

More remuneration for coconut growers

Neera elixir for all ages

Move over coconut water, new Neera high energy drink promises to be the next big health beverage in Goa, reports **Michael Fisher**

Super-hydrating coconut water may have been the undefeated health drink. But this year, it is Neera - the Sapo extracted from the coconut spade called kalpasara - or the flower head of the coconut plant - that looks set to overtake all natural sweet energy brand drinks in the popularity stakes.

Thanks to its array of potential health and beauty benefits, the Neera named by its bolder Manukalparasa of the Nano Enterprises Group, contains lots of important, organic occurring nutrients, such as antioxidant vitamins C, riboflavin, potassium, immune system-boosting zinc, and copper - thought to have anti-ageing benefits and that too the drink is for all ages.

This light brownish sap is tapped from the coconut tree's spade where the bonho comes, but instead the Neera is tapped out. Neera is not new, it is a very popular drink in Kerala, says Nano Enterprises director and engineer Pravas Naik.

Credited with helping a range of maladies, from high cholesterol to flu, kidney stones, headaches, acoma, and colitis, the Neera drink is also considered to have powerful hydrating and detoxifying effects. But what, exactly, is in this Neera (sap/elixir) and why does it have such an impressive reputation? According to Pravas, the basic nutritional profile of Neera drink is very similar to its cousin the coconut water - but contains several impressive nutritional extracts. It is also infused with natural sugars, protective antioxidant vitamins, hydrating electrolytes, invariants like potassium that



Pravas Naik

help the body to rehydrate itself and trace minerals such as copper, calcium, zinc and magnesium. Unlike coconut water, Neera also contains compounds called powerful cholesterol-reducing properties.

At the Nano farm in Colomb the sap is collected by traditional methods in lime coated earthen pots are partially fermented and gets contaminated by insects, ants, pollen and dust particles, which becomes unhygienic for intake. In order to prevent its misuse as an alcoholic drink the tapping and marketing of Neera was brought under the purview of excise department and its sale was restricted.

However, now there are technologies available to collect unfermented Neera. The 'Coco sap chiller' developed by the Central Plantation Cooconut Institute (CPCI) not only ensures that the collected sap is fresh and non-alcoholic but also free from dust, pollen and other contaminants. It is free from and fermenting agents also, explains Pravas.

This organic drink is an alternative to aerated waters with chemi-

cals. The cultivate before tapping coconut produces 12 to 14 litres (approximately) a year, on an average one a month. The owner of a coconut tree can earn Rs.1,500 a year from one spade which can produce 1.5 liter a day.

A tender nut requires 6 to 8 months while, mature nut takes almost a complete year for its maturity. Giving an example of reasonably high water content of 500 ml from per tender coconut its equivalent is 10 to 12.5 per liter from a spade.

Instead of tender coconut, if the same unopened spade is tapped for sap it can produce 60 to 67.5 liters of sap in a period of just 40 to 45 days at a conservative yield of 1.5 liter a day.

The Central Plantation Cooconut Research Institute, Kavaratti, Kerala signed a Memorandum of Agreement with Krishna Plantations Pvt Ltd for acquiring the technology and know-how to collect fresh and hygienic Neera from coconut palms and to market the same as 'Navkalparasa'. It also acquired the technology for producing natural coconut sugar, jaggery and honey.

Biochemical Parameters Contents	
pH	7.18
Total sugar (g/l)	15.18
Reducing sugar (g/l)	0.554
Amino acids (g/l)	0.245
Protein (g/l)	0.2165
Phenolics (mg)	5.10
Antioxidant activity (DPPH)	0.321
Sodium (mg)	90.60
Potassium (mg)	166.84
Phosphorus (mg)	003.9
Magnesium (mg)	0.012
Copper (mg)	0.031
Zinc (mg)	0.020
Iron (mg)	0.053

enter into this venture by supplying sap to increase their remuneration and they can also take up retailing in the village providing the high energy Neera drink to the tourist and the people of Goa.

Kalparasa Neera will be the first fresh hygienic and unfermented sap extracted from inflorescence of coconut palms. It is a natural non-alcoholic beverage, high in nutritional value and is an instant thirst quencher.

The most significant characteristics of the product is its high percentage of sodium, potassium, iron, zinc, several other minerals, vitamins, amino acids, antioxidants and sugar. This ensures that the person taking Kalparasa will feel rejuvenated within minutes, thus making it a perfect health drink.

The Nano farm has acquired the technologies to collect unfermented Neera. The 'Coco sap chiller' developed by CPCI not only ensures that the collected sap is fresh and non-alcoholic but also free from dust, pollen and other contaminants. It is free from anti-fermenting agents also.

As a fresh juice it is being sold at the rate of Rs. 125 per litre in Kerala and Karnataka. Apart from assuring stable and lucrative income to the coconut farmer, switching to Neera tapping provides multiple advantages to economy, environment, farmer and consumer.

Coco sap chiller developed by CPCI



Demonstration of Neera extraction and the strecher machine for coconut Neera and leaves was displayed by Krishna Plantation Pvt. Ltd at the Nano's farm.

"We will start commercial production in 200 ml bottles in October. Sap will be extracted from 100 coconut trees after the monsoon," declared Mr Pravas. A call has gone out to coconut tree owners and growers to

Vitamins	Value (mg/100 ml)
Thiamine	77.00
Riboflavin	12.20
Pyridoxal	38.40
Nicotinic acid	40.60
Inositol	127.70
Choline	9.90
Vitamin C	17.5

coconut spade



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