

ABSTRACT

Food Preservation before Refrigeration in Jamaica

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This paper explores the methods of food preservation and the types of food preserved in Jamaica over the more than five centuries of its recorded history. The methods used by the major groups that have made up the Jamaican people - Tainos, Europeans, Africans, Chinese and East Indians - are examined.

We seek to find out, through a review of food preservation practices, how the five centuries of cultural interaction have affected our eating habits. Related issues such as whether the spices traditionally used to preserve foods truly have preserving qualities are also explored. The role and influence of the Jamaica Welfare Limited is indicated and in addition, utensils and implements used in the food preservation process are highlighted.

Primary sources included interviews of persons from various parishes across Jamaica, as well as the use of the Jamaica Memory Bank's tapes. Descriptions of the lifestyle of the people of Jamaica, written by travellers and residents, were also consulted. A wide range of books and journals, as secondary sources, also provided useful information.

The study indicates that the knowledge and practice of food preservation has always been considered necessary, and has influenced our preferences although many of the techniques still remain outside of the printed word and continue to be transmitted orally or through demonstration.

Keywords: Charmaine Phillipa McKenzie; Jamaica; food preservation; heritage.