COCONUT TREE

by Spyros Peter Goudas
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Can you imagine that I have been the largest importer of coconut products, e.g. Coconut Water, Coconut Milk, Coconut Powder, Shredded Coconut, Coconut Oil, etc., in Canada since the early 1970’s and I had never seen a real coconut tree until I went to Costa Rica in year 2005.

In fact, during my speech at the Cacia Organization Conference with the factory owners from Costa Rica, Nicaragua, El Salvador and Panama, I mentioned that this was the first time that I had ever seen a Coconut Tree. At this point, they all burst into laughter.

I proceeded to show them how to produce Coconut Milk and Coconut Water since they had never attempted or thought of producing such products.

One must understand that in tropical countries, Coconut Trees are everywhere, sometimes even in a person’s back or front yard. Therefore, should they need a Coconut, they simply pick one, cut off the top and drink the water; split it open and eat the soft meat (jelly) on the inside of the shell.

Residents of these countries do not need a production of Coconut Milk or any bi-products in the can. They needed someone like me, who understands and caters to the needs of multicultural societies like Canada to provide them with incentives into the production of Coconut products.

Therefore, since we do not have any Coconut Trees (only artificial ones) in Canada, I had to find a way to provide the ethnic groups with packaged Coconut products in any form.

Over the years I made investigations into the preparation of Coconut products in cans or packages.

In the initial stages, I thought it would be a good idea to produce artificial Coconut Milk in the can but it was not long after that I realized that the beautiful, original flavour of the coconut could not be duplicated or substituted.

Over a period of time, I had people of every background sampling my creation. I have seen each one spit out the product, and with indescribable expressions on their faces, I have heard words I did not understand, such as: Bombacloth and Rascloth, from Jamaicans, Trinidadians said, Shi%T man! What the hell is this? And, one Guyanese man said Skunt!

I did not know what these words meant at the time; after all, I am Greek and in my early days in Canada, I did not know much of the English language and certainly not Caribbean patois. However, I sensed they were not pleasant words and the expressions on the faces meant the artificial idea was no good!

I had to figure out where to go from here. My business was to serve the multicultural society and unless I solved the problem, I could not sleep. I had to get serious on the matter and study the Coconut Tree to the best of my ability.

I utilized my contacts in the Caribbean to provide me with shipments of fresh Coconuts for experimentation. From my knowledge of the canning industry, I knew that I needed microbiologists, seaming process engineers, tasters, evaluators, and temperature elevation for
sterilization, etc., etc.
It was a completely detailed process in
general to formulate procedures.

Obviously, all this work I had done was
not meant for production in Canada,
but to provide the knowledge and
educate a country that has a supply
of coconuts on large enough scale
that is necessary for production.

I will not go through the process in
detail, because although it seems
simple yet it is very complicated.
However, the product that ends up
in the can after the process combined
with water is what is referred to as

Coconut Milk.

My initial idea was production in a
Caribbean country since the freight is
easier and cheaper than from the Far
East, for example. However, although
they have coconuts, there is no one
area that has a big scale of production.

Therefore, I chose Sri Lanka and
Thailand. After several attempts, we
finally produced Coconut Milk in a can
for cooking purposes. When the first
container arrived, my main idea was
to get the same people to taste test.

Thankfully, the expressions on their
faces were completely different.
This time, I witnessed smiling,
approving faces and received positive
comments, recipes and suggestions
with respect to cooking. Then I knew
that I was on the right path.

I would like to emphasize to you that
Coconut Milk in the can contains
approximately 83% water and
17% coconut. This is very good
proportioning and this is what is stated
on our labels: the first ingredient is
water, the second ingredient is coconut.

After a thorough investigation into
this matter and after selecting over
20 brands available in the Canadian
market, I have realized that many
followers and imitators have produced
similar products and state on the list
of ingredients as the first and only
ingredient Coconut Milk, and never
mention the word, water, which is
totally incorrect.

Others contain only 5% coconut,
in which case you need three times
the amount of product to achieve the
flavour of the Mr. Goudas brand.

Basically, Coconut Milk is a food
henancer and is not to be consumed as
a refreshment drink. It is used in stews,
sauces, mixed in with rice,
peas or vegetables. My
Trinidadian assistant told
me in her country Coconut
Milk is added to the dough
when making their bakes
and in their Callaloo
dish, and that Jamaicans use it in their kidney (red) beans and rice. This reminds me of a fascinating story which happened to me some time ago. It is as follows:

Although I am very proud in the selection of my Coconut Milk, I received a phone call from an 85 year old lady who requested to speak to me directly because she wanted to complain about my Coconut Milk.

