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ALL ABOUT JACKFRUIT



Cultivated for over 3,000-6,000 years, jackfruit (*Artocarpus heterophyllus*), is one of the oldest known fruits. Believed to have originated in the rainforests of Western Ghats in southern India, jackfruit spread to Southeast Asia, Africa, and Brazil through Portuguese colonizers in the 16th century. Today, it is widely grown in tropical regions, including the Caribbean, Central, and South America. Valued as a staple food, particularly during famines, jackfruit's abundance, versatility, and resilience have made it a significant crop across many cultures.

Jackfruit thrives in tropical and subtropical climates with temperatures between 77°F–95°F and grows best in well-drained, sandy soils. The jackfruit tree, an evergreen species, can reach heights of 65–100 feet and bears both male and female flowers. Seedlings begin fruiting within 3–6 years, and a mature tree can produce 100–200 fruits annually. Each fruit, weighing between 22–110 lbs and reaching up to 35 inches in length, is the largest tree-borne fruit in the world.


Economically, jackfruit provides an essential income source for farmers in tropical regions and has seen growing demand in international markets as a sustainable, nutritious meat alternative. However, challenges persist, including its short shelf life, labor-intensive harvesting and processing, pest and disease susceptibility, and infrastructure limitations in developing regions.

Despite these challenges, jackfruit remains a vital crop due to its role in food security, nutrition, and economic development. Its climate resilience and versatility have earned it a reputation as a "miracle fruit" capable of addressing both local and global food demands, particularly as plant-based diets gain popularity worldwide.

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HEALTHY INGREDIENT CONTRIBUTION



Jackfruit is a nutrient-rich, low-calorie fruit loaded with fiber, vitamins, minerals, and antioxidants, supporting digestion, heart health, immunity, and skin. Its low calories, antioxidants, and low glycemic index support weight management and blood sugar regulation. The seeds provide plant-based protein, while unripe jackfruit's meaty texture makes it a popular vegan substitute.

Calcium: A one cup serving of raw jackfruit contains approximately 40mg of calcium. Including this source of calcium in your regular diet can help build, maintain and strengthen bones in addition to helping with muscle contractions, preventing blood clots, and maintaining blood pressure.

Dietary Fiber: 1 cup of raw, sliced jackfruit can provide approximately 2.5 grams of fiber, or roughly 9% of the DV. Fiber is essential for digestive health, helps regulate blood sugar levels, potentially reduces risk of heart disease, and helps people with the feeling of being full.

Magnesium: Corn tortillas are a good source of magnesium which plays crucial roles in the body such as energy production and muscle and nerve function. Chronically low levels of magnesium can increase the risk of high blood pressure, heart disease, type-2 diabetes and osteoporosis. One cup of raw jackfruit contains 48mg, or 11% of the recommended daily value (DV), of magnesium.

Potassium: Needed for the normal functioning of the heart, the potassium found in jackfruit can aid in reducing blood pressure by balancing the sodium found in the body. One cup of raw, sliced jackfruit equates to approximately 740mg of potassium, which is nearly double the amount found in a medium banana.


Nutritional Information/Pictures from <https://www.healthline.com>

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TYPES AND VARIETIES

Jackfruit comes in various types and varieties, primarily distinguished by texture, flavor, and intended culinary uses. The main types are soft flesh (honey or butter jackfruit) and firm flesh (crunchy jackfruit) as well as select regional varieties. Unripe (green) jackfruit has a neutral taste and fibrous texture, making it a popular choice for savory dishes and a versatile plant-based meat alternative. In contrast, ripe jackfruit is sweet and aromatic, commonly eaten fresh or used in desserts. The seeds of jackfruit are also edible and highly nutritious, often boiled, roasted, or ground into flour. They offer a nutty flavor and are a rich source of plant-based protein, adding to the fruit's versatility.



Soft Flesh (Honey/Butter)

- **Characteristics:** Sweet, soft, and juicy with a creamy texture.
- **Flavor:** Extremely sweet and aromatic.
- **Uses:** Best for eating fresh or in sweet preparations like jams, smoothies, and puddings.

Firm Flesh (Crunchy)

- **Characteristics:** Firmer texture with a less juicy, crisp bite.
- **Flavor:** Mild sweetness with a neutral profile that absorbs flavors.
- **Uses:** Ideal for cooking in savory dishes, particularly as a meat substitute.

