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Palm Toddy or simply Toddy is an alcoholic beverage created from the sap of various species of palm tree such as the Palmyra, and coconut palms. This drink is common in various parts of Asia and Africa, and goes by various names, such as "emu" and "oguro" in Nigeria, nsafufuo in Ghana, kallu in South India, goribon (Rungus) in Sabah, Borneo, and tuba in the Philippines, Borneo and Mexico. Toddy is also consumed in Sri Lanka and Myanmar.

Tapping

The sap is extracted and collected by a tapper. Typically the sap is collected from the cut flower of the palm tree. A container is fastened to the flower stump to collect the sap. The white liquid that initially collects tends to be very sweet and non-alcoholic before it is fermented. An alternate method is the felling of the entire tree. Where this is practiced, a fire is sometimes lit at the cut end to facilitate the collection of sap.

In parts of India, the unfermented sap is called "Neera" ("Padaneer" in Tamil Nadu) and is refrigerated, stored and distributed by semi-government agencies. A little lime is added to the sap to prevent it from fermenting. Neera is said to contain many nutrients including potash.

Palm toddy also forms the base for a drink popular in Goa, known as Goan Feni. Palm sap begins fermenting immediately after collection, due to natural yeasts in the air (often spurred by residual yeast left in the collecting container). Within two hours, fermentation yields an aromatic wine of up to 4% alcohol content, mildly intoxicating and sweet. The wine may be allowed to ferment longer, up to a day, to yield a stronger, more sour and acidic taste, which some people prefer. Longer fermentation produces vinegar instead of stronger wine.

In some areas of India, palm wine is evaporated to produce the unrefined sugar called jaggery.

Palm wine may be distilled to create a stronger drink, which goes by different names depending on the region (e.g. arrack, village gin, charayam, and country whiskey).

In India, palm wine or toddy is served as either neera or Padaneer (a sweet, non-alcoholic beverage derived from fresh sap) or kallu (a sour beverage made from fermented sap, but not as strong as wine). Kallu is usually drunk soon after fermentation by the end of day, as it becomes more sour and acidic day by day. The drink, like vinegar in taste, is considered to be short lived shelf life. However, it may be refrigerated to extend its life.

In Karnataka, India, palm wine is usually available at toddy shops (known as "Kallu Angadi" in Kannada or "Liquor Shop" in English). In Tamil Nadu, this beverage is currently banned, though

the legality fluctuates with politics. In the absence of legal toddy, moonshine distillers of arrack often sell methanol-contaminated alcohol, which can have lethal consequences. To discourage this practice, authorities have pushed for inexpensive "Indian Made Foreign Liquor" (IMFL), much to the dismay of toddy tappers.

In the state of Andhra Pradesh (India), toddy is a popular drink in rural parts. The kallu is collected, distributed and sold by the people of a particular caste called Goud or Gownla. It is a big business in the cities of those districts. In villages, people drink it every day after work.

There are two main types of kallu in Andhra Pradesh, namely Thadi Kallu (from Toddy Palmyra trees) and Eetha Kallu (from shorter Date Palms, under 15 feet tall). Eetha Kallu is very sweet and less intoxicating, whereas Thati Kallu is stronger (sweet in the morning, becoming sour to bitter-sour in the evening) and is highly intoxicating. People enjoy kallu right at the trees where it is brought down. They drink out of leaves by holding them to their mouths while the Goud pours the kallu from the Binki (kallu pot).

Palm wine plays an important role in many ceremonies in parts of Nigeria such as among the Igbo (or Ibo) peoples, and elsewhere in central and western Africa. Guests at weddings, birth celebrations, and funeral wakes are served generous quantities. Palm wine is often infused with medicinal herbs to remedy a wide variety of physical complaints. As a token of respect to deceased ancestors, many drinking sessions begin with a small amount of palm wine spilled on the ground ("Kulosa malafu" in Kikongo ya Leta). Palm wine is enjoyed by men and women, although women usually drink it in less public venues.

Culinary Use

In the state of Kerala (India) toddy is used in leavening (as a substitute to yeast) a local form of rice bread called the Appam. Toddy is mixed with rice dough and left over night to aid in fermentation and expansion of the dough resulting in the dough to rise overnight, making the bread soft when prepared.