

## Bohol Virgin Coconut Oil: One Bottle of Oil to One Bowl of Rice for the Coconut Farmers

The healthy benefits of virgin coconut oil, with its highest lauric acid content compared to other edible oils around the world, created an accelerated demand from consumers world-wide. This in turn planted a renewed hope for the coconut farmers in the Philippines and once again asserted the coconut as the “tree of life.”



*Fig. 1. The road leading to Bohol Virgin Coconut Oil factory.*

Bohol recently attracted many foreign tourists visiting the island to enjoy its bounty of natural and cultural wonders: more than a thousand Chocolate Hills, white sand beaches at Panglao Island, emerald green Loboc River, cute “smallest monkey” tarsier, century-old Spanish catholic churches, etc. As tourists gape in awe on its natural and cultural wonders, local people looked for venues to further protect their island and preserve the gift of nature and culture that have been handed down through many generations.

Bohol Virgin Coconut Oil is aiming to share the richness of the millions of coconut trees of the island to the rest of the world. This will only be possible through responsible sustainable management of its natural resources. The absence of large industries and factories in the province resulted into villages deriving their livelihood through farming and fishing even up to this day. It is this unknowing “backwardness” that made Bohol among one of the last frontiers of nature.

Coconut farmers in the Philippines are mostly rice farmers as well. The harvest of coconuts is usually done every three months. Coconuts are harvested and dried, and are sold as copra which is a raw material for cooking oil. After this, the farmers will be back to the rice



*Fig. 2. The person-in-charge of the manufacturing of the Bohol Virgin Coconut Oil posed in front of the factory.*

fields to take care of the rice which is harvested two to three times a year with good water supply. The coconut trees requires minimal attention from the farmers compared to rice.

For the local people, to further protect their natural and cultural heritage, education of their young is necessary. This will lead to the awareness, appreciation, and then preservation of their local treasure. And this will only be possible when local farmers, which consists of a large part of the population, will be able to support the basic needs of their families, including education.

The marketing of the virgin coconut oil is relatively new to the coconut farmers. An increased demand of virgin coconut oil will help augment the farmers' income and bring food to their table. In most cases with the low-income of the farmers, there would be a shortage of food on the table such that the young children are discouraged from going to school by parents to help provide for the family. To address this problem, Bohol Virgin Coconut Oil is adopting this motto: a bottle of virgin coconut oil sold brings a bowl of rice to the farmer's table.



*Fig. 3. Curious village children welcoming the visitors.*

We encouraged the rest of the world to help us support the coconut farmers in Bohol.