Refreshing Thirst Quenchers

Posted on



King Coconut or Thambili is one of the tropical isle's abundant and favorite "thirst quenchers". This popular Sri Lankan beverage is rich in taste and nutrients and commonly used in Ayurvedic therapy. This indigenous beverage is the best choice to keep yourself hydrated and cool.



A favorite thirst quencher of the tropical island

Bunches of these rejuvenating beverages are commonly found along roadside stalls, or a mobile thambili vendor would call out "thambili…thambili" while loading a bunch of fresh king coconuts on his bicycle. The refreshing taste of thambili or king coconut is the preferred beverage of many Sri Lankans. And as such, wayside boutiques are laded with thambili is a common sight throughout the island. It is grown commercially in North Western and North Central Provinces. Yet, it is not uncommon to find at least one king coconut tree gently swaying in the gardens of many households. You would discover acres of coconut plantation in these Provinces that provide ideal growth conditions for thambili and yield a greater quantity.

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Thambili is commonly displayed along with the makeshift roadside stalls, while Kurumba, the tender green-colored coconut, is randomly found. You can request from the villagers from a coconut field to cut open the tender coconut. Unlike the thambili, the tender kurumba is a bit hard inside, where you can enjoy the slices.

A thambili can contain up to one liter of sweet water. It is cut in a fascinating procedure that requires skill. There are several ways to climb the coconut tree to cut a bunch of thambili; but the most exciting technique would be when the climber uses a jute rope. Once the climber reaches the top, he would tie a long piece of rope to the stem of a bunch of king coconut and cut it. Then the bunch of thambili is lowered to the ground, taking care not to damage the king coconuts.

For thambili, the broader side of the king coconut is cut until the white surface beneath the orange exterior is exposed. Then a small opening is made enough to either drink directly or by using a straw. After gulping the natural sweet drink, the fruit is cut into two halves, and the inside, lined with a white jelly named ‘londe’ is peeled off and relished – a delectable yet tender mouthful. Tasting the soft, fragile inner scoop is thrilling and a messy experience, but it is one of the best ways to enjoy the fruit. Another way to enjoy the sweetness is to scoop out the londe and add some lime juice, sugar, and blend to prepare a refreshing sweet drink. Thambili is rich in nutrients such a s calcium, carbohydrates, potassium, Vitamin E, and iron. At the same time, protein, fat, several enzymes, and dietary fiber are also part and parcel of the sweet beverage. As such, the health benefits derived from this natural source of wellness are abundant. It is famed throughout the isle to remedy various ailments such as kidney disorders, rashes, allergies, and much more. Further, due to the high levels of electrolytes present, it is ideal as a sports drink or during illnesses such as diarrhea to replenish the lost nutrients in the body. Adding to the long list of excellent properties of thambili, it is said that during World War II, doctors, both American and Japanese have used thambili as a substitute for saline due to its sterile properties.

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A common sight – orange-hued thambili.



Fresh bunch of kurumba.

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refreshes and invigorates the body and mind instantly, especially if battered by the sun’s harsh rays during the dry season. Revitalizing sweetness alone is not the only thing that thambili has to offer, as thambili thel or oil for hair, thambili wine, and other products can be produced from the king coconut water as well. Once the fruit is cut open, it is not thrown but used for many beneficial purposes. The coconut kernel is used to extract coconut milk and coconut oil. Coconut chips, prepared from the peeled kernel of the seasoned coconut, desiccated coconut is widely used in bakery and the confectionery industries. Coconut chips are a good source of dietary fiber. Virgin coconut oil is prepared using the white kernel of the coconut. Coconut butter, coconut cream, and coconut flour are also popular products on the island that carry an aromatic flavor. The husk can be dried and used in the coir industry, where its fibrous interior is extracted. King Coconut water is also packed and exported. There is also a wide range of exquisite, handcrafted coconut shell jewelry in earthen tones with intricate designs from pendants to chains and bangles.



Enjoy a refreshing sip of this natural goodness.



Cutting techniques require practice.



A spring of water sprouts with a small cut.



Scoop to relish the sweet and sticky londe.