- **Where:** San Andrés y Providencia.
- **Region:** Caribbean.
- **Material:** coconut.

Coconut crafts /Pic. borboletaselvatica

In the year 1853, following several social and economic upheavals, the cultivation of coconut palms displaced the cultivation of cotton in the Archipelago of San Andrés, Providencia y Santa Catalina . From then on, the islands began to smell and taste of coconut.

Not only did coconuts become the main characters in the gastronomy of the islands; they also became the basic material for the handicrafts of the region.

Characteristics of the coconut

The coconut palm is a multi-use tree

Hats and baskets are made from its branches; the fiber that surrounds the nut (popularly called bonete) is used for making string, mats, wall hangings, and rugs. The pulp of the coconut yields a delicious oil with which the islanders prepare seafood.

Coconut crafts

Coconut crafts

The shell of the coconut is the part most used for handicrafts. These are primarily bowls, sauceboats, spoons, necklaces, earrings, bracelets, barrettes, card holders, belts, dishes, coasters, cups, sugar bowls, and lamps.

But for the shell to become a product, some preparation is necessary. The shells must be soaked in water for ten to fifteen minutes or until they have absorbed the maximum amount of water. Then, the outside of the shell is scraped and cleaned with a knife or a spoon. Later, the shell is sanded until its surface becomes absolutely smooth and shiny.

The creativity of islanders in making crafts out of coconuts is quite surprising

When the shell is ready, the desired shapes, previously cut out from cardboard, are outlined on it. Finally, the shell is cut and the assembly of the handicraft begins.

The inhabitants of San Andrés, Providencia y Santa Catalina are so skillful they seem to make use of magic use in manufacturing their products. Not only do they surprise everyone with new designs every day; they also combine coconuts with other natural materials like wood, leather, ceramics, seeds, tagua, and silver. By doing so, they add a new dimension to their products.

If you like coconut handicrafts, you may be interested in:

- Other handicrafts: Autochthonous materials .
- Places: San Andrés y Providencia , Old Providence McBean Lagoon Natural Park.