I thought for a moment: What did I do wrong this time? Since she did not wish to speak to anyone else, I had to respond to the call. She proceeded to state that she had bought two cases of Mr. Goudas Coconut Milk from the supermarket thinking it was a very nutritious beverage for the children. At Sunday School class, a can was given to each child. Upon opening and tasting the Coconut Milk, at the first taste of the product, all the children responded with the same: “yuck” and spit out!

She became very embarrassed in front of the children. The consensus was that it was the worst product ever.

I explained to her that Coconut Milk is not a beverage but a food enhancer. However, I felt that the explanation alone was not sufficient.

I obtained more information about the location of the Church, made arrangements the following week to send my Customer Relations Manager to the Church to present the children with Coconut Water and Pina Coladas and to explain to them the difference between the products, i.e. Coconut Milk is for cooking, not drinking.

The children had a good time, enjoyed the Coconut Water and Pina Coladas which we provided, and totally understood the difference. They all thanked the Lord for Mr. Goudas and sent me their regards.

Although the lady and the children were very happy, I thought to myself: How many people in this world are making the same mistake. At times I think of incorporating within the label the following statement: This product is for cooking only and not to be consumed as refreshment.

Since I mentioned the coconut water, I now had to develop this product and to enhance the flavour even further,
I incorporated very small pieces of young coconut jelly. Coconut water - the “wonder drink”, sweet and thirst quenching.

Water from a young coconut not only provided a refreshing drink in hot countries, but in times of medical emergency, it was used as a substitute for glucose.

During World War II, coconut water became the emergency glucose supply when there was no other source.

Coconut Water with pulp is a delicious, refreshing and thirst quenching drink.

For those of you who emigrated from tropical regions, you will remember what a treat it is to have a drink of coconut water on hot, dry afternoons.

The little pieces of pulp contained in this drink are a special bonus to coconut lovers.

The product is available in many brands and each with unique taste due to the fact that in each region and area the coconut has a slightly different taste between one coconut tree and another.

My Coconut Water has been a favourite of many different nationalities who are familiar with coconuts and even Canadians have accepted this product.

I would like to let you know that some people dislike the word coconut in any form.

Provided you buy a reputable brand, after you chill in the refrigerator, either in the summer months or in the winter, the moment you have the first sip, close your eyes and you will have a clear view of a tropical paradise.

I think I mentioned this in another of my books. Imagine with closed eyes, you see things clearly. Meanwhile the taste explodes in your mouth, something you have never experienced before.

How are we doing so far? Are you pleased with the information? We are still in paradise, this time on Pina Colada boulevard.

Sorry, our Pina Colada does not contain any alcohol, yet it is quite addictive. It is very popular within the bar scene.

It is a perfect marriage of two fruits:

It is said that a coconut fell down on top of a pineapple. Upon collision, they both crushed and the man who happened to be there witnessing the accident tried to see how the two fruits tasted mixed together.

To his amazement it was delightful and he told me, private and confidentially that this would be excellent refreshment.
Apparently, he could not keep his mouth shut and he told other companies as well. Hence, we are inundated with numerous brands of Pina Colada and they all taste great.

I am not encouraging alcohol use. However, you may add a dash of vodka, brandy, rum, scotch, tequila, or a brand of your choice and then when you finally get stoned drunk, you may mention to your friends the next day that you got drunk on vodka not on Pina Colada.

Since we are still in paradise on Adam and Eve avenue, and since I know a little bit about The Bible, I have seen some hand written notes in papyrus paper (God help me!) from the old time that Adam and Eve used Coconut Oil as a lotion on the body and hair and to lubricate some other parts or organs. Oh, what am I saying!?

Well, I will have to answer for this, later on, should I ever get there.

In continuation, I would like to introduce another product:

**Coconut Milk Powder**

It is a substitute for fresh coconut milk and an alternative to liquid form.

It has a very long shelf life and can be stored at room temperature. It is also very convenient to use and does not compromise the flavor of the recipe and an alternative to animal milk for those who would like a completely vegan food.

Coconut milk powder has a high-fat content, so it may produce a heavier result in baked goods.

There are thousands of recipes on the internet. However, the recipe below is specific to me.
Rice with Coconut Milk Powder

4 cups of water 1+1/2 cups
Mr. Goudas Long Grain White Rice
(You may also use Basmati, Tai Tai Scented Rice or Calrose Rice)
1/2 cup of coconut milk powder
Salt and Black Pepper to taste
1/2 tsp. Mr. Goudas Trinidad Hot Sauce
Heat up water in a medium sized pot.
Add coconut powder, stir until dissolved.
Bring to a boil. Add rice, stir to blend in and reduce heat to medium low.
Add Trinidad Hot Sauce, salt, and black pepper. Gently stir with fork to blend in all the flavours.
Cover the pot and allow to cook for 16 to 20 minutes until rice is tender to your taste.

