

Neera - a healthy natural drink.

Neera is a sap extracted before sunrise generally from the inflorescence of coconut palm. It is also called sweet toddy or palm nectar, but is different from toddy which is also extracted from coconut palm. Neera is sweet, white in colour and translucent. It gets fermented in a few hours after extraction at ambient temperature. On fermentation neera becomes toddy.

Neera is popular in many parts of India, Srilanka, Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand, Myanmar and Africa as a delicious drink of high nutritive value of delicious taste and agreeable flavour. Chemical nature of neera varies depending on a multiple of factors like season, mode of collection, type of palm, place etc.

Coconut and sago palms develop outspaths during flowering season. When these spathes are tapped, exudation of the juice begins. In date palm, the trunk of the tree is tapped for neera in the morning, normally before sunrise in earthen pots or vessels. It is transferred to large stainless steel containers or vessels. It is then filtered through fine mesh and is then distributed for marketing. Any portion that has fermented becomes toddy containing 4% alcohol and is discarded.

Neera, when extracted from the palm has inherent nature of getting fermented fast, especially at higher temperature. Hence it has to be treated with some preservative without giving chance for fermentation. National chemical laboratory has developed a special filtration technique to enhance shelf life of neera. Central Food Technological Research Institute, Mysore has also contributed towards developing technologies for processing and preservation of neera.

➤ Composition of neera:

Neera is rich in carbohydrates, in the form of sucrose mainly and has specific gravity in the range of 1.058 to 1.077. Generally it is neutral in pH. Sucrose



content varies from 12.3 to 17.4 gm per 100 ml and contains 0.23 to 0.32 gms of protein per 100 ml of the drink. Ascorbic acid content is in the range of 0.016 to 0.03 gm per 100 ml of neera. Total solid content is 15.2 to 19.7 gm per 100 ml and has ash content in the range of 0.11 to 0.41 gms per 100ml. It contains several minerals, salts, riboflavin making it a good health drink and food of mineral value. Neera helps to build body, improves digestion and keeps body system cool.

➤ Experience in other states:

Marketing initiative taken under the initiative of Khadi and village industries commission (KVIC) was of substantial help to tappers engaged in this field in Andhra Pradesh. Life of tappers in Andhra Pradesh was miserable as they could do the job hardly for five months a year and tapping was restricted only in a few districts and could hardly compete with Indian Make Foreign Liquor (IMFL) which has penetrated even into remote areas. Initiative of KVIC in promoting neera from palmyrah trees as a health drink could do a good lot in improving, the living condition of tappers in Andhra Pradesh.

Marketing neera as 'Chilled neera' turned to be very promising to the tappers and a healthy drink very much suitable in the hot climate there.

Initiative is on in Karnatka also under the auspicious of state govt to market neera from coconut palm as a sweet beverage. Horticultural dept is preparing policy for commercial production of neera. Technology developed by Central Food Technology Research Institute, Mysore is helpful in preserving neera in sachets and bottles upto two months.

Govt has already to constituted Neera Board which will monitor the quality of the beverage and various products made from it such as jiggery, candy, sugar and



Launching Neera and distribution of license inaugurated by Hon. Chief Minister Shri. Ummen Chandy:

Formal inauguration of production of 'neera' was done by Hon. Chief Minister of Kerala, Shri. Ummen Chandy at BCM college auditorium on 2nd Feb 2014. Production and marketing of 'neera' is expected to boost income of coconut farmers and the state. Coconut Development Board expects income of Rs. 1500 per palm/ month per farmers. Even if 1% of the 18 crores of coconut palms in the country is set aside for neera production, it will fetch income of Rs 5400 crores/ annum.

During the function, distribution of equipments for extraction of neera and leaf let on scientific means for extraction and processing of neera was also done.



chocolate. It will also accord approval to labels submitted by industries and come up with marketing plan. The board will have representatives of growers, Horticultural dept and Coconut Development Board.

"Padaneer" is the name by which neera is traded in Tamil Nadu. KVIC and Tamil Nadu palm products Co-operative Association promote and sell padaneer at their outlets in Tamil Nadu. Orissa state, Palmgur Cooperative Federation provide technological support in processing and production of neera and it's by products such as jaggery and candy in Orissa. 'Neera Vikri Kendra' or Neera Sale centers in Maharashtra and Gujarat States have set up at different place within these states.

Neera palm products Cooperative society had set up green kiosks that sold neera in major railway stations. Though these booths are seldom seen now, neera sales is still going on by the side of major highways in Bombay City Area.

Similar products are produced and sold in countries like Srilanka and Philippines. Escalating coconut prices has been a major concern to farmers engaged in this sector with good quality control measures and sage mode of storage and sales neera offers steady and profitable income to the farmers and labours engaged in this field and healthy nourishing drink to free of hazardous chemicals to the consumers.

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