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**Topic:** Food and nutrition security

**Title:** Come dine with me Tswana meals – Perceptions and knowledge of traditional foods among Tswana women of different generations in rural South Africa

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Traditional food is thought to play a key role in contributing to more healthy and sustainable diets. Yet, traditional knowledge transfer between generation and consequently the usage of traditional foods is gradually decreasing.

A qualitative approach with focus groups and culinary practices was carried out with 120 Tswana women of three generations in the Vaalharts area, South Africa.

Traditional food is defined by Tswana women as foods that their forefathers have named and eaten. They are described as foods that come from or grow closely to the ground and have the colours of brown, green and white, representing meat, green-leafy vegetables and porridge. Traditional preparation practices include cooking outside over fire and limiting condiments to salt, water and animal fats. The older generation (50 years and older) has a vast amount of knowledge on indigenous foods and the preparation of traditional dishes, perceiving traditional foods as tasty and healthy and eating them regularly. The middle generation (21-49 years) still knows plenty of traditional dishes but will more likely adapt them to modern taste by adding more spices, stock or processed fats, influenced mainly by advertisements on TV or packaging. The young generation (14-20 years) only has limited knowledge on traditional dishes restricted to commonly used foods in traditional ceremonies. In their day-to day life, young women prefer the taste, convenience and social status of modern foods.

Traditional food knowledge and practices within South Africa's diverse socio-cultural environment need more considerations in the formulation of public health nutrition policies and programmes.