While waiting please sing the song with the lyrics as follows:

Goudas Rice is very nice!
Goudas Rice is very nice!
It is good for pelau* or Chinese fried rice!
So take my advice and buy Goudas Rice!

*Pelau is a dish from Trinidad and Tobago in which the rice, pigeon peas and meat is cooked all together in the same pot.

Turn off the stove, uncover the pot, and taste a spoonful of pure delight.

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Coconut cream

Is very similar to coconut milk but contains less water.
The difference is mainly consistency.
It has a thicker, more paste-like consistency, with a mild non-sweet taste.

Years ago, around the late 1970’s, when I started importing Coconut Cream in packages, the products within the carton was in a layer of plastic and sometimes if it were a little damaged or out of shape and the plastic was cracked, when taken out of the refrigerator it is did not keep its shape and did not look presentable.
Consequently, I decided to have the Coconut Cream wrapped in two layers of plastic. Should one layer crack during shipment, there would be another protective layer.
This product should be stored in a cool place, preferably, the refrigerator.
It has a long life, and usually consumers cut a slice or as much as they need, repackage and refrigerate the unused portion.
Coconut Oil

Coconut Oil is extracted from the kernel or meat of matured coconuts harvested from the coconut palm. The coconut kernel is first shredded and dried in an oven to about 10 to 12% moisture, then placed into a press and the Coconut Oil is expelled.

Some communities use coconut oil in cooking, especially frying and baking. It has a long shelf life, and a melting point of 76 degrees.

Coconut oil is commonly used to flavour many South Asian and Caribbean curries and has been used as a vital source of food for health and general well being in traditional communities for thousands of years. Hardly an inch of the coconut palm goes to waste, it is referred to as the “tree of life.” Even the leaves are used to make thatched roofs for homes. In Sanskrit writings one of the official and historical languages of India, the coconut is known as kalpa vriksha, which translates as “tree that gives all that is necessary for living” and reveals that the people of India were using coconuts as a staple for food and various everyday needs.

I was looking through my files and I came across a letter from the fans of my products. The letter is reproduced below:

Patty, Summersette
Willowdale / Ont Canada Oct 29, 2002
To whom it may concern:
I would like to comment about your Exotic Fruit Cocktail.
I have always bought regular fruit salads, but the different eye catching style label on your Exotic Fruit Cocktail, made me try and buy it. I was skeptical until I opened the can, and saw something I really liked. The taste was absolutely stunning and unbelievable.
The fruits were incredibly firm and tasty, and the coconut portions within the Cocktail placed a taste that I have never experienced before in my entire life. If I have to comment and rate the product between 1 to 10, this is definitely an 11.

Let me explain what Ms. Summersette is referring to.
For years and years, I was marketing a product called Tropical Fruit Salad, and the main ingredient was the banana. At one point in time, I thought...
it would be a good idea to produce another product with mango, guava, or pineapple, and eliminate the banana because it became too soft and too dark in colour. I replaced the banana with pieces of young coconut. I called this new product Exotic Fruit Cocktail.

What a treat it turned out to be and some people thought it was the greatest invention since sliced bread. Therefore, the above letter made me feel very happy because it acknowledges my work. The creation of this piece of young coconut originated from an idea that I had years ago since I knew that the people of the Phillipines very creatively developed this product and called it Nata de Coco.

The people of the Phillipines have also developed another product called Macapuno.

This invention may be used as a dessert, topped with ice cream, or as an enhancement to another dessert. If you have never tried this, you do not know what you are missing!. Actually, this was one of the first products I launched in the early stages of my career in the food industry,
around 1973 or 1974. Apparently, it was too early and too premature because there were not many Philipinos in this country.

When I finally received my first shipment of Macapuno, the consumer base was too small and I ended up giving bottles to my customers as a gift. Buy a bag of Goudas rice and get a complementary bottle. I also had macapuno for breakfast, lunch and dinner, and a few spoons in between. I felt like macapuno was coming out of my ears. The high syrup content may not appeal to everyone. However, it is worth trying at least once. Kids will definitely love it. By the way it is not cheap.

I suggest the next time you see a Philippino store somewhere, step in and pick up a bottle of Macapuno. While there also pick up some banana leaves which are needed for the next recipe.

Banana Leaves may be used as a wrap in southern cooking, to make interesting finger foods such as Mexican tamales or Chinese rice cakes.