Regional Varieties

- **Varikka (India):** Firm and less sweet, often used in cooking.
- **Koocha:** Soft and sweet, mostly consumed fresh.
- **Thong Prasert (Thailand):** Crunchy and sweet, widely exported.
- **Cempedak (Indonesia):** Small and soft, with a unique aroma.

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SELECTING AND STORING

Selecting Jackfruit:

- **Freshness:** Choose a jackfruit with a consistent green to yellowish-brown skin tone. Avoid fruit with overly dark or soft spots which might indicate over-ripeness or decay.
- **Aroma:** Ripe jackfruit emits a sweet, fruit fragrance. If it smells overly pungent or fermented, it may be a sign of over-ripeness. Unripe jackfruit often has little to no smell.
- **Firmness:** For ripe jackfruit, the skin should give slightly when pressed whereas unripe jackfruit should be firmer to the touch.
- **Size:** Jackfruit can vary immensely in size, ranging from 10 to 50 pounds. Choose a size based on your needs to minimize waste.
- **Tapping Sound:** A hollow sound when a jackfruit is tapped indicates ripeness.

Storing Jackfruit:

- **Whole Jackfruit:** Store at room temperature if unripe, as it will continue to ripen. If it's already ripe, store the jackfruit in the refrigerator for up to 5-7 days to prevent the jackfruit from becoming over-ripe.
- **Cut Jackfruit:** Wrap cut pieces tightly in plastic wrap or store in airtight containers. Keep cut jackfruit stored in the refrigerator and consume it within 5-7 days.
- **Jackfruit Pods:** Remove the pods (flesh) from the rind and store them in an airtight container. Pods can also be frozen for long-term storage of up to 6 months.
- **Seeds:** Jackfruit seeds can be boiled or roasted. Store them in the refrigerator for up to a week or freeze them for extended storage.
- **Frozen Jackfruit:** If purchased frozen, keep it in the freezer and only thaw the portion needed for immediate use in cooking or for consumption.



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CULINARY USES

Jackfruit is incredibly versatile and can be used in a wide range of dishes, both sweet and savory, depending on its ripeness. Here are just a few of the many culinary uses:

Unripe Jackfruit:

- **Pulled:** Cooked with barbecue sauce, it mimics pulled pork for use in sandwiches, tacos, or sliders.
- **Curries/Stews:** Simmered in spices, it absorbs flavors and works particularly well in Indian and Thai dishes.
- **Stir-Fry:** Use jackfruit as a vegetarian protein in stir-fried dishes with vegetables and sauces.
- **Fritters/Patties:** Deep fried or pan-fried, shredded jackfruit can be turned into patties, fritters, or croquettes.
- **Canned:** Available in brine or water, canned young jackfruit is a convenient option for quick cooking.

Ripe Jackfruit:

- **Raw Consumption:** The sweet, yellow pods can be eaten fresh as a snack or used in fruit salad.
- **Smoothies/Milkshakes:** Blended ripe jackfruit adds a tropical twist to smoothies, milkshakes, and lassis.
- **Ice Cream/Puddings:** Pureed jackfruit enhances deserts like custards and ice creams.
- **Fritters:** Pods can be coated in batter and fried for a sweet treat.
- **Cakes/Muffins:** Ripe jackfruit can be used as a natural sweetener for many baked goods.

Jackfruit Seeds:

- **Boiled/Roasted:** Cooked seeds, similar to chestnuts, can be eaten as a snack, topping or garnish.
- **Curries/Soups:** Seeds can be added to curries, stews, or soups for a hearty texture.
- **Flour:** Dried and ground seeds are used as a gluten-free flour alternative with a nutty flavor.



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INTERESTING FACTS



- The name "jackfruit" comes from the Portuguese word "jaca," which was derived from the Malayalam word "chakka."
- In Bangladesh, jackfruit is not just popular but also holds the honor of being the national fruit!
- Jackfruit holds the title for being the largest fruit that grows on a tree. It can weigh up to 80 pounds and grow over 3 feet long!
- Despite its size, jackfruit belongs to the Moraceae family, making it a cousin to mulberries, figs, and breadfruit.
- The jackfruit's inner skin contains a sticky latex, so oiling your hands and knife before cutting it can prevent a mess!
- Jackfruit has gained global attention as a superfood, with chefs and food enthusiasts in Western countries now incorporating it into everything from tacos to desserts.
- The jackfruit tree is truly zero-waste with its wood used for making furniture and musical instruments, the fruit and seeds are eaten in savory and sweet dishes, and its leaves are used as fodder for livestock.

