



ICAR-CIARI to Showcase 'Andaman Kokum' and Mango Ginger Innovations at Island Food Festival

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The ICAR-Central Island Agricultural Research Institute (CIARI), Sri Vijaya Puram, is set to present a range of innovative, locally developed food products at the upcoming Island Food Festival 2026, scheduled to be held at ITF Ground from April 17 to 19, 2026. Visitors will get an opportunity to savour unique island flavours derived from endemic and underutilized crops, alongside CIARI's broader technological innovations.

A key highlight of CIARI's showcase is its pioneering work on *Garcinia dhanikhariensis*, an endemic species found exclusively in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands. To establish a distinct identity for this rare fruit, CIARI researchers have named it 'Andaman Kokum'. Scientific studies conducted at the institute have revealed that the fruit is rich in bioactive compounds such as antioxidants, anthocyanins, and hydroxycitric acid, positioning it as a promising novel fruit crop for the islands.

With its limited natural population posing a challenge for wider utilization, CIARI developed a nursery protocol for mass multiplication and has been supplying planting material to local farmers through its Horticultural Plants Propagation Unit. Building on this, researchers have also developed value-added products including Andaman Kokum syrup, candy, and dried rind, aimed at enhancing both usability and nutritional benefits for consumers.

Another notable innovation to be featured is based on Mango Ginger (*Curcuma mangga*), a native rhizome spice known for its distinct raw mango-like aroma. Despite its medicinal properties—owing to the presence of curcumin and essential oils—the crop has remained largely underutilized. After over three years of research, CIARI scientists have developed a ready-to-use culinary paste from Mango Ginger, suitable for a variety of dishes ranging from fried rice and biryanis to curries, making it relevant for both household kitchens and the hospitality sector.

In a move to ensure wider outreach and commercialization of these technologies, CIARI transferred its technical know-how in December 2025 to two women entrepreneurs from South Andaman, Ms. Sneha Horo and Ms. M. Venni. The duo established a firm, Island's Ras and Root, registered under UDYAM and FSSAI, to produce and market these products. Their offerings, which were launched during CIARI's Kisan Mela in February 2026, received a strong consumer response and will now be showcased at the festival as limited-edition products.

The initiative reflects CIARI's continued efforts, under the leadership of its Director (Act.), Dr. Jai Sunder, to conserve island biodiversity, promote entrepreneurship, and generate livelihood opportunities. The Island Food Festival is expected to serve as a platform not only for culinary celebration but also for demonstrating how scientific innovation, traditional knowledge, and enterprise can collectively contribute to the sustainable development of the island ecosystem.