

## Traditional food practices of edible flowers

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**Abstract:** This review examines traditional food practices involving edible flowers, emphasizing their culinary uses and potential health benefits. Edible flowers have been part of human cuisine for centuries, enhancing dishes with flavor, aroma, and visual appeal. Different cultures have developed unique ways of incorporating edible flowers into their traditional diets, reflecting their local flora, climate, and culinary customs. From rose petals in Middle Eastern desserts to lavender in European baked goods, edible flowers have significantly influenced local food cultures. The study explores various methods of using edible flowers in traditional cuisine, including as garnishes, ingredients, and main components of dishes. By analyzing these practices, the review aims to provide insights into their health significance and culinary applications, while also highlighting their potential for innovation and experimentation in modern cooking. This review offers a thorough understanding of the role of edible flowers in traditional food practices, inspiring new culinary creations and fostering appreciation for cultural heritage.

**Keywords:** Cuisine, cultural, edible, flowers, traditional

## Introduction

The use of edible flowers in traditional foods is a culinary practice that spans centuries and cultures (Guine et al., 2020). Edible flowers have been part of human cuisine, adding flavor, aroma, and visual appeal to various dishes (Valencia-Cordova et al., 2024). From ancient civilizations to today, edible flowers have been used in salads, teas, desserts, and other culinary creations (Carboni et al., 2025).

Consuming edible flowers not only reflects cultural heritage but also showcases the creativity and resourcefulness of our ancestors (Fernandez-Pintor, 2025). They have been used in different forms, including garnishes, ingredients, and even as the main component of dishes (Rop et al., 2012). Various cultures have developed unique ways to incorporate edible flowers into their traditional cuisine, reflecting their local plants, climate, and culinary traditions (Motti et al., 2022). For example, rose petals are a popular ingredient in Middle Eastern and Indian desserts, while lavender is often used in baked goods and teas in European dishes (Coyago-Cruz et al., 2023). The practice of using edible flowers is not only about flavor and visual appeal but also about the potential health benefits they offer (Benvenuti and Mazzoncini, 2021). Many edible flowers are rich in antioxidants, vitamins, and minerals, making them a nutritious addition to many recipes (Jakubczyk et al., 2022). Additionally, edible flowers can add a creative and unique touch to traditional dishes, encouraging innovation and experimentation in the kitchen (Teixeira et al., 2024). Exploring traditional uses of edible flowers can provide valuable insights into their cultural importance, culinary applications, and health benefits (Pires et al., 2021). By examining how edible flowers have been used in different cuisines, one can gain a greater appreciation for the diversity and richness of global food traditions and inspire new culinary ideas.

## Methodology

Literature surveys were conducted using the Scopus, Crossref, Google Scholar, PubMed, NCBI, and Web of Science databases, which involved systematically searching and analyzing published scholarly articles to gather information on traditional food practices involving edible flowers. The databases were searched using keywords like “traditional food practices”, “edible flowers”, and “culinary application”. The data on the mode of consumption were tabulated with details (Pradhan et al., 2025).

## Results and discussion

The study provides a comprehensive overview of various plant species used as edible flowers in different culinary preparations. There is documentation of 25 plants belonging to diverse families, including Amaryllidaceae, Fabaceae, Asteraceae, Malvaceae, and others whose flowers are edible. The table highlights the versatility of these plants, which are used in a wide range of dishes, such as salads, soups, stir-fries, desserts, and beverages. For example, *Calendula officinalis* (Common marigold) is used in beverages, salads, and as a food colorant, while *Hibiscus rosa-sinensis* (China rose) is used in beverages, cakes, desserts, and as a food colorant. It also showcases the diversity of culinary uses of these plants across different cultures. For instance, *Sesbania grandiflora* (West Indian pea) is used in salads, curries, stir-fries, and soups, while *Moringa oleifera* (Drumstick tree) is used in salads, omelets, stir-fries, and as a beverage (Table 1). The study also highlights the use of these plants as flavoring agents, infusions, and food colorants. It provides valuable information on the various plant species used in traditional cuisine, highlighting their potential for culinary innovation and experimentation. The diversity of plants and their uses presented in the study can inspire new recipes and products, while also promoting the preservation of traditional knowledge and cultural heritage. Present study is a valuable resource for researchers, chefs, and food enthusiasts interested in exploring the culinary uses of edible flowers and plants.

Table 1: Traditional uses of some edible flowers

Plant name	Common name	Family	Mode of consumption	Source
<i>Allium cepa</i> L.	Onion	Amaryllidaceae	Used as vegetables.	Bandyopadhyay et al., (2023)
<i>Allium schoenoprasum</i> L.	Chives	Amaryllidaceae	Used in dips and soups.	Carboni et al., (2025)
<i>Bauhinia purpurea</i> L.	Purple orchid tree	Fabaceae	Used in salads.	Jadhav et al., (2023)
<i>Bombax ceiba</i> L.	Silk cotton tree	Malvaceae	Cooked and consumed with rice and meat.	Jadhav et al., (2023)
<i>Calendula officinalis</i> L.	Common marigold	Asteraceae	Used in beverages, salads, decorations, and food infusions as a colorant.	Jadhav et al., (2023); Akhilraj et al., (2024); Carboni et al., (2025)
<i>Chrysanthemum indicum</i> L.	Indian chrysanthemum	Asteraceae	Used in beverages, desserts, stir-fries, salads, and soups.	Akhilraj et al., (2024); Gupta et al., (2024a); Carboni et al., (2025)
<i>Clitoria ternatea</i> L.	Butterfly pea	Fabaceae	Used in bread, cakes, beverages, noodles, salads, jam, syrups, yogurt, and food colorants.	Jadhav et al., (2023); Gupta et al., (2024a); Carboni et al., (2025)
<i>Cucurbita pepo</i> L. (Figure 2)	Pumpkin	Cucurbitaceae	Consumed as dressings, salads, soups, fries, and	Bandyopadhyay et al., (2023); Gupta et al.,

