

# Kerala's Tender Coconut in new Avatar for Export

CDB News Bureau, Kochi

Tender coconut from the traditional coconut belt of Palakkad in Kerala has become a shining star in the export basket of coconut products. Minimal processing was the technology so far used for processing raw tender coconut for export. Since the recent introduction of Polishing Technology for processing of tender coconut, Kerala's tender nuts have become a premium and much sought after product in the export market.

Muhammed Shajahan, a young entrepreneur from Malapuram district in Kerala was exporting minimally processed tender coconut. Now he has refined the technology and the value added tender nuts processed through the Polishing Technology are being exported to various international markets.

Shajahan was working in Saudi Arabia and Dubai in computer networking for around five years. He has personally seen the high demand for minimally processed tender nut imported from Thailand in the super markets both in Saudi Arabia and Dubai.

**Shajahan's product is available in many cities in Kerala. While the minimally processed nuts are having a shelf life of one month in refrigerated condition, nuts using Polishing Process are having a shelf life of seven days in open air and 15 days under refrigerated condition. The trade name of the product is Coco Tree.**

A tender coconut was costing 12 Dirham (around Rs. 216) while Indian tender coconut was sold @15 dirham during those days. This was because of the better taste and higher water content of the tender coconut from Kerala especially from Attapaadi, Kozhinjampra, Meenakshipuram areas. This knowledge prompted Shajahan to start a tender coconut Minimal Processing unit. Initially he purchased two machines and started a unit attached to his house. Tender nuts were purchased from Malappuram district which were processed and exported with the export license of one his friends.

In due course, Shajahan refined the very concept of Minimal Processing technology and started using Polishing Technology developed by a team of scientists. Only nine minimally processed tender coconuts can be packed in a single carton for export. The price of a nut is around Rs. 40. Each nut weighs around 1.200 gm whereas the nuts processed using Polishing Technology weighs only around 700 gm and nearly 50 nuts can be accommodated in a single carton for export. These nuts cost around Rs. 95 per nut. The cartons are packed and exported in iced thermocol boxes. This poses the advantage for the unit to export 50 nuts at the cost of packing and sending only nine nuts.





Shjahan is presently procuring tender nuts from the farmers of Plakkad district. He has employed two agents for purchase who personally visit the gardens and purchase the nuts directly from the farmers. The nuts are brought to Bangalore for doing the Polishing process. The processed nuts are directly sent from Bangalore to various destinations. The first plant at Melattor was set up by investing around Rs. 15 lakhs and the new plant at Bangalore was set up at a cost of around Rs. 60 lakhs. Tender coconuts are brought to the processing unit on a large scale from Maddur, Pollachi etc.

The technology of polishing is developed by 'Niranthara' with the expertise of a team of scientists and this is the only unit using the technology. The processing is done at the unit for other tender coconut units also against a nominal service charge. Shajahan is willing to offer his services from procurement to processing and also export to other interested entrepreneurs.

Usually seven to eight month matured nuts are used for Polishing Process. Unfortunately most often the purchased tender nuts are more mature with which the processing cannot be done successfully. Such nuts are sold as raw tender nut itself.

Presently Shajahan is exporting the processed nuts to Oman and is planning to export to Dubai now. Shajahan's product is available in many cities in Kerala. While the minimally processed nuts are having a shelf life of one month in refrigerated condition, nuts using Polishing process are having shelf life of seven days in open air and 15 days under refrigerated condition. The trade name of the product is Coco Tree and the products are traded under the license of Tash Exin Co.

Tender coconuts purchased directly from the farmers are brought to his unit in Bangalore in 12 hours time. Initially the nuts are thoroughly washed



and then the outer cover fibre is completely removed with the help of an automated machine. Later on the nuts are dipped in a chemical solution for 7-8 minutes as is done in the case of minimal processing which is for keeping the original colour of the nut. Then a three layer padding is done with poletrene paper, thermocol net and plastic net and is labelled and packed in thermocol boxes filled with ice. The product is ready for sale both in the domestic and export market. Apart from Kerala, Coco Tree products are marketed in Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan and Delhi.

Shajahan is planning to set up a new plant in Kerala soon. He is available @ 9048799800 ■