, to the open grassland in the middle belt, and semi-arid communities in the far North have relied on their food for nutrition, medicine, and livelihood (FME, 2006). Dweba and Mearns (2011) opine that despite the contributions of indigenous food to the lives of communities, they have continually been ignored by policymakers, and have not been researched enough. According to Okoronkwo (1994), indigenous foods are pointers to the unity and common origin of a people as an autonomous community.

Studies on Nigerian indigenous delicacies reveal that they are rich in nutritional and medicinal values which come in the form of essential nutrients and minerals such as protein, fat, iron, and zinc needed for proper body functioning (Onianwa, et al 2001). Wright (1980) sees food as “what supplies the body with nutrients that the body uses in building up and repairing of tissues, supplying heat and energy, protecting the body from diseases and helping the elimination of waste products from the body”. Oxford advanced learner’s dictionary defines food “as any substance that people or animals eat or drink or plant absorbs to maintain life and growth”. In the words of Anosike (1998; 31) food is “a symbol of friendship and religion. Traditional dishes served during ceremonies act as an expression of a variety of social relationship within the community”. He also opined that food attracts visitors and tourists, especially in festive periods. Okpoko (1990) agrees that the celebration of foods usually takes place in festivals like New Yam Festival, Ofala Festival, masquerade festivals, Igba Nkwu (traditional marriages) among others. Onyekwelu also argues that these indigenous dishes have taboos attached to them, and these must be strictly followed, anyone that violates them will face the consequences. Chukwemeka (1988:1) opines that the transition from food gathering to food production with its consequent control of food resources must have profoundly affected all aspects of human culture. In his own view, food production brought about a phenomenal change that enabled man to adapt to different natural environments, and made it possible for man to change biological processes so that they could produce more or something different from what they would have done by themselves. As Nwafor (2006:1) opines, the indigenous foods of a people often reveal the historical background or origin of the people. She went further to say that tradition is the art of passing customs, beliefs and history from one generation to another so that the customs will not die out with time; when such a custom is passed on, it will remain peculiar to the people. Bello (1960) asserted that while some of these foods are significant to festivals and occasions, others are just prepared for household consumption and are also sold in the market as obtainable in my study area, Asaja is peculiar to marriage ceremonies while Ona is eaten just at home and sold in the market. Alumona’s (1998:2) view about food (whether traditional or foreign) is that “the density of a nation depends upon the manner in which they are fed”. Food has been found to be very important in our everyday life, therefore the food we eat should not be harmful to our body but should nourish our body. Food is eaten for the primary reason of satisfying hunger, but food can also be eaten for leisure and

entertainment, and for many other reasons. The indigenous foods are symbolic and significant aspects of the society it is found. It performs several functions in their social and cultural life; they are used for festivals, marriage and other ceremonies, rituals, burials and sacrifices. Indigenous foods promote the unity and harmony of the people because they eat together and enjoy each other's company.

Study Area

Awgu as a local government is located between Enugu, the capital of Enugu state and Okigwe in Imo state, along Enugu Port-Harcourt expressway. It lies within latitude $7^{\circ} 21'$ East and $7^{\circ} 41'$ East, and longitude $5^{\circ} 50'$ North and $6^{\circ} 22'$ North. Until the recent creation of the new local government areas in Nigeria in the post-civil war period, Awgu had encompassed the area of the present Aninri Local Government Area, Oji River Local Government Area both in Enugu state. Awgu local government is bounded on the East by Aninri Local Government, on the North East by Nkanu East local Government area, and Northwest by Udi Local Government area, on the west by Oji River Local Government all in Enugu state, and on the South by Umunochi Local Government Area of Abia State. Awgu is at about 168km North of Port-Harcourt and 48km South of Enugu. It lies at the East of Enugu- Okigwe hills Enugu Escarpment on the Western end of the cross river plain. The escarpment curved into a semi-circle at Awgu town. The curve makes Awgu lie in the plain and forms a sharp contrast as one descends from the escarpment, this intersection with the plain makes an abrupt change of slope numerous rills and streams originate from this points of intersection, thereby forming a maze of ponds and streams all over Awgu; in turn, it makes Awgu to be waterlogged during the rainy season. Nevertheless, the pond and stream basin form a rich agricultural land for the settlement while the land occupies an area of 30.72sq.km from North to South. It covers a distance of 4.8km and West of East 6.4km (Orji, 2008:4).

