

VIRGIN COCONUT OIL (VCO)



Virgin Coconut Oil or VCO is a vegetable oil made from coconut fruit (*Cocos nucifera* L). VCO is made from aged coconut with good and fresh quality. After the brown skin is peeled off, the coconut fruit is shredded and squeezed using a coconut milk expeller machine automatically or manually. The thick coconut milk juice is then cooked at a temperature below 60C. Until a layer of Belondo (coconut protein deposits) is formed at the bottom, the water and pure oil layer are clear on the top layer. The result of the oil doesn't have the signature coconut taste and fragrance.

The process of making VCO can also be done by cold processing, without heating. The first step is to squeeze coconut milk using coconut water, the next process is to add the enzyme from pineapple (ananas), papaya sap (papain) or mashed river

crab / yuyu. Apart from adding enzymes, fermentation can also be done by adding a starter of *Saccharomyces cerevisiae* yeast or bread yeast. Ferment at 30oC - 35oC for 12 hours. Leave it for one night, the next morning just separate the Belondo from the VCO.

The coconut producer is Nias Island (Nias language: Tanö Niha), in the province of North Sumatra. For generations, women on rural Nias Island have been making VCOs. VCO is usually used for cooking oil, massage oil, hair oil, and is often frequently used to heal wounds on the skin.

The activity of making VCO is also an opportunity for village women to improve relations and kinship between them in the Nias Islands. They will connect and support each other. This culture has

been related to the women of Nias Island, North Sumatra, from generation to generation.

The VCO product that was accompanied by ASPPUK in the Local Harvest program was the VCO product "CU PESADA FAOLALA PEREMPUAN NIAS" CU (Credit Union) was formed after the 2005 earthquake and tsunami on Nias Island, by PESADA, which is one of the NGO members of ASPPUK in North Sumatra. This CU was formed because it was driven by the many social inequalities felt by women and children living on Nias Island after the Earthquake and Tsunami, lack of access to information and knowledge, at least women who received education, poor women due to the low economic income on Nias Island.

The women's community is increasingly becoming stronger and more independent through routine assistance as well as diverse expertise and capacity building given by PESADA, such as gender education, women's leadership, and social entrepreneurship. The activities of the Faolala CU group are not only limited to saving and loan, but also monthly discussions that discuss various matters by CU members.

VCO is a joint venture produced by CU Pesada Faolala Perempuan Nias. Until now they have been able to produce 50-100 liters of VCO per week and have always been able to meet consumer needs. For the distribution of VCO products in the Nias

region it is also handled directly by Kopwan Pesada FAOLALA Nias Women, as a distributor that will then be distributed to consumers and also to distributor agents, in this case the merchandise stores of the assisted group members.

With this VCO initiative, it is hoped that it will have an effect on changes in women's economic development on Nias Island, as well as retaining the tradition of Nias women's 'made oil together,' mutual cooperation, cooperation and friendship among Nias women are still awake. In addition, the VCO business also has an effect on the sustainability of the environment on Nias Island, where the group maintains that its refined waste products do not pollute the environment and that the VCO made from fresh coconut is healthier than cooking oils for palm oil products that can damage the environment.



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