

# Going Nuts With Green Supari-ware

Pics: Amit Bhardwa

**DINNERWARE CREATED FROM ARECA PALM ARE DEGRADABLE & HOT ON EXPORT LIST TO US, AUSTRALIA & EUROPE**



Areca palm leaf creations

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**A**reca palm, commonly known as supari and popularly known for its nuts chewed with betel leaf or as sweetened mouth-freshener has turned out to be an effective alternative to plastic (non-degradable) single-use dinnerware. Areca nuts, infamously associated with paan stains at public places by uncivil chewers,

has now been transformed into posh dinnerware from its leaves. And these are good to serve and sturdy. So, food served on leaves is no longer rustic, it's chic and organic too. Easy and light to carry, these have the ability to withstand vast temperature variations and can hold liquid as well. This makes it microwave-savvy too. Bhopal's Nilesh Goyal, 37, is the brain behind the nuts and bolts of this revolutionary concept.

All he had to do was to mould them into beautiful shapes and in four years he is now exporting the product to European markets. Four years ago, Nilesh kicked off his journey with a meagre investment of Rs 50,000. Now, he has a turnover of around Rs 5 crore, supplying betel leaf crockery to countries like Australia, US, China and South Africa. Citing the importance of eco-friendly products, Nilesh said, "Environmental pollution and degradation has reached a stage where government is banning diesel vehicles and implementing odd and even registration number cars. This is the right time to make a beginning to save the environment. Our green concept is a giant leap forward," he said. Going down memory lane, Nilesh said, he

would often visit villages in India away from the cacophony of urban life to feel its simplicity. "I always enjoyed long walks amidst abundant millet fields, drinking cool fresh water from a well and eating out of leaf plates."

"During one such a trip to South India, I returned with bowls made from palm leaves. I showed these simple organic plates to my brother, Manish Goyal, who is an Australian citizen, during his visit to India. This triggered an idea. And our



Nilesh Goyal and his wife Pragya Goyal checking crockery made from Areca palm tree leaves

journey to refine raw dried leaves into stylish, durable and environmentally-friendly single-use dinnerware began," said Nilesh. On manufacturing process, he said, "Final product comes out after three stages. First involves collection and thorough washing of naturally shed areca palm leaves. Then leaves are placed in a heat press and stamped into different shapes. In the last stage, plates are cut into finished shape and size and trimmed." His manufacturing units are in Kerala and

products are transported to Bhopal and to other parts of the world on demand. "Areca palm trees are usually found in southern part of the country, so we manufacture them there," he said.

These products are compostable, biodegradable and contain no chemical or toxins. "It's a perfect example of the cradle to cradle concept," he said. He claimed organic dinnerware could be made of compost either as home compost or in municipal composting facilities. "If you don't have home compost, but a garden or backyard, you can just break the plates and bury them. If none of these options are available, just dispose them with your regular garbage and these will naturally degrade in 6 to 8 weeks. This process uses 90% less energy than recycling," he said.

His wife, Pragya Goyal, and brother Manish are his business partners. "Without them, it was not possible to translate this idea into real. On several occasions, I was frustrated due to poor response and even thought of switching over to some other business. Then it was my wife Pragya and brother Manish who motivated me to carry on. All credit goes to them and of course to my father as well," he said.



Workers at the manufacturing unit of crockery of Areca palm tree