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### REVIEW ARTICLE

#### ETHNIC KASHMIRI WAZWAN: PREPARATORY REVIEW.

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#### Abstract

Wazwan, an integral part of Kashmiri culture is a very elaborate preparation of 7 to 36 dishes that are mainly made up of mutton or beef, chicken, fruits and vegetables. Preparation of wazwan does not follow any fixed Standard operating procedure nor is it done in an organized quality regulated sector. This leads to multiple scientific flaws in its preparation which need to be taken care of for making the production of same nutritious, safe and hygienic. This product has now started to reach even international markets hence it is very important to maintain its good quality so that it is safe for consumption. This paper reviews the method of production of wazwan, the flaws in its production and the risks related with same.

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#### Introduction:-

Jammu and Kashmir, Located in the northern Himalayas in India is a state known all over the world for its rich heritage and culture. It is widely known for its terrain specific foods like, saffron, Kashmiri apples, and most importantly wazwan. These food stuffs are quiet popular all over the world because of their distinct taste and preparatory techniques.

Kashmir, described as Paradise on earth by Emperor Jahangir, is a region known for its diverse cultural heritage and a perfect blend of social groups with ethnic backgrounds. Kashmir valley has been ruled by number of emperors from time to time who belonged to different civilization, thus penetrating number of cultures into the valley of saints.

Kashmiri culture is highly influenced by Central Asian, Persian, Chinese and Indian cultures. It thus is a diverse blend of rich cultures all over the world. [1]

This Merge of various cultures all around the world brought about a rich culinary heritage to Kashmir. One of the important culinary specialties is wazwan, which is prepared mainly by Meat. Wazwan gets its unique taste by a special spice formulation with mixed aromatic spices.

*kabab, rogan josh, aab gosh, tabak maaz, goshtaba, methi maaz and rista* are some of the important preparations of wazwan which are prepared by pre rigor tender lamb or beef meat that is hot boned.[2 - 3]

The local knowledge of the product is not very well documented and is usually passed from generations to generations however now the academicians are trying to document its SOP and make it worthy for the international markets. [4]

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Wazwan has a high potential in the domestic as well as the international markets all that is needed is quality standardization and automation of this product.

This paper reviews the method of production of wazwan, the flaws in its production and the risks related with same.

### **Origin of Wazwan:-**

The general eating habit of the Kashmiri population is non vegetarian, were non vegetarian dishes are relished with great joy. The main cuisine for the wedding banquets is wazwan which is elaborated as per the consumer's choice. With time it is gaining popularity in fast food joints, restaurants and hotels etc. Wazwan came to the valley through a Mongol Invader Timur who invaded India in 1348 back in 14<sup>th</sup> century during the reign of Nasiuddin Muhammad of the Tughlaq dynasty, who bought skilled professional cooks from Samarkand to Kashmir.[1,5,6]

These skilled professional cooks known as wazas in the local Kashmiri language, cooked meat preparation and named them by classifying them as per shape and gravies used while preparing. Wazwan has become immensely popular all over the world and the credit for the same goes to Sanskrit and Persian immigrants.

The term *waazi* means to cook which is derived from a Sanskrit word *waja*. This term is also believed to have been originated from a Persian word, *ashpaaz* which is a special cook skilled in the preparation of making soups, these terms with time became *waza*, the professional wazwan cook.[1]

The names of the dishes in wazwan, due to high cultural influence are from various cultural backgrounds. The term *kebab* being of Arabic origin while the term *korma* has Turkish roots majority of others have a Persian origin like *rogan josh*, *yakhni*, *aab gosh*, *rista* and *goshtaba* [1]

### **Preparation Of wazwan:-**

#### **Introduction:-**

The most important requirement for wazwan preparation is fresh slaughtered meat which must be processed within few hours of slaughtering. After slaughtering, the waza sorts the meat for different dishes in which it is to be used for meats of different body parts is to be utilized in different dishes.

For instance use of rib cage in *tabak maaz*, boneless meat in *kebab*, *rista* and *goshtaba* preparation.[16]

#### **Cooking of wazwan:-**

Typically the dishes are prepared in large copper utensils (which are called as *degs* in kashmiri) that are allowed to stand for the cooking time over simmering heat generated by burning wood obtained from old fruit trees[5,7]

Wazwan is made palatable and spicy by using a combination of number of spices and aromatic compounds like: dried ginger, cinnamon, cardamom, cloves, fennel etc [1].

