
EMPOWERING CHILDREN AND YOUTHS IN STAPLE FOOD SNACKS AND DRINKS ENTREPRENEURSHIP

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ABSTRACT: *This paper focuses on empowering children and youths in staple food snacks and drinks entrepreneurship in order to be self-reliant. Staple foods are the chief foods eaten regularly and in large quantities. It is pertinent for the youths to explore the resources available in the agricultural sector to initiate project that will be profitable, employ themselves and supply other people's need. This paper therefore, defines entrepreneurship, staple foods, and their benefits and suggested some snack and drink recipes the youths can engage in for self-reliance.*

Keywords: Empowerment, Staple foods, Entrepreneurship.

Introduction

Youths are the young people mostly between the ages of 18 to 40 years of age (Labaeka, 2009). Empowering the youths in the agricultural sector entrepreneurship as in staple foods like the grains, starchy roots and pulses guarantees a sustainable source of income for the youths and upgrading the yield from resources and creating a new market and a new customer. The yield of resources herein refers to the value or satisfaction derived from resources by the customer.

Entrepreneurship is an art involving recognizing a business opportunity, mobilizing resources and persisting to exploit that opportunity. It is initiating, doing, achieving and building an enterprise (Olatoke, 2009). Entrepreneurial skills and competencies in staple food snacks and drinks in the youths must be built up gradually if they are to retain their usefulness over a long term. Staple foods are usually found in one of the following categories; cereals, starchy roots and fruits, pulses (Anazonwu-Bello, 1981). Cereals are mainly grains such as Rice, Maize, Guinea Corn, Millet, Wheat, Barley, Hungry Rice (Acca). They are economical sources of energy, B-vitamins, minerals and protein. The most popular of starchy roots and fruits are: Cassava, Yam, Cocoyam, Sweet Potato, Plantain and Banana.

From the earliest beginnings, the human race has depended on grains more than any other food product to satisfy their needs for protein and energy. Because of their ease of cultivation and high caloric yield compared to surface area cultivated, grains have been ubiquitous in all human civilizations (Pamplona-Roger, 2004). The grain is a special type of single seed fruit called caryopsis. It is formed by the homogenous union of the pericarp (bran) and the seed (endosperm). In grains, fruit and seed appear to be a single unit.

Grains and their flour were considered of such fundamental importance to sustain life. The flour serves as a base in the preparation of such a basic food as snacks. Snacks are made with refined flour or whole grain flour, fats, salt, sugar and flavourings. Many decades passed before scientists and nutritionists noted that refined flour is not as healthful as that of whole grains. Today, sufficient scientific evidence showed that whole grains and the products made from them have very real healing and preventive power over what have come to be known as diseases of civilization, such as cancer, arteriosclerosis, diabetes, and dental caries (Pamplona- Roger, 2004).

Benefits of Grains (Particularly Whole Grains)

Some see grains and grain products as foods that only provide carbohydrates and calories. However, whole grains in particular are a good source of protein, minerals and vitamins. According to Pamplona-Roger (2004), grains provide:-

- **Indigestible carbohydrates (cellulose fiber):** Particularly in whole grains and their products.
- **Digestible carbohydrate (50%-60% of grain weight):** Most is in the form of starch, which is converted to glucose by digestive enzymes. The glucose is then absorbed into the blood through the small intestine and provides energy to the entire body.
- **Protein (7.5%-17% of grain weight):** Grain proteins are of a sufficient quality to meet the needs of adults; children, on the other hand, need to supplement grain products with other lysine-rich foods such as milk or legumes.
- Oats and Wheat are the most protein-rich grains in relation to their caloric content; corn and rice are the least.
- **Vitamins B1, B2, B6, E, niacin and Folates:** are found particularly in the germ and bran. This means that refined grains have very little of these nutrients.
- **Minerals and trace elements:** whole-grain products contain much more phosphorous, magnesium, iron, calcium, zinc, and selenium than those that are more refined.
- **Phytochemical elements:** lignans, phytoestrogen (similar to the isoflavons found in soy).
- Phytic acid and phytates and phenolic compounds that acts as antioxidants.

Whole grains contain more nutrients than refined products, particularly more vitamins and minerals. Eating whole-grain products has no adverse effect on the absorption of minerals. As a result, those suffering from iron deficiency anaemia can safely use them.

The use of bran alone does reduce absorption of iron and zinc.

