

Rihaakuru

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Fishing people living on small fishing village like islands, that's the image of the Maldivian past. Every day, men would set off to sea at dawn to return at dusk with their catch and women would then attend to the freshly brought in tuna.



Photo: Lucie Mobelnikova

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Often the boats would bring in more fish than the island people could eat and before electricity and other modern amenities people preserved the excess fish by traditional means such as drying, smoking and boiling. Rihaakuru, one of the essential components of the Maldivian cuisine is one of

the many products that arose from these traditional fish preservation methods.

Rihaakuru is a salty, pungent, fish-based thick paste that's either light brown or dark brown in colour. It can be kept in containers for extended periods of time, and

in the past when people's food consisted mostly of tuna, it was used as a fish substitute during times when fishing was difficult.

Making Rihaakuru

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The procedure for making Rihaakuru is a lengthy one that takes around two days. First, the tuna is continuously cooked in salted water for roughly more than twenty four hours during which the scum that keeps rising to the top is carefully removed.

Then, the cooked fish and the bones are removed from the water. Scraps of tuna found on these bones are scraped off and these are rolled by hand to make fish balls that are placed back in the water. These become the *bondi* that's found in almost all Rihaakuru. The cooked fish on the other hand are smoked or dried.

The remaining water is kept boiling over a low flame as it gets thicker and thicker, and when almost all of the water is evaporated, Rihaakuru is formed.