

# Ball copra



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**C**opra is the dried coconut kernel made from fully matured (12 months) freshly harvested and stored nuts. The copra made in India may be classified into two groups, edible and milling. The edible copra is the superior class copra which is used for various food preparations and also is eaten raw, while the milling copra is used for extraction of coconut oil. The edible copra is made both in the form of balls and cups while milling copra is extracted form of cups only. Ball copra is soft, sweet, oily and cream coloured. In India, manufacturers of ball copra is mainly concentrated in the states of Karnataka, Kerala and and to a limited extent in Lakshadweep, Andaman and Nicobar Islands and also in some parts of Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh. In North India, particularly during the winter and festival seasons there

is heavy demand for ball copra. Government of India has increased the MSP for ball copra to Rs 10,600 per quintal (2021) from Rs 10,300 per quintal (2020).

Ball copra is made from fully matured, i.e. 11-12 month old nuts. Fully mature nuts after harvest are stored with the husk in a shed for a period of 9-12 months. Specially constructed platforms higher than the ground level are used for storing the nuts. Normally, the bamboo or any

wooden platform made across the trusses supporting the roof of the shed is set under the platform to hasten the process of drying. The water inside the nut slowly gets absorbed into the kernel and the kernel gets detached from the shell after a period of 9-11 months. At this stage a rattling sound can be heard while shaking the nuts. The nuts are then removed from the storage and dehusked. The shell is broken and removed piece by piece using an iron knife. This copra will be in the form of balls which is very clean and hygienic and very sweet in taste.

Ball copra is also prepared by drying coconut with artificial heat. The nuts are first kept in a two- storeyed structure. The floor and four sides of the building are made of wooden rafters fixed 3-4 inch apart and depending on the space requirement, the size of

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the store room is determined. The nuts are stored for a period of 8- 12 months. The nuts are smoked with a slow fire on the ground floor of the store. This process will continue until the kernels are fully dried and detached from the shell. The nuts are kept in the store for some more time and then husked, shelled and ball copra is removed in the case of smoke drying different lots of nuts are kept in compartments separated by means of wooden planks in between. But in the ordinary method of drying they are placed in one compartment. The method adopted for drying and the period of drying depends on the season and the quality of copra to be made and varies to some extent in different localities. Coconut shell and coconut husk are used for heating or smoking nuts to hasten the drying process.

Evaluation of different coconut varieties for ball copra production indicated that early germinating varieties are not suitable for this purpose owing to the spoilage under storage. The variety Tiptur Tall was found better for this purpose as the size of the ball copra is optimum for drying and Laccadive Micro Tall is the best for this purpose however with small balls. The weather conditions prevailing in the maidan tract of Karnataka is suitable for ball copra production (Dry weather with Low RH, Low Rainfall and high temperature). The germination inside the storage chambers are almost absent at these places whereas upto 60 % spoilage (due to germination and rotting) has been observed under coastal conditions at Kasaragod with other varieties. The ball copra has good market mostly in northern India where the availability of fresh coconuts are difficult. Quality wise, ball copra is sweeter and has more shelf life.

Several grades and qualities of ball copra are recognized in the trade circles. These are mainly named after the places where the ball copra is made or after the names of the markets in which different grades or qualities are in demand. The ball copra is mainly graded according to the size, weight, colour and cleanliness. Three grades of ball copra are available on weight basis, viz., large, medium and small depending on the numbers of copra required for a weight of 4 kg (< 20 for large, 20 - 40 for medium and > 40 for small). The moisture content shall in all cases be below 7 %. The copra is classified into different grades according to size by visual assessment only and not by any definite size criteria. Details of different grades and important markets are given in Table 1 and 2.

Table .1 Ball copra grades and Major marke

States	Grades	Market
Karnataka	Mysore, Madras, Ras and Barik	Tiptur and Mangalore
Tamil Nadu	Dil pasand, Office copra, Kola copra, Kamal copra or Kachal copra	Thanjavur
Kerala	Calicut copra	Badagra and Calicut
Andhra Pradesh	Madras	Ambajipeta
Grade designation and definitions of quality of ball copra for edible use		
Grade	Size (Diameter) in mm	Foreign matter % by weight maximum
Grade 1	85	0.2
Grade II	75	0.2
Grade III	60	0.2
<small>(Source: WDRA, New Delhi)</small>		

### Note

- Foreign matters includes sand, dust, straw and shell
- Mould and black kernels includes balls in which more than 5 % of the inner surface is covered with mould and /or is dark brown to black in colour
- Wrinkled kernels include balls that are shrunk out of normal shape or are not fully matured or developed or have a rubbery structure and uneven surface. Such kernels are often discoloured
- Chips include pieces of kernel which are smaller in size

Ball copra produce in the Lakshadweep Island is comparatively smaller in size as compared to the copra from the main land but considered as very superior and fetches a premium price in the main land markets. Almost the entire quantity of ball copra produced in Karnataka is disposed off at Tiptur market which is the biggest market for ball copra in India. Ease of transportation and huge demand in North India are said to be the two important factors that have made the Tiptur market buoyant.

Ball copra is generally packed in gunny bags. Polythene lined bags are often used for extra protection against insect damage. Ball copra is mainly consumed in North Indian states where coconut is not grown and where it is economical to transport copra rather than coconuts. The copra besides being eaten raw as such or mixed with other dry fruits is used in the preparation of sweets for a garnishing in many dishes. It is also used as religious offerings and is an essential item during ceremonial occasions. ■