Millets

What are millets?

Millets are small-seeded grasses that are hardy and grow well in dry zones as rain-fed crops, under marginal conditions of soil fertility and moisture. Millets are one of the oldest foods known to humans and possibly the first cereal grain to be used for domestic purposes.
Millets are also unique due to their short growing season. They can develop from planted seeds to mature, ready to harvest plants in as little as 65 days. This is important in heavily populated areas. When properly stored, whole millets will keep for two or more years.

Why eat millets?

Nutrition:

They are highly nutritious, non-glutinous and not acid forming foods. Hence they are soothing and easy to digest. They are considered to be the least allergenic and most digestible grains available. Compared to rice, especially polished rice, millets release lesser percentage of glucose and over a longer period of time. This lowers the risk of diabetes .
Millets are particularly high in minerals like iron, magnesium, phosphorous and potassium. Finger millet (Ragi) is the richest in calcium content, about 10 times that of rice or wheat.

Unlike rice and wheat that require many inputs in terms of soil fertility and water, millets grow well in dry regions as rainfed crops. By eating millets, we will be encouraging farmers in dryland areas to grow crops that are best suited for those regions. This is a step towards sustainable cropping practices where by introducing diversity in our diets, we respect the biodiversity in nature rather than forcefully changing cropping patterns to grow wheat and rice everywhere.

Millets- your friendly food

Millets are highly nutritious and one of the least allergenic and slow digestible grains available. They contain high amounts of dietary fiber, B-complex vitamins, essential amino and fatty acids and vitamin E. They are particularly high in minerals, iron, magnesium, phosphorous, and potassium. The seeds are also rich in phytochemicals, which lower cholesterol, reduce cancer risk and are effective in preventing/managing lifestyle diseases. Millets add diversity to your diet which is increasingly dominated by just two cereals – rice and wheat.

What kinds of millets are available?

- Barnyard Millet (Hindi: *Jhangora*; Tamil: *Kuthiraivaali*; Telugu: *Odalu*)
- Finger Millet (Hindi: *Mandua*; Tamil: *Kelvaragu*; Telugu: *Ragulu*; Kannada: *Ragi*; Malayalam: *Koovarugu*)
- Foxtail Millet (Hindi: *Kangni*; Tamil: *Tinai*; Telugu: *Korra*; Kannada: *Navane*; Malayalam: *Thina*)
- Kodo Millet (Hindi: *Kodra*; Tamil: *Varagu*; Telugu: *Arikelu*; Kannada: *Harka*)
- Little Millet (Hindi: *Kutki*; Tamil: *Samai*; Telugu: *Sama*; Kannada: *Same*; Malayalam: *Chama*)
- Pearl Millet (Hindi: *Bajra*, Tamil: *Kambu*, Telugu: *Gantilu*, Kannada: *Sajje*)
- Proso Millet (Hindi: *Barri*; Tamil: *Panivaragu*; Telugu: *Varigulu*; Kannada: *Baragu*)
- Sorghum (Hindi: *Jowar*; Tamil: *Cholam*; Telugu: *Jonna*; Kannada: *Jola*; Malayalam: *Cholum*)

MILLETS

1. **Thinai (Foxtail millet)**
Telugu – Korralu; Kannada - Navane

Thinai is a traditional food of hill tribes in South India. The dehusked grain is translucent yellow. Thinai has heating properties.

2. **Samai (Little millet)**

These look very similar to foxtail millet but are white in colour. It has a cooling effect on the body.Cooking Method for Thinai and Samai: Clean 1 cup of samai / thinai grains in water to remove residual sand particles. Bring 2.5 cups of water to boil. Add the cleaned grains to the water and let it boil for another 3 minutes. Turn off the stove and keep the container covered for 10 minutes. Samai and thinai rices cooked in the above manner can be used in all food preparations which use paddy (ordinary) rice. They can also replace rice in idli and dosa preparations.

3. **Bajra (Pearl millet)**
Hindi – Bajra, Bajri, Lahra; Telugu - Gantilu

Kambu is said to have been brought to India about 2000 years ago. These yellow, grey or light blue grains are consumed after dehusking. Bajra rotis are very popular in rural areas in North India. These are especially had in winter, since the grain has heating properties. Kambu plants are a very good fodder. The straw and stalk are used for bedding, thatching, fencing and fuel.

4. **Jowar (Great millet, Sorghum)**

Hindi – Jowar, Jowari, Jundri; Telugu – Jonna, Jonnalu;
Kannada – Jola; Malayalam - Cholam

Cholam is believed to have been brought to India about 1,000 years ago. The name 'Cholam' is usually mistaken for maize, the yellow corn. The millet 'Cholam' grains are white in colour, and the size of pepper. They are one of the most drought-resistant crops known.

5. **Ragi (Finger millet)**
Hindi – Mandua, Madua, Maruya, Nagli, Kodu, Koda; Telugu – Ragulu; Malayalam – Koovaragu

Ragi is the most popular millet in India and ranges from orange to dark brown in colour. It is called finger millet since its earheads are made of a whorl of finger-like spikes. Karnataka accounts for 40% of the total area under ragi in India, and 50% of the country's production. Ragi is one of the richest sources of calcium, and has been an important weaning food in South India. Though there are hybrid varieties of ragi which give higher yields, traditional varieties are known to be tastier and more nutritious. Ragi can be stored for many years without any damage from pests, and is hence an excellent famine insurance food.

TABLE III: Composition of small millets, wheat and rice (100g)

Name	Protein (g)	Fat (g)	Minerals (g)	Fibre (g)	Carbohydrates (g)	Calcium (g)	Phosphorous (g)	Thiamin (g)
Finger Millet	7.3	1.3	2.7	3.6	72	344	283	420
Proso Millet	12.5	3.1	1.9	7.2	70.4	14	206	400
Foxtail Millet	12.3	4.3	3.3	8	60.9	31	290	590
Little Millet	7.7	4.7	1.5	7.6	67	17	220	300
Kodo Millet	8.3	1.4	2.6	9	65.9	27	188	330
Barnyard Millet	6.2	2.2	4.4	9.8	65.5	11	280	300
Rice	6.8	0.5	0.6	0.2	78.2	45	160	0
Wheat	11.8	1.5	1.5	1.2	71.2	41	306	0