

Finnish Championship in Food Craftmanship. Oral presentation at Mini-seminar on Original Finnish and Nordic varieties of heirloom plants. Novia University of Applied Sciences in Ekenäs, Raseborg, Finland, 10.-13.10.2016

Original Finnish varieties of heirloom plants – potential raw material for food craftmanship

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Abstract

Landraces and old cultivars of with several decades' long cultivation history in Finland are potential raw material for local food and food craftmanship products. The Finnish National Plant Genetic Resources Programme situated at Luke is responsible for the preservation of field and horticultural crop genetic resources. Furthermore promotion the use of especially landraces and old cultivars is one of the programme tasks.

In pilot projects a few landraces have been delivered to fine dining restaurants in Helsinki for testing. Chefs have been very interested in potato onions and old potato cultivars as raw material. They e.g. acknowledged the intensive strong taste of potato onion ('top onion taste'). Along with potato onion and potato especially cereals, some root plants and pulses, some spice species, many garden berries and fruits, hop and garden rhubarb could offer historically interesting, rare and tasteful raw material for local and artisan food. There are large number of Finnish born local varieties as well as landraces and old varieties of long local cultivation history preserved in the national field and joint Nordic genebank collections. Some of them are still in small-scale production in Finland.

Many Luke research projects on crop genetic diversity aim to search for landraces still in cultivation, to study their growing history, and to provide prompt variety identification (both morphological and genetic characteristics). This is fundamental basis for studies on quality characteristics (eg. chemical compounds, aroma, and texture) of these landrace varieties. Heirloom plants are inspiring, because they are foodstuffs with place and history. Our grandparents cultivated them and ate them. Heirloom plants offer links to earlier generations' everyday life, and moreover maintain cultural and genetic diversity both in agriculture and in cuisine.