Findings

ASAJA (Adzuki beans, *Vigna angularis*)

Ingredients; Asaja (adzuki beans), Fried, pepper, Canda (cow skin),

Akpaka (oil bean, *Pentaclethra macrophylla*), Palm oil, Salt, Seasoning cubes (e.g., Maggi).



Figure 1: Asaja and ingredients for preparation

Preparation processes

The first step towards preparing Asaja is to start boiling the beans. It is a long process because the beans are boiled for four days (4), and as the boiling is going on, the water is changed every morning and

evening for the four days. The reason for this boiling and change of water is to remove the bitterness in the Asaja without which it cannot be consumable. After the Asaja is cooked for four days and is ready for another phase of preparation, the next thing to do is to slice the cow skin(canda) into pieces, wash very well, spice with pepper, salt and Maggi seasoning and boil for some minutes for better taste, then set aside. When this is done, the next thing is to fry the pepper and grind it. With all ingredients ready, the final stage of preparation starts with pouring of red oil into a dried pot, adding the oil bean and cow skin (canda), stirring and allowing it to cook for about five minutes. After that, the Asajais poured into it, salt is added to taste, Maggi seasoning and pepper are also added, everything is stirred well and covered to cook for some minutes before it is ready for consumption.

According to the informant: Mrs Matter Ikeli:

“the oil bean used in preparing Asaja must be left on the fireplace for at least a day after it was processed before being used to prepare Asaja, she said that this is to enable it to get softened for consumption. Also, the pepper to be used must be the dried Igbo long pepper to enable the frying”.

On the side of the social functions of the meal, she said that:

“the meal is prepared on almost every occasion, especially marriages and burials. She also said that it is not a must prepared food during marriages, but that any man that is able to prepare it for his marriage is rated high and respected, this is because the food is expensive to cook”.

And to confirm what she said, the Asaja which was used for this research was half a paint but was bought for one thousand five hundred naira (#1500), and other ingredients like the cow skin (canda) and oil bean seed that was used cost up to a thousand naira.

Furthermore, she said:

“this meal is a special food that must be prepared by one who wants to take the title of Ogbuefi by killing a cow in the town, also if a cow is to be killed for someone in the town, the food must be prepared and accompanied with gallons of palm wine. She went further to say that in the olden days, women boast of preparing this meal for their mother’s burials, to the extent that any woman who did not prepare it for her mother’s burial cannot dance with other women who did in public gatherings”.

Finally, the meal used to be a common thing in the village, until the value attached to it increased and it became very costly to prepare. Worthy of note here is the fact that it is only Mmaku people in the whole of Awgu Local Government that cultivate and sell this special bean seed, and it cannot be found in any other market around the whole of Awgu local government apart from AforMmaku.



Figure 2: Prepared Asaja ready for consumption.

EDE(Cocoyam, *Colocasia esculenta*)

Ingredients: Ede osu-uvuru (cocoyam, *Colocasia esculenta*), Green or slender amaranth (*Amaranthus stiridis*), Anara (garden egg leaves, *solanum aethiopicum*), Pepper, Salt, Palm oil, and Ule/ogili (castor paste, *Ricinus communis*).



Figure 3: Boiled cocoyam, vegetables and prepared cocoyam garnished with vegetables

Preparation process

First, the Ede will have to be harvested from the farm and allowed for at least two days in the open air and away from the sun, after which it will be washed and boiled overnight. This boiling is usually in the evening after the evening meal is prepared to enable it to stay in the fireplace over the night, care must be taken to make sure that the Ede is soft enough and can be eaten before being left on the fire. According to my informant, Mrs Augustina Eboh:

“the reason for this overnight boiling is to enable the Ede to obtain a special brown colour that makes it sweeter”. The next day, you can decide to prepare the Ede in the morning, afternoon or evening, depending on the need. At this stage, the first thing to do is to peel the Ede and set it aside, then select the vegetables, wash them and set a little quantity of water in a pot to boil before putting the vegetable, the vegetable is constantly stirred so as to enable it steam unanimously

When the vegetable is cooked, it is poured into a sieve and pressed to drain the water, after which it is pounded with pepper, ule (castor paste), and salt in a mortar and set aside for later. Then the peeled ede is washed and boiled again in the water from the

vegetable for about five minutes, then it is sieved and poured back into a dried pot and the pounded vegetable is poured on it with oil and mixed together and the food is ready for consumption.



