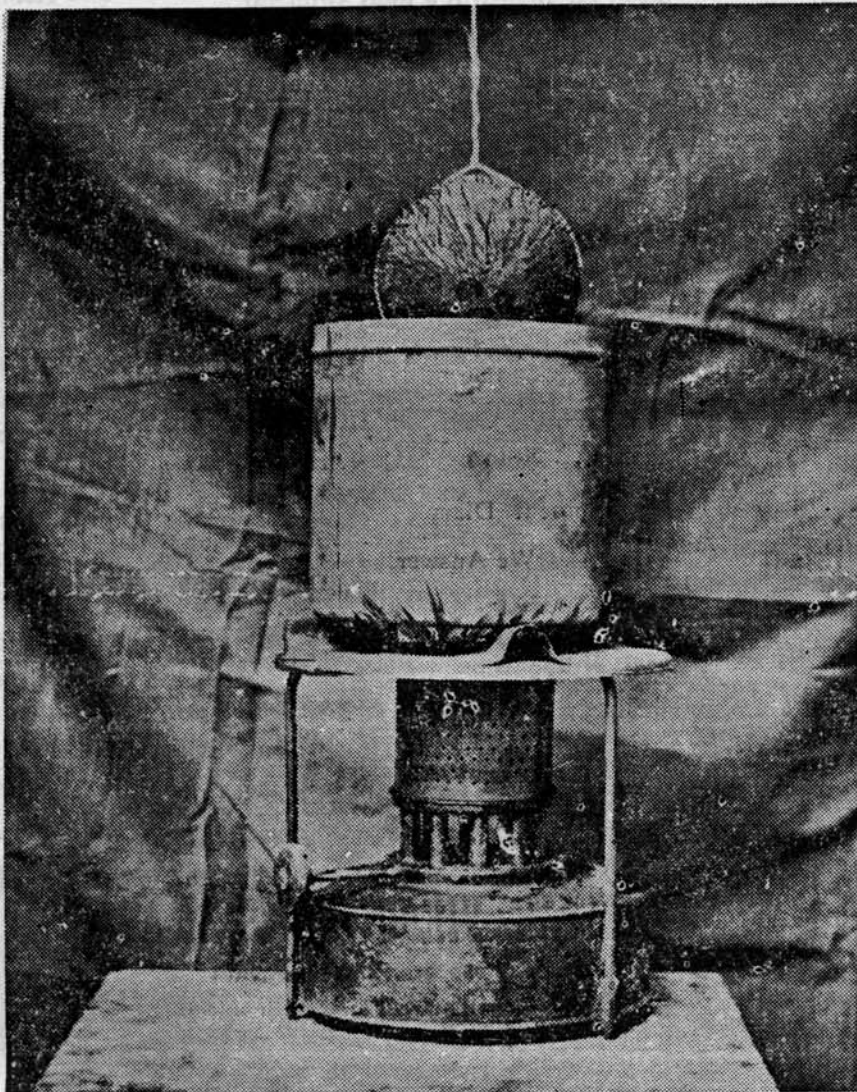


# HOW TO PRESERVE FRESH COCONUTS FOR HOUSEHOLD USE

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Stopping surplus nuts stored for the future from turning stale has been a perpetual problem with the housewife. But no longer is she destined to combat it unaided. Here are a few tips that can take care of her worry.



Dipping the nut in molten paraffin wax.

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The mature coconuts are used for copra making, for edible purposes as fresh kernel, for religious purposes and for raising seedlings. Coconuts are also given as presents in token of friendship, homage, respect or good will on the occasion of Hindu marriages and other ceremonies.

It has been estimated from a recent survey conducted in the different coconut-growing states of India that 25 per cent of coconuts produced by Indian growers are used as fresh nuts.

Fresh nuts reach the consumer in unhusked, partly husked, tufted (husked completely leaving a small fibrous "tuft" over the three eyes of the nut intact) or fully husked condition.

Ripe coconut when harvested and kept in storage gradually loses its water inside until the kernel gets separated from the shell and begins to rattle. Gradually, the kernel becomes hard, leathery and fibrous and loses its fresh taste. The dried nuts are not preferred by housewives for household consumption, particularly for culinary purposes, since the kernel is not fresh and crisp and does not permit grating to be done satisfactorily. Therefore nuts meant for household consumption have to be purchased as and when required. People especially from South India, who live in some of the North Indian States where coconut is not grown, find it difficult to get fresh nuts for their household use since the nuts stored in their house get dried up in a few weeks time. In big cities like Bombay where large number of coconuts are handled in

is found difficult to cope with the demand for fresh nuts available in the neighbourhoods. Hence nuts are transported over long distances and by the time the nut reaches the consumer gets dried up. Purchasing nuts in lots when the prices are long-term uses also does not to be an economical proposition. Because of the aforesaid any method of preserving coconuts without drying of water inside for a considerable period of time will be welcomed by the consumers and traders of coconuts.

Studies at the Central Plantation Research Institute, Kasaragod, on the storage behaviour of partly husked, tufted and fully husked fresh coconuts have led to the following conclusions of interest:-

If the period of storage is short, fortnight or so, no special precautions are necessary.

If the period of storage is for a month, it is better to store nuts in unhusked or partly husked condition.

If the period of storage is about 3 months the nuts may be stored in unhusked condition, preferably in the vertical position with the stalk end up.

Only nuts selected for storage should be fully mature with nut

water inside. They should preferably be stored in a cool place.

### Preservation of Fully Husked Nuts

Large quantities of fresh coconuts are handled in trade in fully husked condition, because the bulk gets reduced. Hence the expenditure on transport to long distance is also less.

The studies mentioned above showed that fully husked nuts if stored under ordinary conditions for more than a fortnight get dried up and the kernel becomes hard and leathery and loses its fresh taste. The storage of nuts in sand also does not remedy matters. Among the other methods of storage investigated viz. coating the nuts with molten paraffin wax, coating with shellac preparations and storing in alkathene bags, coating the nut with commercial grade of paraffin wax has been proved to be most effective and suitable for the purpose. The main advantages of this process are that it is simple, cheap, and on a small scale the housewives themselves can do this with the facilities ordinarily available in the kitchen.

### Process of Paraffin wax Coating

Completely remove the husk from fully mature fresh nuts, including prominent protruding fibres if any. Take sufficient

quantity of paraffin wax of low melting point in a container preferably of metal. Any empty tin can of 2 kg. capacity can be used for the purpose. Place the paraffin in the container and melt it over a stove or heater under low temperature (about 70° C).

Tie the nut with a piece of twine and dip it in the molten paraffin for a few seconds and lift it. After another few seconds when the paraffin gets hardened dip it once again in the paraffin. This process may be repeated for each nut one by one. Store the treated nuts in a well ventilated place at room temperature.

The treated nuts can be stored with the water inside for a period of eight months with two coatings of paraffin. The storage life of the nut can be increased by giving more number of paraffin coatings. The kernel will retain its freshness all through the storage period without any change in taste.

The cost of treating 100 nuts on a small scale inclusive of labour charges worked out to about Rs. 4.00 for giving two coats and Rs. 5.00 for giving four coats. The cost can be reduced by about half if the members of the families themselves can do this and the paraffin wax used for treating the nuts are recovered from the shells of the consumed nuts.