Banana leaves not only look beautiful, they also lend a subtle aroma and taste to the foods that are cooked inside them. While functioning as wrapping material, the hint of flavor that blends into the food is very pleasant, unlike tin foil or parchment paper! You never know when your exotic side will erupt!

You may be wondering why I have asked you to purchase Banana leaves in this booklet about the Coconut Tree. The reasoning behind this is that in the next recipe you will be practising your banana wrapping skills and how the coconut tastes cooked within them.

**Suman Khao Dome Sticky Rice in Banana Leaf,**

Do you know about Suman? It is a main dish in South Asian countries such as, Vietnam, Laos, Thailand, Indonesia, Cambodia and the Phillipines where the name derived. Of course, each country may have a different name for the dish but the ingredients are the same.

Each country and region has its own technique in preparation. You may be wondering how do I know these things?

Knowledge of the foods of various nationalities is a part of my business and it has become my passion.

The following is a simplified version, resulting in a great dish.

Basically, you need: Banana leaves, glutinous rice (Referred to as sticky rice, is important in this recipe because it holds all the ingredients together.)

You may use risotto or calrose rice which have almost the same glutinous components.
Canned beans, (preferably, red kidney and black eye peas). It is easier to use canned beans instead of dry beans which need soaking and cooking. And of course, I do not have to remind you to use Mr. Goudas beans.

One can of Mr. Goudas Coconut Milk, cooked chicken or pork pieces, Mr. Goudas canned Jackfruit, grated cheese, left over vegetables or any left overs in your refrigerator.

In the Philippines, glutinous rice is known as malagkit, in Laos, khao niao, in Japan, mochigome, in Malaysia, pulut and in Chinese, nuòmǐ

To prepare your leaves for use, defrost them first. The leaves should be washed and rinsed to remove any dirt or pesticide residue. Cut the leaves into rectangles of about 8 x 11 inches, and cut off the tough fibrous edges. Hold each leaf section over a heat source like the eye of your stove until the color gets bright. Set it aside, and wipe completely before using. Pour one can of Mr. Goudas Coconut Milk (or three cans of managers or supervisors choice coconut milk) into a casserole or medium sized pot. Add rice, salt to taste, and stir until the Coconut Milk is blended and absorbed into the rice. Remove from heat.

Take 2 pieces of cut banana leaves and place them on a clean surface.

Place a few spoonfuls of rice, and layer with canned beans, strips of jackfruit, meat, vegetables and grated cheese or anything your heart desires.

Cover your creation with another layer of rice, leaving enough room to fold each leaf over so that it forms a pocket.

Simply, fold the leaf over your filling, and fold in the edges and use a strip of banana leaf as a piece of string to hold the pocket together.
Place the pockets folded side down in a large pot, fill with enough water to cover them. Bring to a boil for approximately an hour.

Remove one of the pockets. Allow to cool. Open carefully and check to see if it is cooked. Should further cooking be required, continue boiling for an additional period of time.

When finally cooked to your taste requirements, drain off water; allow to cool and serve.

You may also refrigerate overnight. The next day, unwrap each piece one at a time, cut into slices and enjoy.
Suman is also typically served with coconut cream. Or a caramel-like sauce made from coconut milk.

In the photos you see my two assistants who worked with me in creating this recipe for illustration purpose enjoying Rice with Coconut while waiting for the Suman to cook.

Coconut Bread

Coconut bread or sweet bread is a favourite with people of the Caribbean.

The following is a simple recipe that even beginners will love.

2 cups Mr. Goudas All Purpose Flour
1 tablespoon Mr. Goudas baking powder
1 cup Mr. Goudas 100% Pure Cane Sugar;
1 cup Mr. Goudas Coconut (shredded)
2 tablespoon of Mr. Goudas Coconut Powder, 1 cup of milk, 2 eggs,
Preheat oven to 350 degrees. In large mixing bowl sift flour, baking powder, cinnamon. Add sugar, raisins, coconut powder, and shredded coconut.

Stir to mix in all the ingredients. Place butter in a small pan, and melt over low heat. In a separate bowl, whisk the egg and milk.

Add the melted butter, vanilla extract, mixed essence and pour into the dry ingredients.

Stir well to blend in all the ingredients. Sprinkle the palms of the hand with flour, rub them together and gently knead to form a dough. Lightly grease 2 loaf pans and sparingly sprinkle with flour.

Cut the dough into two, form into loaves, place in loaf pan and bake in preheated oven for approximately 1 hour or until cooked.

(To check if it is cooked – pierce with a skewer or fork – if there is no residue left on the skewer/fork when removed – the loaf is cooked.)

Remove from oven, let cool for a few minutes. Remove from loaf pan.

