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You don't know Jack (fruit)...

By Cathy Dausman



Rambutan Photo Cathy Dausman

Seasonal fruit in groceries and farmers' markets across Lamorinda offer peaches and pears aplenty, but these edible anomalies may have you doing double takes.

Jackfruit, alternately spelled Jakfruit, is a monster to behold. Easily comparable in size to a watermelon, this far-eastern import is a relative of the fig, mulberry and breadfruit tree. It is low in calories, cholesterol and sodium and high in heft - the individual fruits can tip the scales at almost 100 pounds.

Bitter melon, says one online source, is a fast-growing, trailing or climbing vine with thin stems and tendrils which require trellis support. Bitter melon looks like a cucumber with skin gone awry, and indeed it is a member of the cucumber and squash family. It may aid in regulating diabetes, as the vegetable contains a chemical called charantin, which reduced blood glucose in rabbits. It can also be prepared as a green tea substitute.

Slice open the almost Harry-Potter like dragon fruit, with its lime and fuchsia covering and discover a black-spotted white interior with a taste like kiwi fruit. The www.livelovefruit.com website claims dragon fruit has many health benefits including benefits for bones, teeth, nervous and immune systems, skin and heart.

While the rambutan may be as common as an apple in Southeast Asia its looks are menacing in a microscopic bacterial sort of way, although the fruit is thin-skinned and its exterior "spines" are harmless. The fruit name is derived for the Malaysian word for hairy; inside its other-worldly exterior is a fleshy white fruit ball wrapped around an inedible seed. Cross a lychee with Addams family's Cousin It and you get a rambutan. It even has a website: www.rambutan.com

The almost entirely all-rind Citrus Fingers is also known as Buddha's fingers or fingered citron. Did someone plug a lemon into an outlet? Use citrus fingers for cooking or to flavor alcoholic drinks, or simply as a sweet-smelling decoration.



Dragon fruit

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[back](#)

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