



# COCONUT PROCESSING

## Introduction

Coconuts are very versatile and can be used to produce oil to be used in food, cooking, in making soaps and cosmetics, and as a fuel for transport. Coir from the coconut shell can be used to manufacture items such as brushes, mats filtration pads and rope.

## Small-scale processing

The coconut is cracked with a hammer or heavy knife and the shell removed.



Figure 1: Dried coconut for oil extraction. Photo credit Practical Action /Zul

Extracting the kernel can be done with hand held grating tools or mounted devices that are easier to use.

There are various kinds of grater available. The manual ones are either hand or foot operated. The number and size of grooves on the scraper affects the amount of oil that can be extracted. Grating the coconut manually is very tedious and quite hard work. If you are grating a large quantity of coconut, it may be worth investing in a small motorised grater. The amount of oil that can be extracted from the coconut is often higher when a motorised grater is used as the coconut is usually grated more finely.

The coconut kernel is dried to produce copra. Drying can be carried out by various means; direct heat smoking, direct heat smokeless drying and solar drying. The basics of food drying are explained in the Practical Action Technical Briefs; *Drying of foods*, *Solar drying* and *Tray dryers*.

Copra can be preserved through the process of sulphuring, explained in the *Drying of foods* Technical Brief

## Oil Extraction

If dried coconut is used for oil extraction, it must ground or chipped into small pieces before it is pressed. coconut meat is then to increase the surface area. This makes it easier to extract all of the oil from the flesh. If larger pieces of coconut were used, some oil would remain trapped in the middle of the flesh



Figure 2: Grating coconut with a treadle powered machine in Bangladesh. Photo credit Practical Action / Neil Cooper

Coconut oil can be used as an edible oil or for industrial uses. The oil content of coconuts is approximately 64% in the dried copra or 35% if the meat is used fresh.

Once the coconut has been grated, the oil can be extracted using one of a number of different oil presses. In many areas, oil is extracted using a 'ghanni'.

This consists of a large mortar and pestle, the mortar being fixed in the ground and the pestle being moved within the mortar by animal traction. The oil runs out of a hole in the bottom of the mortar and the cake is scooped out by hand. This method is slow and requires two animals as they tire after 3-4 hours of work. In some areas, a motorized ghanni is used.

In addition to ghanis, oil can be extracted using oil presses or oil expellers. The coconut is placed in a metal cage that has perforations in the side. A metal plunger is then used to press the coconut causing the oil to pour out of the perforations. The plunger can be moved manually or with the aid of a motor. Oil expellers are only suitable for dried coconut. They use a horizontal 'screw' which feeds the grated coconut into a barrel-shaped outer casing with perforated walls. The coconut is crushed between the screw thread and the outer casing, causing the oil to pour out through the perforations. Most expellers are power-driven. With any power-driven equipment, it is important to consider how the equipment will be repaired as it becomes worn. If this cannot be done locally, it may be very expensive, in which case manual equipment may be preferable.

Mechanical extraction can be carried out using a centrifuge. Other methods of extracting oil include enzyme extraction and solvent extraction.

### Clarifying

The crude oil will contain some of the pulp and fibre from the coconut. It also contains small quantities of water, resins, colours and bacteria, which make it darker in colour. These must be removed from the product.

The oil is heated to drive off the water and to destroy any bacteria. The other contaminants can be removed by either leaving the oil to stand for a few days until the contaminants come to the surface and can be skimmed off, or by using a clarifier. If the oil needs further clarifying it can be filtered through a funnel fitted with a fine cloth.

### Packaging

The oil should be packaged in clean, dry, sealed glass or plastic containers to prevent the oil from becoming rancid and tasting 'off'. If glass is used it should be coloured as sunlight will also cause the oil to become rancid. If the oil is packaged properly and stored in a cool place away from sunlight, it should store for six to twelve months.

### Manufacturer listing of equipment for coconut processing

Technology Consultancy Centre  
University of Science and Technology  
Kumasi  
Ghana

Tel: +233 51 60297  
Fax: +233 51 60137

Bridge Press

This machine is used for extracting oil from coconuts. Height of cage - 40cm; diameter of cage - 24.2cm. Capacity 200 coconuts in 8 hours. Power: Manual.

TinyTech Plants  
Tagore Road  
Rajkot - 360 002  
India

Tel: +91 281 2480166, 2468485, 2431086  
Fax: +91 281 2467552

Email: [tinytech@tinytechindia.com](mailto:tinytech@tinytechindia.com)

Website: <http://www.tinytechindia.com/>

Copra Cutter

Cuts and breaks coconut balls into small pieces of 12mm or less. Capacity 150 kg/hour  
Power: Electric.

