



AÇAÍ
(*Euterpe oleracea*)



ARAÇA
(*Eugenia stipitata*)



CAMU CAMU
(*Myrciaria dubia*)



Global
Facilitation
Unit
for Underutilized
Species

enabling deployment of underutilized species

What is AÇAÍ and where does it come from?

Açaí Palm is a member of the genus *Euterpe*, which contains seven species of palms native to tropical Central and South America. It grows mainly in floodplains and swamps. The species *Euterpe oleracea* is usually called Açaí Palm, after the Portuguese name for the beverages made from its fruit.

PROPERTIES

The dark purple berries of the Açaí plant contain up to 33 times the antioxidant content of red wine grapes. These berries have traditionally been used to increase energy, stamina, vitality and to promote overall healthy living.

❖ Food Preparation

The *juice* and *pulp* of açaí fruits are used in various juice blends, smoothies, sodas, and other beverages. In northern Brazil, açaí is traditionally served in cuias with tapioca and sometimes sugar. Açaí has become a fad in southern Brazil where it is consumed cold as açaí na tigela (“açaí in the bowl”). The *Heart of palm*, the soft inner growing tip is often consumed in salads.

❖ Health

Processed powder from the fruit pulp is beginning to be sold in the west as a health food in loose powder or capsule form. The seeds are a source of polyunsaturated and saturated fatty acids.

❖ Other Uses

Apart from its berries as food, and as per many underutilized species, the açaí palm has other purposes. The leaves may be used for making hats, mats, baskets, brooms and roof thatch for homes. The trunk wood, resistant to pests, for building construction. Seeds may be ground for livestock food or as a component of organic soil for plants. Seeds are also used to make a variety of jewelry and souvenirs.



In traditional medical practices, fruit and roots have been used for treating gastrointestinal problems and sap as an astringent.

GROWING

Planted seeds are used for new palm tree stock which, under the right growing conditions, requires only months to form seedlings, although açai palm has not been successfully cultivated outside of South America.

HARVESTING

The açai fruit is harvested slowly by hand, the way it's been done for generations. Because the area is in the flooded tidal forest, there is no mechanized way to harvest açai. Instead, local couples do the work. The man climbs the tree trunk, about 30 feet high, chops off an açai bunch full of ripe berries, and brings it down to the woman, usually his wife, who picks the fruit off the bunch and fills up baskets. Once the baskets are full, someone in the family will use a canoe or motorboat to take the baskets to a drop-off point for manufacturing in the nearest village. In addition, not all the açai is harvested. About 30 percent of the fruit falls to the ground or is eaten by birds and other animals, which helps guarantee biodiversity. Of the picked açai, each family keeps about a third to eat and use as fertilizer for small vegetable and herb gardens. A rural development programme encourages families to introduce other native fruit-tree species with commercial value, such as cupuaçu and tapereba, together with the açai.

PROCESSING

Picked açai needs to be processed within 24 hours or the fruit oxidizes and loses its nutritional value. It is cleaned, sorted and pasteurized before being mixed with other ingredients to make the final product.

What is **ARAZA** and where does it come from?

The Araza is a fruit tree native to non-flooding areas of Western Amazonia, Brazil. Efforts are currently underway in parts of South America to cultivate this species. Araza was domesticated in the western Amazon, the area that is now known as Peru.

PROPERTIES

It is very high in vitamin C content, double the amount of the average orange.

❖ Food Preparation

The pulp is sometimes eaten fresh, out of hand, although the fruits are quite acidic. Araza is traditionally consumed as juice. Used also in nectars, jellies, and marmalades, it is very attractive to consumers for its delicious tart flavor, and is more commonly used to flavor ice creams, sweets, and beverages.

GROWING

Today, the araza is cultivated on small properties throughout the basin of the Solimoes (Alto Amazonas), not as a commercial crop but as part of the complex mosaic of crops characteristic of the traditional agriculture of the region. The araza can produce between 20 and 30 tonnes of fruit per hectare annually without any great selection or improvement effort.



HARVESTING

The species is harvested several times a year.



Socially and environmentally committed companies such as “Oroverde GmbH” and “Sambazon” have developed novel products (fruit drinks) and initiated product developments (fruit juices and dairy industries) with indigenous fruits from the Amazon Region in order to buy those fruits at a large scale (several hundred tonnes of pulp per year) so far only used at a local level. As a result hundreds of small holders get income by selling their organically certified fruits at a fair-trade price. A small farmers association in Costa Rica is also selling one of these Amazon fruits to “Oroverde” for more than 100.000 USD. Grown in natural and planted agroforestry systems and home gardens these fruit species contribute effectively to the protection of humid tropical forests and thus to maintain biodiversity in these ecosystems.

What is CAMU CAMU and where does it come from?

The Camu camu, also known as CamuCamu, Cacari, and Camocamo, is a small, bushy river side tree from the Amazon Rainforest vegetation in Peru and Brazil, which bears a red/purple cherry like fruit. Its small flowers have waxy white petals and sweet smelling aroma.

PROPERTIES

The extraordinarily high Vitamin C content (in the order of 2-3% of fresh weight!) is the most important property of the camu camu fruit, which has been exploited consistently in positioning camu camu on international markets. Vitamin C content declines as full maturity is reached, and there is a trade-off between Vitamin C and flavour expression. As a myrtaceous fruit, camu camu most likely provides other nutritional benefits (phenolics, etc.), but these are less understood and communicated to consumers.

❖ Food Preparation

In the jungle towns of Brazil and Peru, Camu camu juice is mixed with sugar and sold in the market. In some places, Camu camu ice cream is also available.

❖ Health

Processed powder from the fruit pulp is beginning to be sold in the west as a health food in loose powder or capsule form. In addition to the high vitamin C content it contains the amino acids valine, leucine and serine, and is also rich in flavonoids.

Camu camu fruit is traditionally eaten by people of the amazonian rainforest of south america to help maintain their health. According to traditional medicine it can be used to help strengthen the immune system, to ward off viral infections, and to help maintain optimal health, especially under conditions of stress and anxiety, which tend to deplete the immune system. It is also used to maintain healthy gums, eyes and skin, and to support the functions of the brain and heart.

GROWING

The fruit has only recently come into large-scale cultivation and sale to the world market with Japan being the major buyer. It is relatively easy to cultivate. It survives best in hot, damp tropical climates but will grow in the subtropics, surviving temperatures down to just above freezing. It requires copious water and withstands flooding. Trees begin to bear fruit after about 4 to 6 years.

PROCESSING

Camu camu berries are handpicked when the red colour reveals their peak vitamin C content. At the processing facility, the berries are stored at temperatures just above freezing to preserve their vital nutrients. A stringent temperature control must be maintained throughout the entire concentrating process. The berries are then concentrated in a cold-liquid extraction. The syrup is filtered and dried in a vacuum at low temperatures to protect the heat- and oxygen-sensitive vitamin C.

The exhibits on show are just few of many commercial products made from Açai, Camu Camu and Araza:

Amazonia juice

SOME PRODUCERS / RETAILERS / DISTRIBUTORS

- ❖ Oroverde GmbH - www.oroverde-fruits.com
- ❖ Sambazon - www.sambazon.com
- ❖ Bossanova - www.bossausa.com



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