

Turmeric drinks to combat malnutrition in Nigeria

Adding turmeric to popular drinks could help combat malnutrition in developing countries. PhD candidate Folake Idowu-Adebayo discovered that adding turmeric to soya milk, cow's milk and hibiscus drink increases the amount of micronutrients.

Numerous health benefits have been claimed for turmeric, ranging from antioxidants to protection against cancer and poisoning. Folake Idowu-Adebayo, a researcher at Food Quality and Design, wanted to use turmeric to combat malnutrition in her home country, Nigeria. She added turmeric root to two popular drinks sold by street vendors: zobo and soya milk. Zobo is made by boiling the calyx of the roselle plant (*Hibiscus sabdariffa*) in water.

Boiled zobo with two per cent turmeric contains much more vitamin C, which is surprising because turmeric itself does not contain any vitamin C. Boiling may release precursors

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of vitamin C from the turmeric, which may then react with other compounds in the zobo to produce vitamin C.

Idowu-Adebayo also showed that soya milk

is a better carrier of turmeric antioxidants than cow's milk. So a plant-based variant of 'golden milk' (milk with turmeric) may have more health benefits than the animal-based variant.

Additional benefits

Both studies point to the effect of the food matrix: the combination of ingredients in a food product influences the health benefits from the individual ingredients. Ingredients can strengthen one another. Idowu-Adebayo advocates further study of such influences. 'Then researchers may find the scientific evidence for the purported health benefits of turmeric, claimed since ancient times.' ss