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Ethno-dietetics and ethno-nutrition as food heritage in negro-African cultures

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Abstract

Medical and health practices in African cultures are most often characterized by an empiricism that cannot be questioned. Indeed not being familiar with technetronic, their medical knowledge is mainly based on an ancestral legacy which has shown its effectiveness over time through the force of a certain experience. Concerning food-stuffs, negro-African traditions have know how to proceed as in most anthropogenic communities, to a medicalization, or even a hyper-medicalization of food. The Greek physician Hippocrates believed that food had to be made into medicine. And, along the same lines, most Negro-African food traditions bluntly assert that the food is a substitute for medicine. From that moment on, to eat is to prevent disease, to cure oneself. However, in another sense, to eat is also to give oneself the disease, to poison oneself, and this in particular when the food is of poor quality.

In view of all this, ethno-dietetics and ethno-nutrition appear as a body of endogenous knowledge on the nutritional, health and medical value of foods produced by Negro-African societies. Because these societies have been able to show or to demonstrate the link between these foods, these dishes and health, it is therefore possible to promote their knowledge at national and international level. Much of our research has been based on food-medicine in an African context. We therefore believe that, in-depth research on such foods is undeniably the foundation of a food heritage that deserves a real attention. Our contribution will thus focus, from an inventory of certain foods used for their therapeutic virtues in African cultures, to show that, the food-health link can be effective in making food an element with repercussions tourist some.

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