Figure 4: The Ede after preparation

According to the informant, Mrs Augustina Eboh:

“Ede has a very important social function which is no longer obtainable in the present society because of Christianity and modernization. This function is concerning a particular festival known as Nkwo Ede or Nhasa Ede Festival. This festival is mainly for women, it is celebrated with cocoyam. The festival according to my informant, is celebrated on the 5th native week of the month of July, this was the season when cocoyam is harvested in good quantity. The festival is done annually and it is just for one day. On the day of the festival, the market square (nkwo) will be well-swept and neatly kept by the women. Women who cultivated cocoyam just like men with yam in good quantity from each home will prepare a large quantity of the food with vegetable in an earthen bowl (ochiri), and hand it over to the young men, who will carry the food to the towns market place, the women will then come in their numbers and begin to pour this deliciously prepared meal round every stone and trees found there, they will also go to different shrines in the communities and pour the food. After pouring the food, they sit down at the marketplace and eat the ones they must have reserved with their friends and invited guests, after which they will go home happy and fulfilled”.

This festival was so special to women that any woman who did not participate in it is seen as weak and unable to keep a family, while those that participated are seen as strong women who are capable of taking care of their families even if their husbands are no more. The women invite people from neighbouring towns, but the people of Mbala, according to my informant, usually come uninvited. They would eat as much as they could, and take the rest home.

ASACHA(prepared tapioca)

Ingredients:Atulatu(tapioca), Ule (castor paste, *Ricinus communis*),Palm oil,Ehulu(calabash nutmeg, *Monodoramyristica*), Pepper,Mmiringu,Salt,Garden egg leaves(akwaanara),Mkpuruanara(Garden egg),Azumiliami (smoked fish), andUtazi leave(*gongronemalatifolium*).



Figure 5:Asacha, ingredients and already-made Asacha

Preparation processes

To prepare this food, one has to first get the ingredients ready because it is eaten immediately it is prepared because of the nature of the ingredients used in preparing it. The Ehulu(calabash nutmeg) will be roasted and ground with the pepper, the vegetables will be washed and sliced (though vegetable is optional)before the *atulatu*is poured inside water and immediately put in a sieve again to drain the water.This is because it is dried and needs to get wet before it can be used, and in as much as it needs to get wet, it must not be allowed to become too soft.

According to the informant, MrsEuphemia Okafor:

“theOchiri (earthen bowl) is originally used in preparing this food, but modernization has made it that they now use metal pot and even stainless bowl to prepare it. The Ochirigives the food a natural taste and the food is prepared with hand”.

To start the preparation, the first thing is to pour the *Mmiringu* into the pot, then add a little water, add the pepper and *Ehulu* to taste, add the *Ule* (castor past), then add palm oil and mix together to form a thick sauce.Now add the *Atulatu* and additional water and mix very well. Then add salt, garden egg and vegetable and serve with the fish.

OFE ACHALA(Achala soup)

Ingredients Achala(elephant grass, *Pennisetum purpureum*), Meat (anyone of choice), Stock fish, Dried fish, Pepper, Ofo (*Datariummicrocarpum*), Salt, Palm oil, Ule (castor paste, *Ricinus communis*), Maggi, Crayfish, Oha leave(*Pterocarpus mildbreadii*), Abiliba (small fish called PH).



