

THE COOKING COMPETITION CATASTROPHE

A Short Film Script

Genre: Comedy

Setting: Kumbakonam Village, Kerala, India

Duration: 15-20 minutes

CHARACTER LIST

KAMALA AMMA (60s) - Spirited mother-in-law, known for her prize-winning fish curry. Lives in the blue house.

SUSHILA AMMA (50s) - Competitive mother-in-law, famous for her payasam. Lives in the yellow house next door.

RAVI (30s) - Kamala's son, software engineer, caught between the two women.

MEERA (28) - Sushila's daughter-in-law, pregnant, trying to keep peace.

KRISHNAN UNCLE (70s) - Village elder and reluctant head judge.

POSTMAN BIJU (40s) - Village postman who becomes an unwilling judge.

SUMA TEACHER (45s) - Local school teacher, third judge.

VARIOUS VILLAGERS - Neighborhood audience

FADE IN:

EXT. KUMBAKONAM VILLAGE - MORNING

A typical Kerala village. Coconut palms sway gently. Traditional houses with red-tiled roofs line the narrow road. Roosters crow in the distance.

INT. KAMALA'S KITCHEN - MORNING

KAMALA AMMA (60s), a sprightly woman in a cotton saree, grinds spices on a stone grinder. The aroma fills the kitchen.

KAMALA

(to herself)

Thirty years... thirty years I've been making the best fish curry in this village.

INT. SUSHILA'S KITCHEN - SAME TIME

SUSHILA AMMA (50s), wearing a crisp handloom saree, stirs a pot of bubbling payasam. She tastes it with satisfaction.

SUSHILA

(smiling)

Perfect. Just like amma taught me.

EXT. VILLAGE SQUARE - DAY

A colorful banner reads: "KUMBAKONAM VILLAGE ANNUAL COOKING COMPETITION - SATURDAY 2 PM"

Villagers gather around a notice board. KRISHNAN UNCLE (70s) posts the rules.

KRISHNAN UNCLE

(reading aloud)

"Traditional Kerala dish only. One hour time limit. Three judges will decide the winner."

Kamala and Sushila arrive simultaneously from opposite directions, eyeing each other.

KAMALA

(sweetly)

Oh Sushila, you're participating? How... brave.

SUSHILA

(equally sweet)

Well, someone has to give you some competition, Kamala chechi.

The crowd senses tension.

INT. RAVI'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

RAVI (30s), in casual clothes, sits at his laptop. MEERA (28), visibly pregnant, enters looking worried.

MEERA

Ravi, your mother and my mother-in-law are going to kill each other over this cooking competition.

RAVI

(not looking up)

Amma's fish curry will win. It always does.

MEERA

That's not the point! They've been neighbors for twenty years. This is getting out of hand.

EXT. KAMALA'S BACKYARD - DAY

Kamala examines her curry leaves, plucking the best ones. She notices Sushila watching from her window.

KAMALA

(loud enough for Sushila to hear)

These curry leaves are so fresh. Picked this morning from my own tree.

EXT. SUSHILA'S BACKYARD - CONTINUOUS

Sushila waters her coconut palm dramatically.

SUSHILA

(equally loud)

My coconuts are the sweetest in the village. Perfect for fresh coconut milk.

INT. VILLAGE PROVISION STORE - DAY

Both women arrive at the small store simultaneously. The SHOPKEEPER looks nervous.

KAMALA

I need your best tamarind.

SUSHILA

I need your best jaggery.

SHOPKEEPER

(sweating)

Uh... we have both...

They circle each other like cats, examining vegetables.

KAMALA

(picking up ginger)

This ginger looks fresh.

SUSHILA

(snatching it)

I saw it first.

KAMALA

(grabbing it back)

I was already holding it!

The SHOPKEEPER intervenes quickly.

SHOPKEEPER

Ladies, ladies! I have plenty of ginger for everyone!

EXT. VILLAGE SQUARE - COMPETITION DAY - AFTERNOON

Makeshift cooking stations are set up. Villagers gather in a circle. KRISHNAN UNCLE, POSTMAN BIJU, and SUMA TEACHER sit at the judges' table.

KRISHNAN UNCLE

(into a megaphone)

Welcome to our annual cooking competition! Today we have... (dramatic pause)

Only two contestants!

The crowd murmurs. Kamala and Sushila take their positions at opposite ends.

KRISHNAN UNCLE (CONT'D)

You have one hour to prepare your dish. And... begin!

MONTAGE - THE COOKING BEGINS

- Kamala starts cleaning fish with expert precision
- Sushila begins grating coconut rhythmically
- Both women work efficiently, occasionally glancing at each other
- The crowd watches like a tennis match

INT. KAMALA'S COOKING STATION - 20 MINUTES IN

Kamala's fish curry is taking shape. She reaches for her spice box, but it's empty of turmeric.

KAMALA

(panicked whisper)

Where's my turmeric?

She looks around desperately, then notices turmeric powder suspiciously scattered near Sushila's station.

INT. SUSHILA'S COOKING STATION - SAME TIME

Sushila's payasam is cooking beautifully. She reaches for her cardamom, but the container is empty.

SUSHILA

(shocked)

My cardamom!

She spots cardamom pods near Kamala's station.

The women lock eyes across the cooking area.

