

'Jackfruit man' tries his skills on chara poovan banana

A SATISH @Palakkad

THE 'jackfruit man' James P Mathew, who is known to make a large number of value-added products from jackfruit, has set his sights on "chara poovan", a banana variety not in demand as it is considered less tasty.

"A chara poovan tree and its pups can be productive for 15 years. Since the tree has a high disease resistance, there is not need to use chemical fertilisers. Hence the cost of cultivation is low. Therefore if a farmer gets even ₹10 per kilogram, it is profitable for him," said James.

The crop is popular in Tamil Nadu and Karnataka as it can be cultivated both in black as well as red soil. The crop can be cultivated in Attappadi.

Since it is considered less tasty, compared to more famous varieties, demand for the banana is low and many farmers have abandoned the crop altogether. Therefore, the way forward is to make tasty value-added products, said James. Value-added products



The chara poovan in James' house at Kanhirapuzha | EXPRESS

like payasam and "ela ada" can be made from ripe banana. Chooru poovan powder can be used with coconut milk or cow milk to make two varieties of payasams.

Ripe bananas can also be had with 'upma' and the curry made with bananas can be had for lunch. Dry products can also be made from raw bananas, which can be used by diabetic patients too. James said



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James P Mathew

he is willing to transfer the technology free of cost to anyone willing to make value-added products from chara poovan. "Value addition will help keep this fruit in the garden or else it will vanish soon," he said.

Experimenting is something James is famous for. In 2016, he celebrated his son's marriage by serving 18-course jackfruit-based feast to the gusts. Along with the traditional Kerala jackfruit meal, there were jackfruit-based delicacies such as juice, pickles, payasam, wine and fries.

James has developed a set of jackfruit processing devices from which he churns out a variety of products. It includes a golden yellow wine, dehydrated flakes with a long shelf life, a health drink, baby food and jack seed powder.