Figure 6: The ingredients and Abiliba (PH)

The Achala soup just like every other soup is simple to prepare. First, you have to wash the meat, spice, and steam it, then add the stock fish and dried fish . While they are cooking, peel the Achala, wash it, cut it and set aside; then select the Abiliba, wash and set aside; then select and wash the oha leave and set aside. By the time all these are done, the meat and fish on fire must have been cooked well , then add water to the needed quantity, add palm oil and allow to boil for at least seven minutes again, then add the Abiliba and ground crayfish and allow for some time, then add the Ofo (thickener) to taste and allow to boil. When it must have boiled, then add the salt, Maggi seasoning, ule, and pepper to taste and allow for some time. After adding the ingredients then add the Achala and after one minute, add the oha leave and the soup is ready. The soup can be eaten with any swallow of choice but according to my informant; Mrs Stella Chukwu, “*the best is fufu, and that is what Awgu people eat it with*”.

She also said that:

“they normally cook this special soup during occasions and the soup is significant and important to them because the Achala itself is a vegetable that has a good supply of blood and that also helps boost the immune system against diseases and infections. Also she went further to explain that the Abiliba is one of the major ingredients that give the food a good taste apart from the Achala itself which is the major ingredient”.



Figure 7: Prepared Ofe Achalla

ABACHA AKPAKANA

Ingredients: Abacha (sliced cassava, *Manihot esculenta*), Akpaka (Oil bean *Pentaclethra macrophylla*), Palm oil, Pepper, Mmiringu, Utazi (*Gongronemalatifolium*) Magi and Salt.



Figure 8: The ingredients and prepared Abacha Akpakana

Preparation process

This food is one of the simplest to cook. First, bring a clean pot, add some water, then add the *Mmiringu*, add palm oil and pepper all in a proportionate quantity and allow it to mix and form a thick sauce. When this is done, put the pot on the fire and add the oil bean, allow it to cook for some time then add the salt and magi and add the *Abacha* and allow to cook while constantly checking it. When the food is ready, slice the *Utazi* and add to it before or after dishing. The *Utazi* can also be washed and eaten with the *Abacha* without being sliced. It is all about choice. The informant Mrs Jacinta Ugwa also said that:

“the food can also be eaten with Igbo cola nut (Cola nitida) just because of the taste, she also said that the food basically does not have any social function it performs, but that the people of Ezere community value it so much as one of their food and they eat it with joy and happiness”.

JI AHURU NA OKU NAAKPAKA (ROASTED YAM AND OIL BEAN SAUCE)

Ingredients: Yam(white yam= *Dioscoreaalata*, yellow yam= *Dioscoreacayenensis*), Akpaka (Oil bean, *Pentaclethra macrophylla*), Salt, Pepper, Palm oil, Utazi(*Gongronemalatifolium*), *Mmiringu*and *Ule/Ogiri* (castor paste, *Ricinus communis*)



Figure 9: Ingredients for preparing roasted yam and oil bean sauce

Preparation processes

To roast the yam, you have to make a fire with enough firewood and allow it to burn until there is charcoal and ash, then burry the yam in the hot ash and cover it with the hot charcoal, allow the yam to cook then bring it out and roast the back properly in the hot charcoal. After roasting, use a kitchen knife and scrape out the burnt part of the yam till it is neat enough, then place it beside the stone used in making the tripod stand for the fire (ekwu). This is to keep it warm pending when the sauce will be ready. It is important to note that it is mostly white (diacorea) and yellow yam (enegbe) that are preferably used for this delicacy. However, any other yam specie can be used. To make the sauce, put the *Mmiringu* in a pot, add some water, add pepper, salt, palm oil, and *ule* and put on fire, allow it to boil for some time and add the oil bean, mix very well and allow it to boil for some time, then slice the *utazi* and add it as soon as it is brought down. An informant, Mrs Euphamiah Okafor, said that:

“as yam is the king of all crops, especially in Igbo land, yam is well respected and has one of the highest social functions in Igbo land as a whole. In Ezere community, yam is mostly cultivated by men, and during the New yam festival, this food is cooked to celebrate it. The festival was done to make merry and give thanks to the god of yam and harvest: Njoku. The Njoku shrine is located at Umuagwa village and was managed by them, therefore it was their duty to announce the arrival of the festival. Consequently, during each planting season every year, it is mandated that they must be the first to cultivate yam, they do this on the early morning of the day they will choose, and nobody will see them go and come back, after which every other person in the town can cultivate their own yam, and anyone that violates this rule will incur the wrath of the gods on the people, and the consequence will be a poor harvest”.

