Shea Butter Manufacturing Processing

The process of shea butter production is very long and difficult.  Ghanian women are using traditional methods and almost the whole shea butter  production process is made solely with hands, just like centuries ago. Women usually work together and help each other, which makes the work easier, more interesting and relaxed. Women in Ghana gather under a big tree outside compounds, where they can be protected from the merciless sun and work from the early morning to the late afternoon.

When shea nuts are dry, shells have to be removed.

The only way of removing shells is to crack them with stones or other hard materials. Shea nuts are then washed again and dried under the sun. Afterwards, nuts are broken into small pieces. In past, women used to grind nuts with their hands, using mortar and pestle.

Nowadays, they mostly take them to the grinding machine which really facilitates and speed up the process.

Once nuts or flesh are crushed, they are roasted on fire. That is why final product has a pleasant roasting scent. Roasted fragments are then taken to the grinding machine again, where with a special process, thick paste is obtained. After this process phase, the most difficult part follows.

Women put paste in big basins, sit in shadow and churn the paste with one hand. Water is added gradually, most often by small children who are supposed to help their mothers.

Women churn the heavy paste for at least an hour, until butter oil separates from water. Afterwards, butter oil is carefully removed and put into a bowl of boiling water under low fire. When butter oil melts under the high temperature, women scoop off oil that floats to the top of the bowl.

Liquid is then strain in order to remove all the unwanted impurities and put into big basins. These basins have to be saved in a cool and dark place for minimum half a day, so that oil becomes thick and ready to use and sell.