			stuffed vegetables.	(2024a); Carboni et al., (2025)
<i>Hibiscus</i> × <i>rosa-sinensis</i> L.	China rose	Malvaceae	Used in beverages, cakes, desserts, food colorants, ice cream, salads, syrup, jams, jellies, pickles, etc.	Akhilraj et al., (2024); Gupta et al., (2024a); Carboni et al., (2025)
<i>Hibiscus sabdariffa</i> L. (Figure 1)	Roselle	Malvaceae	Used in jams, fermented drinks, cakes, puddings, salads, soups, infusions, and chutney.	Jadhav et al., (2023); Gupta et al., (2024a)
<i>Indigofera cassioides</i> Rottler ex DC.	Cassia indigo	Fabaceae	Cooked and consumed as vegetables.	Gupta et al., (2024b)
<i>Jasminum sambac</i> (L.) Aiton	Arabian jasmine	Oleaceae	Used in beverages, desserts, flavor agents, infusions, porridge, and syrups.	Jadhav et al., (2023); Carboni et al., (2025)
<i>Lavandula angustifolia</i> Mill.	Lavender	Lamiaceae	Flavoring for chewing gums, candies, ice cream, beverages, and baked goods.	Duggirala et al., (2024)
<i>Madhuca longifolia</i> (L.) J.F.Macbr.	Indian butter tree	Sapotaceae	Used as vegetables, to prepare beverages, and	Bandyopadhyay et al., (2023)

			can be eaten directly.	
<i>Mangifera indica</i> L.	Mango	Anacardiaceae	Used in pickles and other culinary purposes.	Duggirala et al., (2024)
<i>Moringa oleifera</i> Lam.	Drumstick tree	Moringaceae	Used in salads, omelets, stir-fries, rice, beverages, syrups, herbal infusions, desserts, and pickles.	Bandyopadhyay et al., (2023); Akhilraj et al., (2024); Gupta et al., (2024a)
<i>Musa</i> × <i>paradisiaca</i> L.	Banana	Musaceae	Used in salads, curries, stir-fries, soups, and fillings.	Bandyopadhyay et al., (2023); Gupta et al., (2024a)
<i>Nelumbo nucifera</i> Gaertn.	Indian lotus	Nelumbonaceae	Consumed as stuffed flowers, candies, syrups, infusions, salads, soups, and fries.	Akhilraj et al., (2024); Gupta et al., (2024a); Carboni et al., (2025)
<i>Nyctanthes arbor-tristis</i> L.	Coral jasmine	Oleaceae	Used as a flavoring agent and infusion for tea or beverages.	Gupta et al., (2024a)
<i>Portulaca oleracea</i> L.	Purslane	Portulacaceae	Used as a flavoring agent and infusion to impart its flavor.	Gupta et al., (2024a)
<i>Rhododendron arboreum</i> Sm.	Tree rhododendron	Ericaceae	Consumed as fermented beverages, food colorants, flavor agents, jam,	Carboni et al., (2025)

			jellies, juices, and yogurt.	
<i>Rosa indica</i> L.	Rose	Rosaceae	Used in beverages, desserts, food colorants, ice cream, jam, syrup, candies, etc.	Akhilraj et al., (2024); Gupta et al., (2024a); Carboni et al., (2025)
<i>Sesbania grandiflora</i> (L.) Poir.	West Indian pea	Fabaceae	Used in salads, curries, stir-fries, soups, pickles, beverages, and desserts.	Bandyopadhyay et al., (2023); Akhilraj et al., (2024); Gupta et al., (2024a)
<i>Tagetes erecta</i> L.	African marigold	Asteraceae	Used in baked goods, beverages, butter, candied petals, salads, and soups.	Akhilraj et al., (2024); Gupta et al., (2024a); Carboni et al., (2025)
<i>Tamarindus indica</i> L.	Tamarind	Fabaceae	Cooked as a culinary dish.	Jadhav et al., (2023)



Figure 1: *Hibiscus sabdariffa* flowers sold in the rural markets





Figure 2: Pumpkin flowers sold in the urban markets

## Conclusion

The traditional use of edible flowers in food practices is a rich and diverse aspect of global cuisine, reflecting the creativity, resourcefulness, and cultural heritage of various communities. The use of edible flowers in traditional cooking not only adds flavor and aroma to dishes but also provides a unique and visually appealing element to culinary preparations. By exploring the various ways in which edible flowers have been used in traditional cuisine, a deeper appreciation for the cultural significance and potential health benefits of these flowers can be gained. The incorporation of edible flowers into traditional food practices also highlights the importance of preserving and promoting local food cultures. As a continuation of navigating the complexities of modern food systems, it is essential to recognize the value of traditional knowledge and practices that have been passed down through generations. By embracing and celebrating the use of edible flowers in traditional cuisine, work can be done towards preserving biodiversity, promoting sustainable food systems, and fostering cultural exchange. Ultimately, the traditional food practices involving edible flowers offer a wealth of inspiration for modern culinary innovation, while also reminding us of the importance of cultural heritage and traditional knowledge in shaping our relationship with food. By exploring and appreciating these practices, cultivation of a deeper understanding of the complex relationships between food, culture, and identity can be done, and inspire new generations of cooks and food enthusiasts to experiment with the beauty and flavor of edible flowers.

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