During the festival, the Umuagwa people will be the first to harvest yam, the festival was celebrated in the month of July, during the second native week. Each family will prepare their yam in any way they choose, friends and invited guests will come from within and outside the town and they will make merry while dining and winning. The yam is usually eaten with well-prepared oil bean souse, and the yams used in this festival must be cultivated in the town; no one buys yam from the market.



Figure 10: The roasted yam and oil bean sauce (Asacha)

ISIEDE NA AKPIRIDO (Cocoyam and weaver ant sauce)

Ingredients: Isiede (cocoyam, *Colocasia esculenta*), Akpirido (weaver ant, *Oecophylla smaragdina*-red specie), Pepper and Salt.



Figure 11: The weaver ant in leaves and being roasted in fire

Preparation process

First, boil the Isiede till it is good for consumption. My informant, Mrs Josephine Anya, said that:

“the Isiede should be boiled in the evening and left on the fireplace till the next morning so that it cooks very well”.

Once the Isiedeis ready, the next thing is to prepare the sauce and to do this you have to first roast the *Akpirido* (weaver ant) as it is in the leaves, then select them and grind in a mortar, after grinding it, add pepper and salt and sauce is ready.



Figure 12:The weaver ant removed from the leaf and being eaten as sauce with cocoyam.

This particular food is practically on the verge of extinction because hardly are people seen eating the food around the community for a long time. According to my informant, the food used to be one of the best in those days when they were growing up. She also said that the sauce can also be eaten with *foo foo*, and that it was mostly eaten during the time of the Nigerian Civil War. She also went further to assert that *Akpirido* is very medicinal and that it helped heal a lot of diseases in those days. This is because this ant feeds from herbal plants and leaves in the bush where it is gotten from. This particular food has no specific social function, but it was a very good food to the people, but due to the advent of modern packaged foods, children no longer find the delicacy fashionable and therefore, it is fading away gradually.

Discussion of Findings

Several responses from the informants show that the present condition of these dishes and the way they were valued in time past is no longer the same. They all agree to the fact that these meals are no longer as valuable as they used to be, and also that some of them have lost their original way of preparation. For instance, in the olden days *Asaja* was not prepared with Maggi seasoning, but presently, it is added to it. The women interviewed asserted that the following reasons are what led to the abandonment of these foods for modern packaged foods:

- Most of the women are of the opinion that the wives and girls of nowadays are too lazy given that they complain that most of these foods have a long and difficult process of preparation. For instance, the *Asaja* that has to be cooked for four good days before it can be eaten, the *Ede*, and *Ona* that have to be cooked overnight before they can be eaten and the rigorous processes to be followed in preparing these foods like the *Akpirido* (weaver ant) that must be gotten from the bush, the yam that has to be roasted first in a hot fire, or the *Ede* that must be peeled, the vegetable pounded, and the *Ede* washed and boiled again before it can finally be ready for consumption. All these put together have made it tiring for these foods to be cooked by the

present-day people. According to my informants, they also forget that these foods take those rigorous processes so as to make the food good enough for consumption, like the Asaja that has to be cooked for four days to remove its bitter taste.

