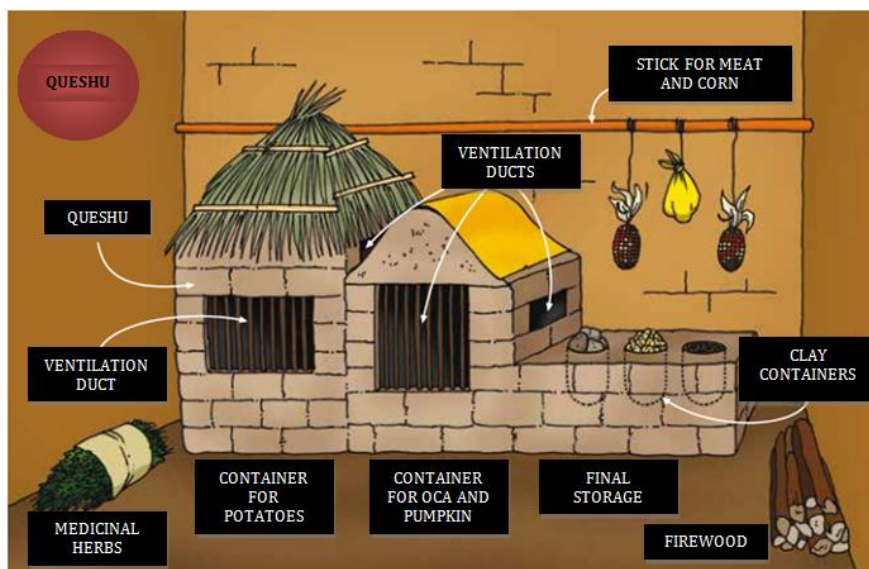


QESHU TRADITIONAL TECHNOLOGY FOR CONSERVATION AND STORAGE OF FOOD IN PERU

By Daysi Mamani Suaquita

QESHU technology for conservation and storage of food was awarded the “Best innovative practices Prize” in 2012, organized by United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction UNISDR (Regional Office for the Americas) and the European Commission Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection DG (ECHO).

Qeshu technology was rescued by women from Pariacaca community (Ancash) in the framework of Dipecho Programme supported by UNISDR and ECHO.



[Practical Solutions Peru](#) supported Pariacaca community (Ancash) to the elaboration of the [Construction Manual for nests of conservation and storage of food](#) in order to reinforce the use of wider benefits of this rescued technology by small farmers and rural communities with the aim to contribute to food conservation and storage for long periods especially during shortages and emergencies. Images of this article were taken from Practical Solutions Peru.

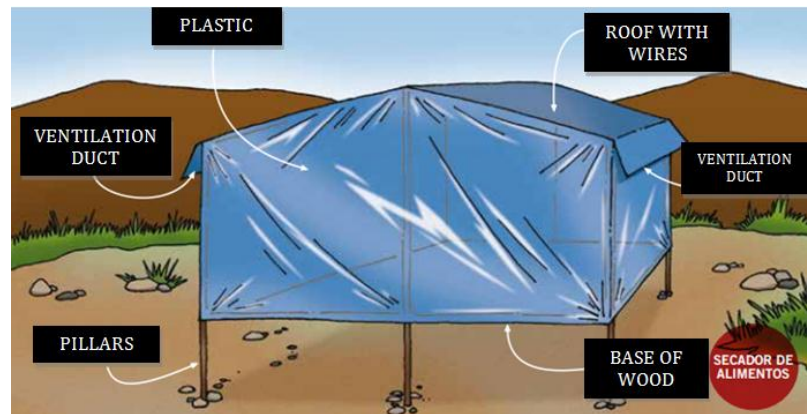
Adverse effects of climate variability such droughts, heavy precipitation, earthquakes, frosts, floods, increased temperatures and mudslides, pose significant challenges for Peruvian farmers. This uncertainty is aggravated by appearance of pests, affecting crop yields and thus food security. However, Peruvian farmers are confronting these challenges by rescuing and improving ancestral indigenous technology.

Pre-Hispanic Andean cultures managed to preserve and store their food using various technologies. The Incas created “*collcas* or *pirhuas*” made of stone and clay, and were used as common food storage containers. *Collcas* are now known as Qeshu. Corn, quinoa, potatoes, chicha (Saliva-fermented drink), salt, wood, among others, were stored in *Collcas*, as well as other goods such as objects of gold, silver, bronze and copper, clothing, weapons, ceramics, textiles, shoes, commodities, coal. Food was stored in crocks and they were able to preserve them up to



one year by using sticks, bunch grass, eucalyptus leaves and aromatic herbs like "ishumuna". *Collcas* were strategically located in places from which redistribution of stored products was controlled.

Currently, this technology is being revalued in many Andean communities, mainly in Ancash area, especially for periods of frost, drought or disaster that may cause loss of food. The QUESHU building process includes two steps: food dehydrator and Queshu construction and implementation.



Food dehydrator

Food dehydrator will remove moisture from products and restrain various bacteria from growing and spoiling food, as well as protect them from the appearance of flies, fungi and dust because aforetime, products were dried on the floor directly exposed under sunlight which caused presence of food infesting insects. Food dehydrator should be installed 50 cm above the floor with a base of wood, wire ceiling cover with plastic and two air vents.

Queshu

Queshu must be constructed within a confined space or room, in a safe place and accessible by the community members. The structure is built with sticks, stones and adobe (Sun-dried brick made of clay and straw). It has three rooms: two for drying products (one for potatoes and the other for oca and pumpkin) and one for final storage. When the structure is ready, the inner walls are covered with red and yellow clay to generate a suitable microclimate and be waterproof. After one week, walls should be covered with a mixture of straw, mud and small stones. The materials for Queshu building are locally available: Sticks, stones and mud; Cal for disinfection and Sawdust to avoid presence of insects.

Finally, nowadays many Andean communities are solving problems of food insecurity through traditional and ancestral technology. This initiative increases the value of ancestral knowledge and promotes a sustainable innovation, which could be applied for other communities in different parts of the world.



To know more

[Manual Soluciones Prácticas Perú](#)

http://www.eird.org/wikiesp/Queshu_Pariacaca_Ancash.pdf

[Video in stafaband.info](#)

[Video in youtube.com](#)

[Dipecho Programme](#)