

# BE A GREEN SANTA IN THIS WHITE WINTER!

How About Betel Sheath Dinner Plates, Banana Fibre Wine Bottle Holders Coupled With Palm Leaf Nut Trays For A Christmas Hamper?

**Sudeshna Chatterjee** Gets The Green Entrepreneur **Poorani Kesavan** For Some Unique, Inexpensive Green Christmas Gifts

**2010** is the International Biodiversity Year. Keeping with that spirit, as Christmas draws in and you have to play Santa Claus, what better way than to gift your loved ones with environment friendly articles.

Make sure you tell them how and why they are environment friendly as this will make them look out for other bio-friendly gifts. This will also keep the little ones' brain on action and our future generation can be expected to be more sensitive to preserve Mother Earth. Yes, this time, as you prepare to be Santa to someone, think about the planet and the threat it is facing thanks to the increase of greenhouse gases. And if Cancun summit is any indication, it is time for common people to take up the cause of keeping your city green and serve an example for those from the richer nations. So, don't just gift an article, make sure to wrap it with a thought.

It is here that the green products marketed by Poorani Kesavan bears mention. For one, these are not your regular green stuff that you get off the shelf in many shops. These are unique and inexpensive. Sample it out yourself. Heard of betel sheath plates, banana fibre wine bottle holders or palm leaf book stands? At her modest flat at Vasant Vihar, Kesavan, 41, shows it with much pride. She sources her products from the interiors of southern cities like betel sheath plates from Bengaluru (Karnataka), banana fibre products from Ernakulam (Ker-

ala) and palm leaf products from Tuticorin (Tamil Nadu).

Most people, specially those living in the urban areas may not have seen or heard of betel sheaths. Once, the betels are taken out, the sheaths are usually wasted away. In

a TV programme, Kesavan saw how these

sheaths are turned into plates of different sizes by Dayanand Saraswati Ashram, Coimbatore. She got trained by them and worked in another organisation before becoming an independent entrepreneur in 2003.

Some of the advantages of these eco plates include they are biodegradable, heat resistant and mi-



crowave durable. The longevity of the plates is directly proportionate to the frequency of its usage, the manner of its usage and how it is maintained. For example, "If dry food is used rather than wet food, then it can be easily cleaned with a dry cloth and its durability will be more," she points

out.

There are more unique things in the offing. That lovely handicraft items can be made out of banana fibre is to be seen to be believed. "Banana fibre is extracted from the stem of the banana plant. These are then turned into ropes and then weaved to make table mats, doormats, carry bags, runners, caps etc in different colours. About 2,500 products are made out of banana fibre," says Kesavan. They are sturdy and bio-degradable. In fact, the whole manufacturing process is cent percent bio-degradable, maintains Kesavan.

How? "Well, when the stem is extracted, you get starch, water and fibre. Fibre is used for the product. Starch and water is used for vermi-compost," she explains.

While gifts could be of any nature, certain products particularly draws your attention since Christmas is just about couple of days away. How about wine bottle holders coupled with nut trays as a gift? They are available in both banana fibre material as well as those made with palm leaves. You can further add to it with a dozen dinner plates made of betel sheaths which will cost much less than Rs 100, but can go a long way in enhancing someone's experience of a Christmas din-