THE SABOTAGE ESCALATES

MONTAGE - THE SECRET INGREDIENT WAR

- Kamala sneaks dried chilies into Sushila's payasam
- Sushila adds salt to Kamala's curry (extra salt)
- Kamala puts soap powder in Sushila's coconut milk
- Sushila adds toothpaste to Kamala's tamarind water
- The crowd watches, unaware, as the women smile sweetly while cooking

INT. COOKING AREA - 45 MINUTES IN

Both dishes are nearly ready. The sabotage continues:

- Kamala adds hair oil to Sushila's ghee
- Sushila puts washing powder in Kamala's coconut oil
- Kamala adds mosquito coil ash to Sushila's jaggery
- Sushila puts shampoo in Kamala's curry leaves

FINAL MOMENTS

KRISHNAN UNCLE

Ten minutes remaining!

Both women frantically try to fix their dishes, tasting and looking increasingly horrified.

KAMALA

(tasting her curry, face contorting)

What the...?

SUSHILA

(tasting her payasam, eyes watering)

This is...

They look at each other, realization dawning.

THE PRESENTATION

KRISHNAN UNCLE

Time's up! Please present your dishes!

Kamala presents her fish curry with a nervous smile. Sushila presents her payasam, hands shaking slightly.

The judges approach the first dish - Kamala's curry.

KRISHNAN UNCLE

(taking a spoonful)

Mmm, this smells wonderful...

He tastes it. His face freezes. His eyes water. He starts coughing.

KRISHNAN UNCLE (CONT'D)

(choking)

Water... water...

POSTMAN BIJU and SUMA TEACHER rush to help him. The crowd murmurs with concern.

SUMA TEACHER

What's wrong with him?

POSTMAN BIJU bravely tries the curry. His reaction is immediate - he spits it out.

POSTMAN BIJU

(gagging)

This tastes like... like...

KRISHNAN UNCLE

(still coughing)

Soap! It tastes like soap!

All eyes turn to Kamala, who looks mortified.

KRISHNAN UNCLE (CONT'D)

(recovering)

Let's... let's try the payasam.

He approaches Sushila's dish cautiously. Takes a small spoonful. His face immediately scrunches up.

KRISHNAN UNCLE (CONT'D)

(spitting)

This is... salty... and... is that... toothpaste?

SUMA TEACHER tries it and immediately starts rinsing her mouth.

SUMA TEACHER

(disgusted)

What have you ladies cooked?

The crowd begins to murmur and laugh. Ravi and Meera rush forward.

THE CONFESSION

Kamala and Sushila look at each other, then at the horrified judges, then at the amused crowd.

KAMALA

(quietly)

I may have... accidentally... added some extra ingredients.

SUSHILA

(equally quiet)

So did I.

RAVI

(confused)

What kind of extra ingredients?

KAMALA

(sheepishly)

Well... I thought she was trying to sabotage my curry...

SUSHILA

(defensive)

She started it! She put something in my payasam!

MEERA

(realizing)

You both sabotaged each other's dishes?

The women nod reluctantly. The crowd bursts into laughter.

KRISHNAN UNCLE

(still recovering)

In sixty years of judging competitions, I have never...

POSTMAN BIJU

(laughing)

This is the first time I've tasted shampoo curry!

SUMA TEACHER

And washing powder payasam!

THE RESOLUTION

The laughter is infectious. Even Kamala and Sushila begin to see the humor in the situation.

VILLAGER 1

What do we do now? We have no winner!

KRISHNAN UNCLE

(thinking)

Well... technically... both dishes are equally... inedible.

MEERA

(stepping forward)

Why don't we declare it a tie? And maybe... next year... we can have a rule about keeping ingredients... pure?

The crowd laughs and applauds.

KAMALA

(to Sushila)

I'm sorry. I got carried away.

SUSHILA

(smiling)

Me too. Your fish curry... before the soap... it smelled wonderful.

KAMALA

And your payasam... before the salt... looked perfect.

They look at each other and start laughing.

KRISHNAN UNCLE

(announcing)

I declare this year's competition a tie! And next year... we're having separate cooking areas!

The crowd cheers and laughs.

EXT. VILLAGE SQUARE - EVENING

The competition area is being cleaned up. Kamala and Sushila sit together on a bench, sharing a banana.

SUSHILA

You know, I've always wondered about your fish curry secret.

KAMALA

(smiling)

I use a pinch of fennel powder. Just a pinch.

SUSHILA

Really? I add a few drops of coconut vinegar to my payasam.

KAMALA

Coconut vinegar! That's brilliant!

RAVI

(approaching with Meera)

So... friends again?

MEERA

The baby was kicking so much during the competition. I think it was laughing too.

KAMALA

(patting Meera's belly)

Smart baby. Knows when the adults are being silly.

SUSHILA

Next year, let's cook together. Show these youngsters how it's really done.

KAMALA

Deal. But no more soap ingredients.

SUSHILA

No more toothpaste either.

They shake hands as the sun sets behind the coconut palms.

FADE OUT.**THE END**

PRODUCTION NOTES:**Key Props Needed:**

- Traditional Kerala cooking utensils
- Spice boxes and ingredients
- Soap, shampoo, toothpaste (for sabotage scenes)
- Makeshift cooking stations
- Village square setup

Casting Notes:

- Both lead actresses should have strong comedy timing
- Natural Malayalam speakers preferred for authenticity
- Supporting cast from local community

Cultural Authenticity:

- Traditional Kerala cooking methods showcased
- Authentic village setting and customs
- Malayalam phrases and expressions integrated naturally
- Proper representation of neighbor relationships in Kerala villages

Technical Requirements:

- Close-up shots for cooking sequences
- Reaction shots for taste-testing scenes
- Wide shots to capture village atmosphere
- Sound design for cooking sounds and village ambiance