

Bad, Ugly and Sweet

By : **Juggernaut**

“ It stinks bad, “ “ You eat this ugly fruit? “ Derrick jumped back from the large fruit cut opened with a machete. “ It smells good for me and tasty too, “ Juggernaut pulled a slippery, glossy yellow flesh covering a large seed and placed in his mouth savoring its taste to full extent. The golden yellow fleshy covering of a large seed is the sweetest part of the fruit that can be eaten fresh while the large seeds are like chestnuts roasted, boiled or fried as chips.



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Subba Rao

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“We feed these prickly unripe green fruits to pigs on the island, they like it bad,” said Derrick getting up and looking at a tree with shiny green leaves and gigantic fruits hanging loose from its branches and the tree trunk.

“What you call this tree here?”

“We call Jackfruit tree.”

“Do you know as early as in 250 years B.C., Emperor Ashoka the Great of India declared Jackfruit as we know today as the Fruit of the Gods and encouraged its propagation throughout the subcontinent as we know now as India? The Portuguese traders visiting South India in early 1500 have mispronounced its local name “chakka” as “jaka” and the fruit was stuck with the name “Jackfruit.” What an improbable name? The Jackfruit got a bad rap from Portuguese folly. The bad boy of all fruits, weighs up to 80 pounds deserves a better name; say “Bad Boy” “Sweet Heaven” or “Hang Loose” since these fruits hang loose from trunk of the tree. Any one of these names best describe its appearance and taste. Now we stuck with this irrelevant name “Jackfruit”, we can only hope to change it by marketing with one of those fancy names to make it popular. Is it not “Kiwi Fruit” alias for “Chinese Gooseberry” became more popular with its alias?”

Dumbfounded and silent, not able to digest all that information, Derrick looked at Juggernaut in disbelief thinking what triggered Juggernaut to get so emotional about a fruit that stinks.

Juggernaut took a deep breath and got a grip on himself realizing that he was overtaken by the emotions on the injustice done to the fruit known as Jackfruit everywhere except in its native habitat.

The name “Jackfruit” is non starter. Unless people tasted one, saw a real one or at least saw a picture of it, very few know how a Jackfruit looks like. It is an enormous fruit that weighs up to 80 pounds with prickly outer coat with shades of green to yellow green, hangs from the tree branches and the trunk. What is inside the fruit is totally misrepresented and grossly diminished by its look. To cut open the fruit is tedious because of sticky material that slows down the progress. One has to apply plenty oil to the hands and knife before handling the fruit to cut open to prevent white gummy latex like material sticking to the finger and the knife. Once the fruit is cut opened, a unique aroma comes out to either please some or totally put off others. The cross section exposes oval shaped slippery, shiny yellow flesh surrounding each seed that looks like a chestnut. Long, thin, white ribbon like material intertwines like a loose net around the yellow flesh. It is the yellow flesh is the sweetest part of the fruit.

Why anybody has to go through all this? It all about acquired taste. Unless somebody was exposed to eating this fruit from childhood, it is impossible to enjoy its unique flavor. It is sweet alright but its aroma will put-off anybody who was not familiar eating it from childhood.

The young unripe fruit is used as a vegetable. It is easy to cut open to use as a vegetable rather than as a fruit. The prickly rind is removed with a sharp knife and the inner content is chopped into bits and pieces and curried to eat with steamed rice. It is more popular as a vegetable since the objectionable aroma associated with fruit is absent with the green unripe fruit.

“It seems you were emotionally attached to this fruit,” said Derrick wrapping the fruit pieces with news paper and loading onto the Land Rover.

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â I am; you know I came from a region where these fruit trees were cultivated on a large scale,â
â I never expected to see this fruit tree on the island and pleasantly surprised to see one.â

â Perhaps the British have brought it here from India, you know,â â Your wife will be happy to share the fruit with you saar,â said Derrick shaking his head with a smile exposing his shiny white teeth.

Next day morning Juggernaut jumped from the bed just to hear â Something smelling funny in the kitchen, have you brought something last night,â his wife was screaming.

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