

Brazilian Inventor Converts Any Fruit or Vegetable into Flour

Contributed by Marina Sarruf
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Brazilian Researcher José Amado Alves, who works as a production supervisor for a mining company in Cajati, in Ribeira Valley, in the interior of the state of São Paulo, Brazil, has created a process for dehydrating and transforming fruit, vegetables and tubercles into flour.

According to him, the entire process takes from two to three hours. The inventor is currently seeking investors so as to be able to trade his product.

"The main objective of this project is to use discarded fruit and make it into fruit flour," stated Alves, who has already tested bananas, guavas, apples, pineapples, paw-paw and passion fruit, among others.

The process consists on dehydrating, drying and grinding the fruit peel, pulp, or both together. The researcher stated that this dehydration technique already existed in Brazil, but it took up to 13 hours.

According to Alves, the idea behind the project arose in August 2003, during a postgraduate course in entrepreneurship at Scelisul College, where he had to develop a product.

"First of all, I started dehydrating ripe banana skins, which are very hard to dehydrate. After I managed that, I decided to test the peel and pulp of other fruit," he said.

According to the inventor, this technique presents some advantages, among them greater conservation and concentration of nutrients. Apart from that, added Alves, the flour has no addition of chemical ingredients, it dries out faster and uses Brazilian equipment.

"What is interesting is that the flour is colourful and has a good taste, different from wheat flour, which has no colour and scent," stated Alves.

After the discovery, Alves found a partner and established company Copavar, occupying a 200 square-metre area close to his house, in Cajati. The unit has a production capacity of 600 kilograms of flour a day.

He believes that with investment of US\$ 4,600 to US\$ 190,000, it would be possible to produce between 30 kilograms and 2,000 kilograms per hour. Up to now, the company distributes only samples.

"I am currently after investors. I can sell either the flour or the technology," he stated.

Another advantage of the fruit or vegetable flour, according to him, is that it is 100% natural and does not contain gluten, a protein present in wheat. It may therefore be used in foods for people who are coeliac (who cannot digest gluten).

The researcher guarantees that the flour may be used for any kind of pasta, drink, appetizer, soup and pudding, among other products. "The flour is wholemeal, nutritious and tasty," he said.

Approved Product

José Amado Alves explains that his first experiments for the discovery of this innovative process for dehydration of fruit and vegetables began at his house.

"Before buying my current equipment, I used kitchen utensils in my laboratory," he said. "I spent nights awake. My friends called me crazy," he explained.

After having managed to transform the fruit into powder, Alves took a sample of the flour to the Food Technology Institute (Ital), in the city of Campinas, and, according to him, it was approved.

Tests were also made at the National Service of Industrial Education (Senai), in the city of São Bernardo do Campo, in greater São Paulo.

Alves is currently trying to patent his process, and believes he will manage in the near future.

"There is no similar process in Brazil, I therefore believe that it will be approved," he said.

The name he gave his product is "Dona Nica" and, apart from the eight flavours presented on the company site, Alves has already developed beetroot, tomato, bell pepper, sweet potato, watercress, kale and other flours.

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