



Native to southeast Asia, this tree can produce fruit weighing up to 100 pounds. Annie Ryu (above) shows the scale. Green, unripened jackfruit is used in savory dishes. But the fruit can also be enjoyed at its peak (top), when it gets sweet like other tropical fruits.

The Queen of Jacks

Jackfruit is a rising star on the supermarket scene as demand for plant-based “meats” continues to grow. Annie Ryu, the 27-year-old founder of the largest supplier in America, is leading the charge.

In the summer of 2011, Annie Ryu was traveling in Bangalore, India, when a spiky green mass caught her eye. “I thought it was an Indian porcupine!” she laughs. It was jackfruit—a huge, bulbous fruit with a thick rind, fleshy interior and a mild taste that soaks up any flavor you pair it with. And for Ryu, it was love at first bite. She decided that the rest of the world needed to taste it too.

A Harvard University junior on the med-school track at the time, Ryu found herself engrossed in research on the meaty-textured fruit. For starters, it’s nutritious—high in fiber and potassium. It’s also abundant. One tree can produce 200 to 300 jackfruit per year. But jackfruit was hugely overlooked. While some locals (and elephants) ate it, the majority was left to rot because there was no global market for it—yet. Ryu saw potential for sales to bring an additional income to small farmers who already had wild jackfruit trees growing on their land.

Later that same summer, Ryu founded Global Village Fruit, a company focused on developing jackfruit supply chains. Then, after graduating in 2013,



EAT THIS

We Know Jackfruit



The Jackfruit Company BBQ Jackfruit

Serve this sweet and smoky jackfruit exactly—seriously, *exactly*—as you would pulled pork.



Upton's Naturals Chili Lime Carnitas

Perfect for making tacos, nachos and burritos with a kick.



Trader Joe's Green Jackfruit

This unflavored version is ready for any sauce or marinade you'd like.

she jumped into the business full time. She launched the Jackfruit Company, which now sources from 500 small farms in India to make heat-and-eat entrees. Flavors include BBQ, Tex-Mex, Teriyaki and Curry. Nutrition note: While jackfruit has a meaty feel, it isn't very high in protein, so pair it with other proteins—make it into a stew with chickpeas, tuck it into tacos with cheese or pile it on a bun with baked beans.

Today, the Jackfruit Company's line is in over 5,500 stores nationwide, including Whole Foods, Kroger, Wegmans, Publix and Safeway—making it the largest supplier of jackfruit products in the U.S. Other companies, like Upton's Naturals and Native Forest (available online), have jumped on board this growing trend as well.

Ryu's mission goes beyond just business: she's making good on her promise to help farmers in India. “We're estimated to be contributing 10 to 40 percent of the annual income of the farmers that we work with,” she says. Jackfruit is also a sustainable way to satisfy a hankering for meat. Says Ryu: “We convincingly replicate meat with trees!”

NATASYA MOHD ADNAN/EYEEM/GETTY IMAGES; INSERTS: LEFT & TOP, COURTESY THE JACKFRUIT COMPANY; UPTON'S NATURAL; OLIVER PARINI