Asian Remedies is a London based funded arts and outreach project designed to explore all aspects of domestic life and ritual which enable people to feel and live better. As the project’s title implies it was anticipated that we would gather recipes for individual ailments or to enhance health in particular circumstances such as childbirth or the frailty of old age. As a number of our interviewees told us, ‘food and medicine share the same source’ or ‘food and medicine are one’. Herbs and spices are also seen as having specific healing potency as a corollary to their aesthetic powers.

However, what rapidly emerged was that although specific healing recipes exist in abundance, they do so amid a seamless web of food culture. Nourishment is never just physical. Irrespective of cultural background, the food aesthetics that we learn from childhood are critical in forming socio-political as well as domestic identities. They are therefore as important for nourishing the soul as they are for powering the body.

There is nothing necessarily Asian in this, but people in diaspora develop a different awareness of tradition in their communities. Whereas in Europe and America the rise of scientific medicine and its reach into everyday life has contributed to a widespread interruption of the transmission of traditional remedies and recipes, the migrant communities studied thus far have yielded an unforeseen depth and quality of information.

Below are some recipes we have gathered from our interviewees which demonstrate the range that there is in the collection. What makes these recipes unique is the stories that go with them—personal histories within the greater spectrum of narratives about the Asian diaspora. Please look at www.asianremedies.co.uk where you will find an exciting and ever increasing archive of film, transcripts and remedies for living in the UK. Also, look out for our major exhibition, Routes & Remedies 2006, opening for a week on 29th September at Asia House, London.
Title  
Kicheree

Country of Origin:  
India
Contributors Name:  
Raju the cook
Route to UK:  
Orissa > Delhi > London

Purpose/Illness

You always eat this when you are ill, after a fever, elderly, or if you've eaten too much.

Ingredients

One katori [equivalent to a teacup] of basmati rice
One katori moong dahl
Finely chopped vegetables eg beans or carrots
Ghee
A pinch turmeric
A pinch cloves
A stick of cinnamon
A pinch of salt
1 teaspoon of cumin
A pinch of asafoetida
Water

Directions

Wash rice and dahl thoroughly in cold water and soak for two hours in fresh cold water. This is to remove the gas from the dahl [otherwise the dahl will cause flatulence].

Heat a saucepan and put a little bit of pure ghee and add whatever finely chopped fresh vegetables you have. Strain the rice and dahl and stir into the ghee and vegetables. Add water to half a knuckle (finger measurement) over the rice and dahl.

Bring to the boil and simmer for five to ten minutes until the vegetables are softening.