

# Kadazandusuns; Traditional fruit based vegetables...



**A**LMOST all of us have eaten Jackfruit or Nangka at least once in our life. I believe that most of us love the sweet spongy taste of ripe Jackfruit for dessert. The ripe fruit can be eaten fresh or it can be cooked as a sort of sweet porridge. In fact it can also be made into juice. Juice! Now that is something new. Now we drink fruits!

Anyway, in my community almost every home seems to have at least one jackfruit tree growing at the backyard.

However, this fast growing tree is not Sabahan...it is not even Malaysian, it is believed to have originated from India.

The fruit as we all know is eaten ripe but it is also consumed while it is still green; as vegetable.

When you want to cook it as vegetable, you have to get the young fruit but not too young or you will have very 'closed' fibres and the taste will be a bit bitter. You have to de-skin it and cut it into bite size pieces. After that you wash it thoroughly to get the sticky gum off it. You have to boil it for five minutes at least to get the pithy taste out before you cook it properly.

For those of us who have never seen a Jackfruit in its natural surrounding, the skin of the fruit varies from dark to light green while it's on the tree. The skin will deepen to yellowish brown hue when it ripens. When you cut the ripe fruit open, you will see numerous segments with stringy white tissue and therein the seed, covered in golden yellow flesh.

The ripe fruit exudes a cloying sweet smell. By the way, to have a nicely ripened fruit with no worm burrow, cover the young fruit in gunnysack. That way you will have a blemish-free fruit and if for sale, better market value.

The seeds of ripe Jackfruit can be eaten too. In fact, I remember a gaggle of aunts grabbing the seeds and boiling them with salt, when I was a child. They liked to snack on the pale seeds while listening to my great-grandmother's tales. I think the seeds gave them flatulence as I remember the awful smell of intestinal wind ejected from feminine rear ends.

The skin of the ripe fruit can be pickled and eaten. After the fruit is eaten, the skin is scrapped off its rough exterior. It is then cut into bite sizes and pickled in rice water. Rice water means water used to wash rice.

Personally, I know of two main varieties of jackfruit. One has flesh that is soft and stringy when ripe, which we call 'Nangka Bubur' or 'Porridge Jackfruit' while the other one has firm and crisp flesh. We call this 'Nangka Binulang' or 'Leather Jackfruit'.

The other fruit that can be eaten as vegetable is the papaya. This fruit is available in most Kadazandusun's backyard, especially when they live in the suburbs and rural areas. This is because the seeds of this fruit seem to take to the environment easily. You can just throw them out of your window and lo! a week later you will see a papaya plant sprouting merrily up. Whether or not they grow up to be full-pledged papaya tree is another matter what so ever, however.

Be that as it may, this fruit range from the very big to small fist-like size. When it is eaten green or as vegetable, what you do is de-skin the papaya and cut them into bite size pieces. Then you fry them with ingredients of your choice. Personally I like papaya fried with canned dace and black beans or fried with oyster sauce and then sprinkled with salted fish floss.

I believe most people love ripe papaya. They can be eaten just like that, scooped with a spoon, or you can de-skin the papaya and cut them into pieces. You can also eat this with ice cream on top.

A long time ago, my grandmother said constipation could be remedied by eating lots of papaya. She has been proven correct many times by my family.

That is not the only problem that can be helped by papaya. The papaya leaves are believed to be able to destroy worms and intestinal parasite. I read somewhere that because the leaf is high in beta-carotene; it can also prevent infection. The flowers are also good when eaten as vegetable. They are very bitter but it is supposed to decrease high glucose content in blood, so it is good for diabetics.

A friend of mine said that the leaves could also be used as tenderiser. To tenderise tough meat, like old chicken, you wrap and boil it. You can also drop in an unripe fruit in the concoction. I have never done this before so I cannot vouch for this, but you can try.

These are two fruits that you can eat as vegetables. So the next time you see a Jackfruit and a papaya, think vegetables and experiment. You may get a pleasant surprise.