- Furthermore, the easy-to-prepare nature of modern and packaged foods makes them more appealing than the native ones. The women argue that since the women of this generation are lazy they would rather jump at this easier option. That explains why food like indomie and spaghetti which are faster and easier to cook are common delicacy nowadays. However, they fail to consider the health implications of these packaged foods. They further argue that they are not even as nutritious as these traditional meals. Ultimately, they stressed that the high rate of consumption of these packaged foods has contributed to the rapid increase of chronic and deadly diseases that are more rampant now than then..
- From another perspective, they reason that these foreign delicacies represent other people's cultures which we have adopted at the expense of ours. We, Africans find it difficult to value what we have. Hence, Awgu people want to emulate foreign cultures just to join the bandwagon of trend. In the words of Nwafor (2006:1), the indigenous foods of a people often reveal the historical background or origin of the people. She went further to say that tradition is the art of passing customs beliefs and history from one generation to another so that the customs will not die out with time, such customs when passed on will remain peculiar to the people. However, the reverse has practically become the case with the Awgu people as they are yet to understand that these foods are part of the relics of their culture.
- Impatience is another factor that may have led to the abandonment of these foods. Since the preparation of most of these foods is rigorous and stressful, patience is needed to wait for the right time when the food will be ready for consumption. And it has been discovered that this patience is lacking in the women and wives of this present age. So since they can't wait, they go for what they think is easy.
- Another factor that may have led to the decline in consumption of these food is the scarcity of some of the ingredients used in cooking them. For instance, the Asaja is now very scarce and cannot be found in any other market except the AfoMmaku. Consequently, it has become very expensive. I bought half a paint of it for #1500 from the market. Also, the ule (castor paste) is scarce and difficult to prepare. The majority of women in this generation do not know how to prepare it.. Another important one is the oil bean which takes time to prepare also, and so many other ones.
- Given that this generation does not place much value on these native delicacies they are gradually drifting into oblivion. Some of these foods are seen as poor man's food or archaic, and for that reason cannot be eaten by the people of this present age. For instance the Isiede and Akpirido (weaver ant) are at the verge of extinction. They also pointed out the health benefits of these indigenous foods.
- Lastly, another factor that has contributed to this is the lack of knowledge of the preparation process of these meals by the present-day wives and mothers. They don't really know how these foods are prepared, so they can't prepare them. For this reason, they concentrate on the modern ones which they can easily prepare.

The first step towards solving this problem is awareness creation, most people ignore these foods because of ignorance. They do not know the values of these local foods, especially the people of this generation. They need to know that the food they eat defines them, that food is not just there to satisfy hunger and build the body tissues but also to express some social and cultural significances. Therefore, they should be encouraged to value the food that originated from their place. According to Okoronkwo (1994), indigenous foods are pointers to the unity of common origin of a people as an autonomous community because of the origin and cultural significance involved. This awareness can be done by promoting the research and documentation of these indigenous foods in schools. Also, villages and communities should be told the importance of inculcating the habit of eating these foods in their children and young ones for sustenance. They should also make sure they teach them how to prepare these foods for posterity.

Secondly, to promote the social and cultural values of these foods, the social functions which they perform must have to be promoted and revived to their full standard for these foods to become as relevant as they used to be. For instance, the Ede that was used during the Nkwoede festival in Ezere community will become relevant again if the Nkwoede festival will be revived again as it has gone into extinction. Also, the Aniobodo festival whose anchor food is Ona needs to be revived for the Ona to become as useful as it used to be before now.

Furthermore, promoting the buying and selling of these foods is another way they can be promoted and preserved. If the local farmers that cultivate these food items are patronized and encouraged, they will continue to cultivate them.

Conclusion

This research work which is aimed at documenting the indigenous foods and delicacies of the people of Awgu local government area of Enugu state has been achieved. The work covers the materials and ingredients used in preparing these foods, their preparation processes and their cultural and social values. The major motivation behind this research work is that it was discovered that the people of Awgu neglect and most times abandon these delicacies for the modern packaged foods which are not better than these local delicacies, which has posed a very big threat to their existence and in turn eroding away the cultural values. However, this work has been able to find out what their reasons are for abandoning and neglecting most of these foods and has been able to proffer solutions as much as possible on how they will be promoted and preserved for the future.

From the results gathered from this very research work, it is made clear that the indigenous foods of Awgu people are very rich as well as valuable and should not be ignored again. It was also discovered that these dishes were used for festivals and cultural practices which are no longer upheld these days, and also, that most of these foods like the weaver and sauce and cocoyam head are at the verge of extinction. Furthermore, a lot of things have been discovered to be the cause of this problem and some of them are modernization and civilization, laziness, lack of value for culture, Christianity, and business activities. However, the good news is that there are remedies to these problems and if the recommendations can be applied, these foods will gain their value back. One of the major ways to achieve this is a constant practice of cooking and eating these foods, sensitization and education of the younger ones on how to

prepare and eat these foods and how valuable they are. The government can also come in by providing agricultural equipment to promote local farming.

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