Coconut Development Board  
Govt. of India  
Kera Bhavan  
Kochin - 682 011  
India  
Tel: 0484 369248/362237  
Fax: 0484 371902  
Email: [cdbkochi@x400nicgw.nic.in](mailto:cdbkochi@x400nicgw.nic.in)

- Bridge Press

This machine is used for extracting oil from coconuts. Height of cage - 40cm; diameter of cage - 24.2cm. Capacity 200 coconuts in 8 hours. Power Manual

Space Engineering Ltd.  
Nelson Mandela Road  
Dar Es Salaam  
Tanzania

- Bridge Press

This machine is used for extracting oil from coconuts. Height of cage - 40cm; diameter of cage - 24.2cm. Nuts / Oilseeds. Capacity 200 coconuts in 8 hours. Power Manual

Arai Machinery Corporation  
2-7-19, Okata  
Atsugi-Shi  
Kanagawa-Ken 243-0021  
Japan  
Tel: +81 46 2270461  
Fax: +81 46 2270463

- MM2 Screw Press

This machine can be used to separate creamed desiccated coconut into virgin coconut oil and a fine aromatic desiccated coconut. It is also used for other fruits and vegetables. Power: Electric

- Fine Grinder

This machine can be used to separate creamed desiccated coconut into virgin coconut oil and a fine aromatic desiccated coconut, as well as other fruits and vegetables. Power: Electric

## Coconut oil equipment

Women's Revolutionary Socialist Movement  
HQ  
44 Public Road  
Kitty  
Georgetown,  
Guyana

Larkai Engineering  
Community 7, P.O. Box 8388  
Tema  
Ghana  
Tel: 233 22 206809

Azad Engineering Company  
C-83  
Bulandshahar Road  
Industrial Area  
Chaziabad - 201009 (U.P.)  
India  
Tel: +91 575 700708/730122  
Fax: +91 575 702816

- Copra Cutter

Used for cutting coconuts.

Development Authority  
54 Nawala Road  
Colombo 5  
Sri Lanka  
Tel: +94 1 502503/4  
Fax: +94 1 508729

Societe de Production et d'Exploitation de  
Material de  
Traitement du Karite  
Contact M. Gadiaga Amadou  
Secteur 2  
BP 296  
Koudougou  
Burkina Faso  
Tel: 44 03 58  
Fax: 34 08 17

- Bridge Press

This machine is used for extracting oil from coconuts. Height of cage - 40cm; diameter of cage - 24.2cm. Food Groups Nuts / Oilseeds. Capacity 200 coconuts in 8 hours. Power: Manual.

Gack Engineering  
Tantra Hills, New Achimota,  
Ant / B / 016 Accra,  
P.O. Box 15883 Accra  
Ghana  
Tel: 221 21 404109/403744/403801

TAMSA Trading  
152 Sidwell Avenue,  
P.O. Box 14305,  
6061 Port Elisabeth  
South Africa

technical brief

Fax: 233 22 206809

Tel: 27 41 43 339

Fax: 27 41 411 731

Agrico Agricultural Engineers Limited  
Kaneshie  
Industrial Area,  
P.O.Box 12127  
Accra-North  
Ghana  
Tel: 233 21 228 260/236 240/228 292  
Fax: 233 21 230 481  
E-mail: [agrico@ncs.com.gh](mailto:agrico@ncs.com.gh)

### Further reading and links

- [\*Coconut Processing in the Mekong Delta\*](#) Food Chain Number 22, Jan 1998
- [\*A stirrup-operated Coconut Grater: Rural Technology Guide 6\*](#)  
Tropical Products Institute (Now called [NRI](#))
- [\*Coconut Crude – Vanuatu\*](#), Hands On : A video on making copra and the manufacture of coconut oil has been produced by the Asian and Pacific Community Secretariat. The video is aimed at improving training and farm level technology use.  
3<sup>rd</sup> Floor Wisma Bakrie Building  
Jl. Rasuna Said  
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- The Coconut Research Center  
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Colorado Springs, CO 80936  
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<http://www.coconutresearchcenter.org/>
- [CoCoMan](#) Index of coconut processing

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Website: <http://practicalaction.org/practicalanswers/>

Practical Action is a development charity with a difference. We know the simplest ideas can have the most profound, life-changing effect on poor people across the world. For over 40 years, we have been working closely with some of the world's poorest people - using simple technology to fight poverty and transform their lives for the better. We currently work in 15 countries in Africa, South Asia and Latin America.

# technical brief