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Seeds of change

What you can see and hear at the forthcoming Covai Seed Festival 2018

by SREEDEVI LAKSHMIKUTTY

Most people have lost the taste for traditional varieties of food. We want the uniform, easy-to-cook, modern varieties of rice. Many South Indians are not aware that there are different kinds of wheat. When it comes to vegetables, we do not look for the local and seasonal varieties. But there are people who are working to conserve our seed heritage and keep it alive for future generations. And the Covai Seed Festival 2018, at Ksirs School, Saravanampatti, will offer a bird's eye view of the richness of traditional foods and seeds. Here's a look at the people and networks who will be present.



Bharat Beej Swaraj Manch (BBSM)

The BBSM, which began in Delhi in 2014, strongly asserts "the rights of farmers to freely plant, use, reproduce, select, improve, adapt, save, share, exchange or sell our heritage seeds, without restriction or hindrance, as we have done for past millennia." This is the cornerstone of seed conservation.

BBSM, which is now spread over 20 states, is led by Krishna Prasad. "Seeds belong to the farmers and seed sovereignty is an integral part of food sovereignty," he says, adding that each individual needs to take responsibility for saving seeds. "We should not cede control of seeds to corporations but should be able to freely grow exchange and multiply them."

Tula

The festival is not restricted to food. Poison-free or pollution-free clothing will also be showcased.

Ananthasayanan, who coordinates the Safe Food Alliance, has also founded the organic cotton initiative Tula.

"The fact that more than 70% of farm suicides happen in cotton belt and a huge amount of pesticides used in India is for cotton are two important factors for us to look at organic cotton and pollution-free clothing.

In addition, the high pollution especially in dyeing combined with the loss of livelihoods of hand spinners and handloom weavers led us to create these fabrics."

Tribal health Initiative (THI)

The founders of THI, which is in Sittilingi Valley are Dr Regi George and Dr Lalitha. They found that going back to traditional foods in tribal areas made a great difference to the malnutrition status of the tribals. "Not only was it cost effective but also they did not have to resort to fancy and costly formulations available in the market. People could actually grow and use it in their diet. In an urban milieu, stopping packaged food and shifting to traditional foods like millets will provide a balanced diet as well as prevent ingestion of harmful additives." Dr George believes that the magic wand to solve the country's nutrition problems and water usage is to grow and eat millets. "Unfortunately our nutrition and agriculture 'experts' do not want to see it. It is too simple a solution, they say. But often the most profound truths are the most simplest."

The festival will have stalls on food without cooking, traditional toys and games, books on food, farming and nature, vegetable seeds for kitchen gardens, mentors to help you restart your kitchen gardens and organic retailers. Join the network and become a seed saver.

Sreedevi Lakshmi Kutty is a Consultant to the Save Our Rice Campaign and the Co-Founder of Bio Basics, a social venture retailing organic food

Save Our Rice Campaign (SOR)

Begun in 2006, this is among the oldest campaign across the three southern rice-growing states. Today it has helped conserve more than 800 varieties of paddy seeds. Many local networks and farmer groups have taken up paddy seed conservation and increased the number of traditional varieties that are not only being conserved in-situ but also being introduced into the food chain. SOR runs a Nel Thiruvizha in Tamil Nadu in May every year and in November, the famous rice diversity block maintained in Wayanad has become a destination for rice and seed lovers.



Alliance for Sustainable and Holistic Agriculture (ASHA)

Kavitha Kuruganti, one of the founders and the current convener of ASHA, recalls the birth of the movement. "We set off on a Kisan Swaraj Yatra on Gandhi Jayanti 2010, starting from Sabarmati Ashram to reach out to farm-

ers in the country. We travelled 20,000 km through 20 states before we reached Rajghat on December 10. We wanted to let farmers know that adopting the path of sovereign ecological agriculture was a solution to multiple problems they were dealing with and we believe that it addresses several root causes of the agrarian distress today. From this yatra was born ASHA."

ASHA focuses on four aspects related to our food and farming - income security for all farm households; environmental sustainability in agriculture; resource rights over land, seed, water, forests and other commons to be vested in farming communities; and safe, nutritious and diverse foods for all citizens.



• PV SIVAKUMAR, N BASKARAN, GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCK PHOTOS

WHEN:
July 21 & 22,
10.00 am to 7.00 pm

WHERE:
Ksirs School,
Chinnavedampatti
Road

Covai Seed Festival 2018
CALL:
9994447252
or
9698373592
for details

WHAT:
Open to all. No entry fee. Bring your own cloth bags and water bottles. No PET bottles allowed. Water will be available in cans and taps for refills. Plastic carry bags will not be available.

