



NUTWORKS

The Australian Macadamia Nut

GROWING

In Australia, macadamia are grown in the rich fertile soils along Australia's east coast from Nambucca Valley and the Byron Bay hinterland in New South Wales, to the Sunshine Coast, Bundaberg and Atherton Tableland regions of Queensland, and now in Western Australia.

FARM

The native rainforest tree grows over ten metres high. It is a dense evergreen tree which bears racemes with numerous sweet smelling white flowers in spring. After pollination, only a small percentage of these flowers become mature nuts. Maturity is reached from February onwards.

HARVESTING

After maturity is reached, the nuts fall to the ground and the fibrous green husk surrounding the nut-in-shell turns brown and splits open. The nuts fall to the ground between March and September each year and are harvested mechanically or by hand at regular intervals.

DEHUSKING, DRYING & TRANSPORT

After harvest, the husk is removed and the nut-in-shell is sorted and stored on the farm in aerated silos. The husk material is recycled as organic mulch on the farm and the nut-in-shell is transported to Nutworks.

FARM TO FACTORY

The nut-in-shell is transported to Nutworks in bulk by truck or semi-trailer for drying and processing. Processing of the macadamia nut began early in Australia with enthusiasts cracking by hand. The first macadamia nut processing plant was not established until 1954

DRYING

Careful drying is critical step in the macadamia processing to maximise shelf life and quality of the end product. At harvest the nuts have a moisture content of up to 30%. In Nutworks silos, the nut-in-shell moisture is reduced from field moisture to 1.5% kernel moisture content to suit cracking. At this moisture, the kernel comes away from the shell and ensures the full recovery of the kernel.

CRACKING & SORTING

After drying, the nut-in-shell is cracked mechanically and the shell is separated from the kernel by air separation and with the use of electronic colour sorters.

Machines have now been developed to crack the nuts' tough outer casing without damaging the precious kernel within. These machines have a fixed blade and rotating cutting blade or combination of rollers and base plate to crack the shell.

The electronic colour sorters separate the shell from the kernel. The waste shell is used as a substitute for coal. This is good for the environment as it is clean-burning with minimal residual ash.

During the cracking process, two key by-products are produced. One is called a “chip” and these small grades are ideal for use in cooking. The other is “residual dust”, which is used to make cold-pressed macadamia oil.

GRADING

The macadamia kernels are finally sorted by size using rotating screens. An elevator raises the nuts to the rotating screen for grading into different styles. Each style passes through the rotating screen into separate hoppers.

After grading, each hopper is opened separately, and a final visual sort and quality check is undertaken by hand.

PACKING

Bulk kernels pass through a metal detector and are filled into laminated foil bags and weighed. The bags are then vacuum-sealed to maximise storage life, sealing in the freshness.

MARKETING & EXPORT

The Australian macadamia industry is the largest producer of the only commercially viable native Australia product in the world. The combination of macadamias’ unique flavour, texture and heritage is a source of great pride amongst those involved in the industry.

Currently, macadamias account for about 2-3% of the work tree nut market, leaving ample opportunity for expansion in existing markets and for developing new markets. In recent year, there has been strong growth in the consumption of tree nuts worldwide as consumers become more interested in nuts as part of a healthy diet.

In excess of 60% of the nut-in-shell produced in Australia is directly exported as kernel to the world market, with USA, Europe and Japan being the key markets. The Australian domestic market has expanded enormously in recent years with many new high quality value-added products available. Macadamias are increasingly being used in manufactured food products and there is also greater use of macadamias in mixed nut production the traditional fresh category.

MACADAMIA HISTORY

The macadamia is related to the familiar banksia, grevillea, waratahs and hakea (Proteaceae family). There are several different types if macadamia, but only *Macadamia intergrifolia* and *Macadamia tetraphylla* produce commercially edible nuts.

The Proteaceae family are thought to have first flourished 65-130 million years ago in the age of the dinosaur, when Australia was part of the great Gondwanaland super-continent, which fragmented into South America, Antarctica, Africa, India and Australia.

Cultivation

The first macadamia tree used for cultivation was planted in the Botanic Gardens, Brisbane in 1858 and still bears nuts today.

Common Names

- Bauple Nut
- Queensland Nut
- Australian Nut
- Bush Nut
- Gympie Nut
- Popple Nut

Natural Distribution

Beechmont to Mt.Bauple, Queensland

Flowering Period

September

The Aboriginal people of Australia knew this plant as the “burrawong”, “kindal-kindal” or “boomberra”. It is believed that long before Australia was mapped by European explorers, Aboriginal people would congregate on the eastern slopes of Australia’s Great Dividing Range to feed on the seed of two evergreen trees, one of which was the macadamia. Bauple Mountain, south of Maryborough, is home to the world’s largest natural rainforest of these trees.

The German explorer Ludwig Leichhardt collected the macadamia in the 1840’s from the Conondale ranges near Maleny. The plant was not officially named until 1857. Ferdinand von Mueller, a British botanist, named it after Dr John Macadam, a chemist, medical man and member of the legislative assembly for Castlemaine in Victoria. It is reported that the nuts were first tasted by Europeans by one of von Mueller’s co-workers.

Nutworks Macadamia Factory

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