- They are rich in fiber: this insoluble cellulose fiber acts like a “broom” sweeping the digestive tract.
- They produce a greater sense of satiety because of their fiber content. The fiber swells in the stomach. This helps reduce additional food intake, thus preventing obesity.
- They help avoid constipation: eating whole grains improves intestinal function: increases fecal volume, accelerates fecal passage through the intestines, and facilitates the elimination of toxic substances, such as bile acids.
- They reduce cancer risk, especially of the colon and the breast, when whole-grains are eaten regularly.
- They help avoid coronary disease and arteriosclerosis: the protective effects of whole- grains regarding cardio-vascular disease are due to high levels of:
 - ❖ Antioxidants (vitamin E, selenium, phenolic compounds, etc)
 - ❖ Unsaturated fatty acids (in the germ),
 - ❖ Trace elements
 - ❖ Phytochemicals (lignans, phyto estrogens),
 - ❖ Cellulose fiber
- They prevent diabetes: A study conducted at Harvard University (USA) demonstrated that the more whole-grain products eaten, the lower the risk of non-insulin dependent diabetes. Because the glucose in whole grains is released slowly, it does not produce abrupt increases in its blood level. As a result, diabetics tolerate whole-grain products better than those of refined grains and can eat them without difficulty.
- They do not contain cholesterol, and contribute to the reduction of its level in the blood.

Suggested Staple Food Drink and Snack Recipes for Youth Entrepreneurship

<p><i>Ginger Drink</i> 2 Medium size fresh ginger 2 Cups of granulated sugar 3 Litres of water 1 Cup of Lemon or Lime juice</p>	<p><i>Method</i> Wash and grate the ginger make sugar syrup with the water, allow to cool, add on to the ginger, strain. Add lemon or lime juice if desired. Chill and serve.</p>
<p><i>Millet Yoghurt Drink (Fura)</i> 3 Cups of Millet 2 Cups of Yoghurt 1 Cup of Sugar ½ Tablespoonful Ginger Add water before serving (optional)</p>	<p><i>Method</i> Pound millet to remove husk, wash and keep to drain in a basket, pound into powder. Put water on fire to boil. Divide the millet and pound ½ into flour. Put water to boil. Sieve the lillian to remove dirt particles. Add the lillian and ½ cup millet to the boiling water and cook for 15 minutes, prepare a paste out of the millet flour and divide into two parts. Pour the boiling water into one part of the paste and stir for 5 minutes to cool. Then add the second half of millet paste. Add sugar or honey. Serve cold.</p>
<p><i>Spiced Millet Drink</i> 4 Cups of Millet 2 Cups of ground sweet potatoes 2 Tablespoonful of ground ginger 8 Litres of water Add sugar to taste or honey</p>	<p><i>Method</i> Remove dirt from the millet. Grind into a paste all the ingredients, pour in boiling water over the mixture and allow standing over-night. Strain the following morning and sweeten to taste. Chill and serve.</p>
<p><i>Guinea Corn Spiced Drink</i> 1 Cup guinea corn Spices and pepper to taste 3 Cups of water 1 medium size sweet potato ½ Cup sugar</p>	<p><i>Method</i> Soak the corn for a day or two. Wash and grind guinea corn, then grind sweet potato and spices into paste too. Put the water to boil. Make the paste to a thin consistency with guinea corn in one bowl; allow to cool for 5 minutes. Then add sweet potato and spice into the paste. Allow to cool and add sugar. Chill and serve.</p>
<p><i>Soya Milk Drink</i> 1 Cup of soya paste 3 Cups of water 4 Tablespoons of sugar Add flavour (optional)</p>	<p><i>Method</i> Mix the paste with water, sift the mixture through sieve. Boil the milk for 15-20 minutes. Leave to cool and add sugar. Serve chilled.</p>
<p><i>Dry Corn Spiced Snack (Adun)</i> 1¼ Cups of Dry corn 1 Level tablespoonful of crayfish 6½ tablespoons of palmoil Salt to taste 1 tablespoon of dry pepper 1 Large Onion</p>	<p><i>Method</i> Roast dry corn in a hot roasting pot, stirring till all have brown colour. Grind into powder while still warm. When using finely ground corn, sieve well and roast. Add the palmoil, salt and dry pepper, grinded crayfish and mix well until oil binds it. Mould and wrap in leaves or moulds and serve.</p>
<p><i>Spiced Dry Maize Balls</i> 1¼ Cups of Dry maize 1 Tablespoon dry ground red pepper 1 Small Onion 6½ tablespoons of palmoil 4 tablespoons of grounded crayfish</p>	<p><i>Method</i> Grind the roasted maize in a mill to have fine product. Fry onions, pepper and crayfish in hot oil until onion is well cooked. Add powdered corn, stir together with hand and make balls out of the mixture.</p>
<p><i>Garri Biscuit (Cookies)</i> 2 Cups Wheat flour 1 Cup fine sieved garri 1 teaspoon baking powder 1 Cup margarine Grated Coconut 1 medium size egg ½ Cup granulated Sugar 1 teaspoon grated Orange rind</p>	<p><i>Method</i> Cream margarine and sugar together, stir in the coconut, orange rind and beaten egg. Add all dry ingredients and mix together. Roll out thinly and cut to various shapes with a cutter. Place them in a greased baking sheet and bake until golden brown and cooled.</p>
<p><i>Cassava Fried Balls</i> 7 Cups of grated cassava 1 medium size coconut 2 medium size iced fish 3 fresh peppers Salt to taste 2 medium size onions 1 bottle of groundnut oil</p>	<p>Squeeze out water from grated cassava, grate coconut, mix the grated coconut and cassava together. Add salt, pepper and onions. Cook fish with little salt and water then debone the fish. Mash and add the mixture together. Shape into flat round balls and fry cassava balls in hot oil and serve hot.</p>
<p><i>ChinChin</i> 1 bottle Vegetable oil 2 Cups of Wheat flour</p>	<p><i>Method</i> Sift the flour, rub in the fat and beat in the eggs, sugar and flavouring and mix together. Add sufficient milk or water to bind into stiff dough and knead until very smooth. Roll out and cut</p>