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RECIPE

Jackfruit Pad Prik King
Yield: 4 Servings

Ingredients:

- 3.5 Cups Young Jackfruit, Fresh, Shredded
- 2 Tsp Avocado Oil
- 3 Tbsp Red Curry Paste
- 1/4 Cup Vegetable Stock
- 1 Tbsp Maple Syrup
- 2 Tbsp Coconut Aminos
- 3 Kaffir (Makrut) Lime Leaves
- 2 Cups Green Beans, Stemmed, Bite Size Pieces

Directions:

1. Heat a wok or a large saucepan over medium-high heat, add the avocado oil. Once to temperature, add the shredded jackfruit and sauté for 2–3 minutes or until the jackfruit softens.
2. Remove the jackfruit from the pan and set aside. Reduce the heat to medium, add the curry paste, vegetable stock, maple syrup, and coconut aminos. Mix until well combined and bring to a simmer, about 1–2 minutes. Add the lime leaves and cook for a few minutes more.
3. Return the jackfruit to the pan and mix until the jackfruit is well covered, you may need to add 1 tablespoon of water or vegetable stock to loosen up the sauce. Cook the jackfruit with the sauce for 1–2 minutes, then add the green beans.
4. Toss the green beans and jackfruit together, cover with a lid, and steam until the green beans are soft with a bite about 5–8 minutes. If you notice the jackfruit is sticking, add one more tablespoon of water or vegetable stock.
5. Once the green beans have softened remove them from the heat, taste for seasoning, and adjust to your liking. Serve over brown rice or your favorite whole grain of choice.

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QUIZ



After you read through this month's Ingredient of the Month, take this quiz to test your knowledge. In order to earn continuing education hours (CEHs) from the American Culinary Federation (ACF), the test must be completed through the ACF's Online Learning Center. Seventy-five percent accuracy is required to earn one hour of continuing education credits toward professional certification.

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QUIZ

Question #1



Jackfruit's popularity has grown due to its potential as a sustainable, plant-based meat alternative.


A. True
B. False

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QUIZ

Question #2



How long does it typically take for jackfruit seedlings to begin fruiting?


A. 1-2 years
B. 3-6 years
C. 6-8 years
D. Over 10 years

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QUIZ

Question #3



How much dietary fiber is found in one cup of raw, sliced jackfruit?


A. 1 gram
B. 2.5 grams
C. 5 grams
D. 7.5 grams

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QUIZ

Question #4



What makes jackfruit a good vegan substitute for traditional meat options?


- A. Its high calcium content
- B. The protein found in its seeds
- C. Its meaty texture
- D. All of the above

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QUIZ

Question #5



Ripe jackfruit is most commonly used in savory dishes.


- A. True
- B. False

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QUIZ

Question #6



Which regional variety of jackfruit is widely exported and known for being crunchy and sweet?

- A. Thong Prasert
- B. Koozha
- C. Varikka
- D. Cempedak

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QUIZ

Question #7

How should you store whole jackfruit if it is not ripe?

A. In the refrigerator
B. In an airtight container
C. In the freezer
D. At room temperature



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QUIZ

Question #8

Jackfruit seeds, when boiled or roasted, have a flavor similar to what?

A. Almonds
B. Chestnuts
C. Pecans
D. Macadamia nuts



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QUIZ

Question #9

What is the origin of the name jackfruit?

A. Hindi word "Jakka"
B. Portuguese word "Jaca"
C. Tamil word "Kakka"
D. Bengali word "Chakka"




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QUIZ

Question #10



What is another name for the Kaffir lime leaves used in the recipe for Jackfruit Pad Prik King?

- A. Persian
- B. Hystrix
- C. Makrut
- D. Key Lime

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JOIN US NEXT MONTH!



Stay tuned for the next ACF Ingredient of the Month! Be sure to visit the Online Learning Center (OLC) to download a copy of each month's ingredient presentation. Don't forget to take the official IOTM quiz through the OLC to earn one hour of continuing education credits toward professional certification.

For more information:

- www.acfchefs.org
- www.acfchefs.org/olc
- www.acfchefs.org/iotm

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