

KERALA

New technology for drying fruits, vegetables

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

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You crave for that favourite dish of spinach but the hassle of wading through traffic to reach the market is a definite put-off. That situation may soon be a thing of the past, thanks to the latest technologies in drying and preserving fruits and vegetables.

All it takes is to cut open a packet of three-month-old dried vegetables and soak them in water for a while before cooking, all without leaving the comfort of the house.

Scientists at the CSIR National Institute for Interdisciplinary Science and Technology here have developed an energy-efficient technology for drying a range of fruits and vegetables for preservation. Named Refrigeration Adsorption Dehumidification Drying (RADD), the process involves drying the material under controlled temperature and uniform distribution of air to retain the properties and nutrients. The method is cost-effective and dries faster.

According to P. Nisha, scientist, Agro Processing and Natural Products division, NIIST, fruits and vegetables dried using the RADD method were found to have a shelf life ranging from three months to one year. Dr. Nisha said the dried product retained its qualities. NIIST has already transferred the technology for drying spices like nutmeg and cardamom.

Packets of spinach, bitter gourd, cucumber, pineapple, banana, cardamom and nutmeg dried using the RADD method are on show at the expo organised in connection with the workshop on agro processing and value addition which began at the Kanakakkunu Palace grounds Thursday.

Value added products made from coconut and jackfruit are the highlights of the expo. A 45-kg banana bunch of the Udayam variety displayed by the Biotechnology and Model Floriculture Centre, Kazhakuttam, is a showstopper at the event. The stall also features a variety of ornamental plants including orchids, heliconia and foliage plants.

Winter vegetables

Cool climate vegetables and fruits like cauliflower, broccoli, avocado, tree tomato, celery, parsley, onion, garlic, passion fruit, elephant apple and peach displayed at the stall of the Devikulam block in Idukki is also attracting visitors.