LISTEN TO THEM

Karthikeya Sivasenapathy, of the Senapathy Kangayam Cattle Research Foundation, will talk about indigenous cattle breeds

Kavitha Kuruganti and Sridhar Radhakrishnan will touch upon traditional seeds and politics of seeds

Arachalur Selvam will offer a perspective on the journey of being local and global

PET PALS

Come home to Woody



We all remember the day that Woody arrived at the shelter; emaciated and struggling to move around on his front legs... he was a sad sight. We could only guess that he was the victim of a hit and run and that the accident had taken place some weeks or even months before he was rescued. This had caused irreparable damage to his spine.

Now, almost two years later and after a lot of love and treatment, Woody has gone from strength to

strength and captivates the hearts of all who meet him. He zips around at breakneck speed and, if he gets so much as a whiff of a treat, he'll appear at your feet within seconds to gaze imploringly with his beautiful brown eyes!

Calm and friendly by nature, Woody gets along with his four-legged companions just as well as he does with humans. He is living proof that handicapped dogs can still enjoy life and often don't need any more care than

other able-bodied dogs.

Woody appears on the official Humane Animal Society calendar for the month of February, wearing his trademark goofy smile.

(A shelter story from Humane Animal Society, Coimbatore)



Bala: A four-month-old calm Indian female pup who is friendly with both humans and canines. Her vaccinations are current.

Striker: Friendly, and affectionate, this five-month-old Indian male pup will be a lovely companion. All his vaccinations are current.

Puzzle: Very friendly,



and alert, this six-month-old Indian male pup enjoys playing. He has been vaccinated and neutered.

Cassidy: A one-year-old spayed female Rott-



weiler with all her vaccinations current, she is friendly, active and alert.

All pets adopted from Humane Animal Society (HAS) get free life-time veterinary care, free vaccinations and free spay/neuter surgery at the appropriate age from HAS. Contact Humane Animal Society @ 9366127215 from 9.00 am to 5.00 pm.

'Cos now I'm living on green power

It's guava season now and here's something new to try with this amazing fruit

by SHANTHINI RAJKUMAR

At a recent wedding, there was a surprise element on our vazha yel-lais. A chutney made with green guava by a local caterer. An appetising green in colour, it was smooth, creamy and delicious. It had the sour flavour that one associates with chaat.

It is now a sought-after item at wedding feasts and the credit goes to Madhampatty Rangaraj for not just developing the recipe but for getting me to think about using the green guava as a veggie option.

The guava may have originated in Central America but after hundreds of years in the Indian subcontinent, it is considered local.

When it comes to nutrition, the guava is to Asia what the apple is to the west. Yet it is not a fruit that is found as often as some others at our homes.

This may have something to do with the fact that it isn't used much in cakes, pies or even salads. While I have heard of guava jellies, squash-



Deliciously healthy The green guava chutney • SHANTHINI RAJKUMAR

es and jams, I wonder how much of the actual fruit goes into making these condiments. Also given that these products are pink/peach in colour, they are probably made using the pink strawberry guava rather than the green, which are easier to find here.

The country variety ranges from a small one with dark green flesh to bigger ones that with a paler green exterior. I wasn't too fond of the

guava especially because of the seeds that wouldn't break, no matter how hard they were bitten.

With guavas in season now and available everywhere here, the first dish I experimented with was, of course, the chutney. I didn't want to ask the caterer for his secret recipe but going by the taste, I used onion, green chillies, tamarind, turmeric powder, rock salt and a few coriander leaves. In went the chopped

guava, seeds and all, because discarding the latter meant losing so much flesh. Once it was all blended together, we had to strain the chutney. The smooth puree was tempered with dried red chillies, curry leaves and mustard seeds. One taste and I was supremely happy.

With the rainy weather we're having, a warm green guava soup is next on the agenda. And a *koyakkai rasam* maybe?

Know Germany better

Goethe-Zentrum hosts a session on the topic, Entering the German Job Market. Participants will get an opportunity to clear their doubts on the subject at the event. Entry is free.

JULY 19; 4.00 PM
@ Goethe-Zentrum, 734, President Hall, Avinashi Road
☎ 04222221643 or 9952411371 for details

Laugh out loud

Coimbatore Book Club Theatre Group in association with Eat Alley presents two short English comedy plays: Villa for Sale and Mother's Day. Registration fee of ₹600 includes dinner.

JULY 28; 6.00 PM
@ Eat Alley, Trichy Road, Near Sun-gam Junction, Ramanathapuram
☎ 9367706779 or 9790425168 to register

World of watercolours

Orita Sinclair School of Design and Music hosts a watercolour painting workshop for those above 12 years. Registration fee is ₹2000 per session and includes art kit and refreshment.

JULY 21 & 22
@ Orita Sinclair School of Design and Music, Above Audi Showroom, Avinashi Road
☎ 9790356194 or 9790552444

Stage craft

Coimbatore Art and Theatrical Society presents Love Sex and the Taxman, an English play for those above 18. Registration fee is ₹1600 for couples; ₹850 for individuals; and ₹750 for CATCARD members includes lunch.

JULY 22; 12.00 NOON
@ The Residency Towers, Avinashi Road
☎ 9629645004, 9894288422 for details