

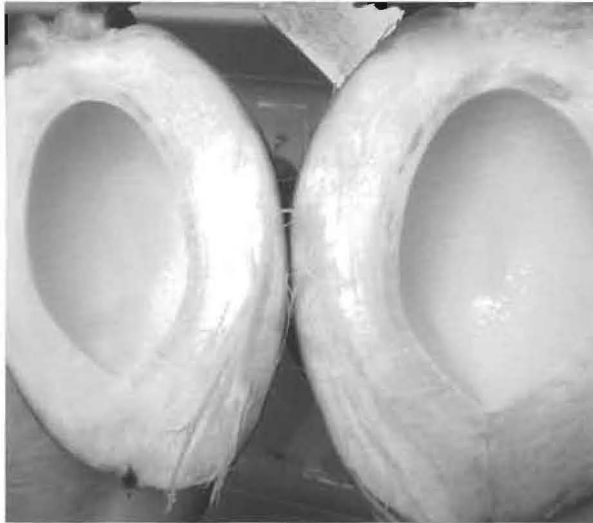
Sweet Husk Type Coconut from the Bay Islands

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Coconut is a versatile crop that has been an integral component of ancient and modern lifestyles of human being. It is regarded as one of the unique species possessing nutritional, religious and socio-economic significance. The economy of a number of small tropical islands of the world is largely dependent on coconut and allied industries. It is not necessary to reiterate the multifaceted applications of this crop. A number of morphologically distinct types are found in coconut, which could diversify the product range apart from the existing popularly exploited forms such as tender coconut water, copra, oil, virgin coconut oil and other value added products. Such unique types include those with soft endosperm, fragrant endosperm and sweet husks. A sweet husk

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The sweet husk type coconut found in the Bay Island is characterized by soft edible husk which can be eaten in the raw form
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type coconut was observed in the Bay Islands, which is characterized by its soft edible husk. Yes, the husk could be eaten in raw form like any tropical fruit!

Outer covering in coconut is commonly known as husk, which is bitter and tough during younger stages. Upon maturity the fruits turn dry with considerable amount of fibres, which are used for making coir based by-products. However, in some parts of the world, exceptional palms have been reported to have softer, less fibrous husk that could be chewed like sugarcane. These phenotypes are popularly known as sweet husk or edible husk types. Available reports suggested that such types have been identified from various places including Pacific islands, Thailand, Sri Lanka, Micronesia etc. In many of these places, the husk is consumed both in raw and processed forms.



During regular visits to the farmers' fields, one edible husk coconut type was noticed in the fields of Mr. Shyamal Chandra Halder. Mr. Halder is a 63 years old farmer engaged in farming profession for past 25 years from the North and Middle Andaman district of Andaman and Nicobar Islands. His family settled in the islands since 1965 and his father introduced a few nuts of this type from their ancestral village

in Bangladesh during 1974. At present, two yielding palms are maintained in his home garden in the islands.

At his farm, he offered the author sliced husk that could be eaten as such with good palatability. Husk from fully dried nuts remained comparatively softer than those obtained from ordinary palms. Further, it was also observed that the mesocarp lost its sweet taste and soft texture were developed during later stages of fruit development. No distinct change in taste and quality was observed during different seasons.

Mr. Halder is proud of this unique possession and local people are showing their interest in cultivating this type. Sensing the future requirements, he has already collected seednuts from those palms and few more seedlings have been recently planted for area expansion. Such types are rare and hence need to be conserved for their possible utilization in future.

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