You may baste the top with a mixture of sugar and water, honey, or sprinkle with icing sugar. Delicious served in thick slices, or lightly buttered.

In general Coconut Cream, Milk, Powder, Shredded, slices, etc. are used daily as an enhancement to any meal, cakes, drinks, bakes, dumplings, stews, sauces.

It thickens your sauces and stews giving them such a delicious, exotic flavour.
I was just about finished detailing the information about The Coconut Tree and make this booklet into 16 pages, but as I was filing the pictures, something very important flashed in my mind.

I have spoken everything about tropical countries, everything about the tree and much more.

Because the subject is so endless, I know that this booklet will be read by so many people, I thought it would be a very good idea to revisit another booklet I wrote, called Bougatsa.

Bougatsa is a delicious dessert which originated in the Mediterranean areas of Greece, Turkey, and some Arabian countries.

Now, you are wondering: What does Bougatsa have to do with the Coconut Tree?

The Bougatsa booklet is in a comedy format, however, I am not too sure if you may be able to pick up a copy. I felt that I should incorporate this recipe in this booklet and this time I will make some variations to make this dessert international.

The recipe for the Bougatsa is as follows:

1 package fillo (also spells phyllo)

3/4 cup unsalted butter,
1/4 cup powdered or icing sugar,
Cinnamon

Filling:
6 cups of milk 2%
1 cup semolina for pastry

1 cup of sugar

I will not place another photo of a box of sugar here. We all know what a package of sugar looks like.

However, you may not know the difference between one sugar or another.

Our package states 100/% pure cane sugar. Have you ever noticed these words on the bag presently in your cupboard? If it does not say pure cane sugar, then ask yourself, what is this sugar made from? Sugar is also made from beets.

You also need 4 eggs
2 envelopes of vanilla powder or 2 tbsp liquid,
1 tbsp lemon juice,
1/4 cup unsalted butter,
2 slices of lemon rind (skin)

Method:

Place milk in large pot on medium heat. Add semolina, butter and stir with wooden spoon until of a custard
consistency. Beat eggs, sugar, vanilla, lemon juice and blend well.

Pour mixture into the semolina and milk batter. Stir continuously, bring to a boil.

Once cream is ready, remove from heat. Allow to cool.

Spread fillo sheets and cut in half. Lightly grease the bottom of a large cooking tray.

You have two options: small individual pieces or a whole tray.

1. Make small individual pieces by filling the fillo with the cream filling and position each piece within the tray. Spread melted butter over fillo in each piece and in between them at the sides.

On the other hand:

2. Place enough fillo to cover bottom and over lapping the sides of the tray. Pour HALF the cream filling over the fillo.

We have to pause for a moment to let you know that in Mediterranean recipe you pour all the cream above the first layers of fillo then place a few more layers of fillo and basically that is the recipe. But because we are changing this recipe and we are incorporating certain fruits in between, we need to only use half of the cream and place certain fruits cut in very small pieces and spread evenly.

The fruits that we will use are: pineapple, nata de coco, macapuno, mango and peach.

The pictures below illustrate how the product is within the can and how you are to cut it.

Do not use any of the juice from the can because it contains water and additional sugar which you do not need.
4 spoons of Macapuno, mango, peach

After you place some of the fruits, pour the remainder of the cream over the fruit combo.

Finally, cover the whole thing with 3 or 4 layers of fillo.

With a small pastry brush, try to push and smoothen the excess fillo around the edges. With the same small brush spread melted butter over fillo.
Place your creation in the oven, uncovered, at 350 degrees for approximately 30 minutes or until golden in colour.

When finally done, remove from oven and evenly spread icing sugar over the top. Sprinkle with cinnamon.

If you want to be much more international, you may add a handful of almond or pistachios chopped into very small pieces.

Once cool, cut your creation into serving size pieces

Bougatsa may be eaten hot, or out of the refrigerator.

It was a real pleasure writing this booklet. I finally have the opportunity to show photos of some of my favourite products, like the Mango Slices, the Pineapple in its own Juice, the Peaches from the Northern part of Greece, Semolina and the wonderful flavour of Mixed Essence.

I know there are some people who for whatever reason cannot stand the taste, appearance and flavour of the Coconut.

Nevertheless, since I am a certified workaholic and I always have to have something to do, I wrote this book to the best of my ability as a gift to the millions who love this wonderful fruit, referred as the Tree of Life.

Who knows, one day I may actually have the opportunity to lay down under a Coconut Tree, and sip Coconut Water out of a fresh Coconut instead of Mr. Goudas Coconut Water in the Can with pulp, which is second best only to pure coconut water.