2 medium size eggs ½ cup granulated sugar Milk and Water to bind as required 1 Teaspoon flavouring (nutmeg or grated lemon rind) ¼ Cup margarine	into strips, cubes and small triangles to have variety of shapes. Heat vegetable oil and fry until golden brown. Drain and serve.
<i>Rice Balls</i> 1 Tin cooked rice 2 Pepper 2 Tomatoes Little Onion Salt to taste Seasonings 1 Cup minced meat 2 Eggs (medium size) 1 Bottle Groundnut oil ½ Cup flour	<i>Method</i> Boil rice until quite soft, but not mashy, saute pepper, tomatoes and onion. Add the pepper mixture and minced meat to the rice, season well. Bind rice mixture with some beaten eggs or shape on a floured board. Coat in beaten egg. Fry in hot oil, until cooked.
<i>Yam Meat Balls</i> 3 Cups minced meat 1 Medium size yam Flavouring and season to taste 2-3 Eggs (medium size) 1 Bottle groundnut oil	<i>Method</i> Peel, cut and cook yam. Mash the cooked yam. Add pepper, salt, etc to taste. Mix well, add eggs, make into balls and fry in oil.
<i>Maize Masa</i> 2 Cups coarse maize flour 1 Cup fine maize flour 2 teaspoon yeast or 1 cup palm wine 1 bottle of vegetable oil ½ tablespoon granulated sugar Pinch of potash	<i>Method</i> Bring water to boil, add potash and yeast. Stir in the coarse maize flour until it thickens, allow to cool. Add the raw fine maize flour, mix and cover overnight. Deep-fry in the morning, serve hot, sprinkled with granulated sugar.
<i>Soya PuffPuff</i> 2 Cups of Wheat flour 1 Cup of Soyabean flour 3 teaspoons of groundnut oil 2 Medium size eggs 1 bottle of oil for deep frying Pinch of salt 1 teaspoon baking powder Sugar to taste	<i>Method</i> Mix wheat flour, soyabeans flour and baking powder. Whisk eggs and pour into a mixing bowl. Add sugar a little at a time. Mix well and shape into balls, place oil on fire and heat up. Fry gently until golden brown and serve hot.
<i>Soyabeans ChinChin</i> 2 Cups of Wheat flour 1 Cup of Soyabeans paste 2 teaspoons baking powder 1½ tablespoon melted margarine ½ cup of milk or water 1 Egg 2 Cups of sugar ½ teaspoon lemon or orange rind 1 teaspoon lemon or orange juice 1 bottle of oil for deep-frying	<i>Method</i> Mix egg, sugar, salt and milk. Melt margarine in a separate bowl; sift together the flour and baking powder. Add the dry ingredients to the beans paste mixture and mix well. Knead well until the dough is soft, add more flour if necessary, roll the dough and cut evenly on a floured board. Cut into cubes; fry in oil and over a moderate heat until brown.
<i>Popcorn</i> 1 Cup of Popcorn 1 tablespoon of sugar A pinch of salt 2 tablespoon Groundnut oil	<i>Method</i> Put a pan on fire for 5 minutes. Put two tablespoonful oil. Put one cup of popcorn in the pan and continue to turn it until it starts to pop. Continue popping until you finish. Blend sugar, mix the sugar and a pinch of salt, sprinkle over the corn and leave for 5 minutes.

Source: Alabi, O.F. and Bamalli, H.S. (2008). *Local Drinks and Snacks from Nigeria*.

Conclusion

Empowerment is the most effective strategy for providing people with opportunities to develop sales skills, which not only be for employment generation but also to bring about the much desired democratic values in the society. Employment opportunity in the

agricultural sector especially in local snack and drink production from roots and grains where a lot of youth can be self-employed should be embraced. This will alleviate poverty among the youths. It will not only help to sustain the youths, raise their standard of living, but also enhance national development.

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