

Category	: International Rice Research Conference
Select Theme	: Food systems for the future
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Keyword 1	: Consumer preferences and behavior
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Keyword 3	: Value chain analysis
Title of Entry	: Drivers of food choice for improved nutrition in Eastern India
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Select only one type of presentation	: 15 minute oral presentation
Abstract	: Access to nutritious food does not necessarily translate to improved nutritional status, particularly for households in the middle and low income classes. Although eating behaviors are often associated with caloric intake and body mass metrics, understanding the drivers of food choice is also critical in identifying entry points for nutrition-sensitive interventions and will provide insights into the development of science-based policy recommendations targeted for the poor. The work presented here is part of an on-going study which aims to understand the behavioral drivers of food choice using gastronomic systems research (GSR) framework. In 2017–2018, we conducted expert elicitation workshops to capture diversity of food choices in Eastern India and to identify nutritional interventions. The results were validated with consumers through focus group discussions and quantified through surveys conducted among low and middle income households in the urban and rural districts in Odisha and West Bengal, Eastern India. Our findings showcase the diversity of dishes with 130 unique dishes identified by experts and extended to more than 200 by consumers. The main eating occasions for the households surveyed are breakfast, lunch and dinner. Only a third of the households surveyed eat morning snacks while 75% take afternoon snacks. Cereal dishes are most frequently consumed, particularly for breakfast, morning and afternoon snacks. The dishes frequently consumed during lunch and dinner are more diverse than those consumed at breakfast and snack times, with cereal-based, meat-based, plant-protein, and vegetable dishes. The typical portfolio of dish types based on major ingredients consumed by the households are: 40% cereal-based (e.g. rice, moori/puffed rice, panta-bhat/water rice, roti/chapatti, gola roti), 21% meat-based (e.g. fish curry, egg curry, chicken curry), 16% plant-protein (e.g. dal, dalma), 16% vegetables (e.g. curry, saag/drumstick leaves, santula, mixed-veg curry, mix fry), 3% milk-based and 2% fruit/fruit-based. Our preliminary findings suggest possibilities for nutritional interventions at dish level (i.e. improving diversity of dishes consumed for breakfast and the two snack occasions, increase intake of fruits). The food choices captured in the survey are critical inputs in the behavioral experiment in the next phase of the study test consumers' behavioral response to nutrition-sensitive interventions.

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