#### **Serving of Wazwan:-**

The dishes thus cooked are served in an elaborated manner in large copper plates (*tramis*) with rice. The sequence of serving the dishes is fixed. Fried chicken, *kebab* and *tabak maaz* are already present on the platter before the service of the other sequenced dishes starts. [7]

### **Major Preparatory flaws in Preparation of wazwan:-**

#### **Use of Food colors:-**

The food and drug control of the region has conducted many surveys and quality tests regarding the use of artificial food color in the ethnic wazwan. Before the use of artificial food colors had become common many natural food coloring agents were used to bring about a bright and an appetizing color in the wazwan.

Traditionally, the use of sundried chilies and red cockscomb flower was done but now the city municipal corporation has declared the presence of coloring agents (red and yellow) are in toxic levels in the wazwan. Not only this, presence of unpermitted level of crude dye, used for coloring clothes, too has been found in the same. It must be noted that only Eight food colors are permitted in India that are Tartazine, Sunset Yellow for yellow; Carmosine, Ponceau - 4R and Erythrosine for red; Brilliant Blue and Indigo Carmine for blue; and Fast Green for Green.

According to, The Prevention of Food Adulteration Act only 100 mg per kg of food or one gm in 10 kg maximum is allowed. [12].

#### **Passing the food from the danger zone:-**

One of the greatest issues in the preparation of wazwan is its holding time and its reheating which passes the food from the danger zone again and again.

Since the preparation of wazwan is an elaborate affair, its preparation usually begins a night before the feast because of which the food prepared is to be reheated and served steaming hot to the guests.[7]

This reheating of wazwan again and again can cause the growth of bacteria in the food (such as *Staphylococcus aureus*, *Salmonella enteritidis*, *Escherichia coli* O157:H7, and *Campylobacter*) that can cause illness. The danger zone is between the range of 40 °F and 140 °F. More the food passes through this zone, Doubled are the bacteria [13-11].

It must also be noted that since in the preparation of wazwan the major nutritional component is of Fats/oils. Its reheating can be detrimental to health since the change of unsaturated fatty acids to saturated fatty acids can prove to be hazardous to health. [14]

#### **Traditional Preparation of Wazwan:-**

Wazwan is usually the feast for the weddings but it must be noted that since the scale of its production is huge it cannot be prepared in the common domestic kitchen of the house. It is therefore prepared in an open surrounding with a temporary roof top and a portable water supply. The conditions in and around the preparation area are usually traditional and do not include any GMP or SOP. The major Areas of concern that can cause cross contamination include, use of same ladles for multiple dish preparation, cross contamination between raw and cooked meat because of no segregation in the area, Poor Personal hygiene of the *wazas*, presence of insects and birds in the open surroundings, lack of good sanitation and hygienic conditions etc.[15]

#### **Health and Wazwan:-**

A study was conducted in the local medical research institute (SKIMS) to know the ill effects of wazwan on the human body if included as a part of regular diet. [5]

It was found that that wazwan is not feasible for patients suffering from chronic liver disease and chronic kidney disease [10], not an apt diet for obese and diabetic patients. [8-9.] Keeping in view the calorific content of the wazwan (5483 calories) [5], it is likely to causes disturbance in the glycemic control and weight loss management for obesity. Although wazwan has some higher health risks, it is a good nutritive diet for growing children as it is high in protein, good for pregnant women and lactating mothers. [5]. Because of the recent inculcation of artificial food colors to the same the risk of cancer has increased due to carcinogenic agents in the colors which are being used to make food more appealing and colorful. Though the food colors are allowed only in certain food groups (wazwan not one among them) it is still being used in excessive quantity in even those in which it is permitted.

#### **Conclusion:-**

Wazwan being the most important part of Kashmiri cuisine needs to be preserved and improved based on the scientific parameters so that this cuisine does not die a silent death. Wazwan has a distinctive taste and has a huge potential in the national and international markets. Presently the generation of SOP for its production, commercialization of this product on a larger scale and documentation about its benefits and flaws is required. This research may help to develop this cuisine in an organised and a scientific manner.

#### **Conflicts of interest:-**

The author has no conflicts of interest

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