

Nutmeg Production on Grenada

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1. The Plant and its Growth

Nutmeg (*Myristica fragrans*) is 10 meter tall evergreen tree (Fig. 1) that is native to the Banda Islands of Indonesia. Plantations in Indonesia are responsible for 75% of the world's production while those on Grenada produce 20%. Trees reach maturity in 7-9 years, and commercial production requires grafting to ensure female plants. Egg-size, teardrop-



shape fruits (Fig. 2) are comprised of several parts. The soft, green, 5 mm thick outer part is the *husk* (Fig. 3). It is used locally in the making of soups.



The next part is a reddish, stringy, rubber band-like wrapping called the *mace* (Fig. 4). Inside the mace is the *nut* (Fig. 5), and inside the shell is the *meat* (Fig. 6)



2. Preliminary Processing

Ripe fruits are collected from the ground, put into large burlap sacks (Fig. 7, and taken to an initial processing facility such as the one on the Dougaldston Estate (Fig. 8). Here the fruits are dried on outdoor racks that



can be rolled under the floor of large wooden buildings when it rains (Fig. 9). When dried, the husks are then cut off, and used locally in the making of soup. The mace is then removed (Fig. 10) and packaged to be used as a mild spice and in the making of cosmetics. The nuts are put into burlap



sacks using short-handled wooden shovels (Fig 11). The sacks are sewn closed, and taken to a processing plant at the port.



3. Advanced Processing

At a port-side processing plant, such as the Grenada Co-operative Nutmeg Association facility in Gouyave (Fig. 12), sacks of nuts are carried to the second and third floors and emptied onto rows of four-level drying racks that resemble bunk beds with screen bases (Fig. 13). Shuttered windows



are opened to facilitate drying. The nuts are rotated every few days by women using wooden hoes (Fig. 14). When dry, the nuts are again put into sacks, carried to the end of the building, and poured into the hopper of a cracking machine (Fig. 15). Cracked nuts, both and shells and meat, (Fig.



16) drop into a huge penstock on the ground floor (Fig. 17). Women seated at sluices around the penstock sort meat from shells by hand, dropping each into separate burlap sacks (Fig. 18). Sacks of meat are then taken to



the flotation room where they are scooped into framed screens (Fig. 19) that are lowered into sinks are filled with water (Fig. 20). Meats that float are removed by hand and discarded. Screens are then lifted out of the



sinks, and meats are poured back into sacks. They are then carried to a sorting rack perforated with nickel-size holes (Fig. 21). Meats are shoveled into the sorter; smaller ones fall through, larger ones do not. Meanwhile, new sacks are being prepared (Fig. 22), stenciled with the name of the



destination port (Fig. 21). Sorted meats are then shoveled into these new sacks, which are sewed closed, loaded on ships, and brought to you to grind and consume (Fig. 22).

Nutmeg is a perfect example of a product that may seem small and insignificant in some respects (a luxury item, not an essential food crop), but is labor intensive.

