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Breadfruit Has All The Makings Of A Global Future Food Trend

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With its immense potential for food resilience and security, breadfruit or *Artocarpus altilis* is being celebrated as a staple crop with the opportunity to boost global climate smart sustainable development. Traditionally grown in the Pacific, the Caribbean and other tropical regions, and also available on farms across Florida, scientists and economists are encouraging more widespread adoption in climate vulnerable food insecure countries. Elsewhere, breadfruit's popularity is increasing as an up-and-coming exotic food, taking it beyond the specialty food aisle, and into functional foods and high end menus. All trends point to this crop's potential for growth in the months and years to come.

In British Columbia, the [first complete, fully-designed breadfruit diet study](#), heralded the potential of the superfood to be the next big nutritional trend, and in many countries, breadfruit has become a common ingredient in mainstream diets. Even Chef Gordon Ramsay admits that he was blown away by the staple and its

versatility, using the super food as the primary ingredient in Shepherd's Pie in an episode of the National Geographic series, [Gordon Ramsay: Uncharted](#).

According to [Tastewise](#), now more than ever, consumers want personal and planet-based health to align across plant-based categories, and this is very much the case for breadfruit.

Nutritionally, breadfruit is an energy-rich, low-fat food, that is gluten free and high in fiber and minerals such as calcium, iron and potassium. One fruit can provide the carbohydrate intake for an entire family and breadfruit protein has been [found to be](#) more digestible than that of wheat, with higher total essential amino acid content than other staples including rice, corn, wheat, potato, and soybean. This is in keeping with [StartUs Insights'](#) projections that plant based proteins will be bigger than ever in 2024.

As a low glycemic super food, breadfruit has great potential for use in the production of functional, vegetarian and gluten-free foods as well as for the management of conditions such as coronary heart disease and diabetes. Check, check and... check for what will continue to trend in the coming months.

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Pancakes made from breadfruit pancake and waffle mix from Amasar PR [AMASAR PR](#)

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Last year, the Specialty Food Association's sofi Awards—recognizing the best in specialty foods that are projected to join mainstream restaurant menus and home kitchens— included [Amasar All Purpose Breadfruit Mix](#) from Puerto Rico among its favorite new products. The mix is used to make cakes, pancakes and waffles, among other baked goods that call for flour.

As far as trends go, Hanni Rützler, one of Europe's leading food experts, [predicts](#) that regenerative food will be a big trend in 2024

and will continue to compete with the organic industry. As part of this trend, consumers will value regional food production, as well as exotic foods. And yes, breadfruit fits the bill on both counts.

[Tasting the future](#) predicts that in 2024, consumers will look to climate friendly crops and forgotten or orphan crops (traditional crops that are often overlooked).

Environmentally— as a low maintenance, high yielding crop with little need for human intervention, that can share space with a variety of fruits and vegetables across a variety of soil conditions and topographies— research suggests that breadfruit will grow well across tropical environments into the distant future. In addition to its small environmental foot print, the crop can withstand severe weather conditions, and with a lifespan of more than 50 years, the perennial creates little soil disturbance and can even regenerate degraded land. With respect to climate mitigation, scientists say that a mature breadfruit tree can sequester 1.3 metric tons of carbon.

In 2022, [researchers](#) at Northwestern University in Illinois used climate models to determine where breadfruit trees could grow between 2060 and 2080. When compared to current conditions, the global total suitable area for breadfruit growth was projected to shrink by only 4% during the next half century or more.



A breadfruit tree GETTY

“Breadfruit is a neglected and underutilized species that happens to be relatively resilient in our climate change projections,” said [Daniel Horton](#) of Northwestern University. “This is good news because several other staples that we rely on are not so resilient. In really hot conditions, some of those staple crops struggle and yields decrease. As we implement strategies to adapt to climate change, breadfruit should be considered in food security adaptation strategies.”

And as a seedless crop, with 20% starch content— making it an effective substitute for corn or maize— and a delicious, slightly sweet, potato-like flavor, breadfruit is turning up in fast food, convenience food and in high end restaurants.

The applications for breadfruit are both broad and diverse. It is showing up in chips or crisps, being used as a replacement for potatoes and cassava, or is ground into flour and used to make gluten free breads, pastas and pancakes. Goya foods, a United

States-based producer of Latin foods, is selling a breadfruit version of its traditional tostones.

In many Caribbean countries, breadfruit is roasted on an open fire, and paired with roasted fish or meat, and in some countries such as Barbados, it is pickled and made into salad.



Goya Breadfruit Tostones GOYA

In Jamaica, a number of brands, such as Tropical Sun, are selling canned breadfruit to the export market, and in Barbados, gluten free breadfruit flour processed by brands such as Carmeta's, are growing in popularity.

Also in Barbados, local foodie experience, [Yelluh Meat](#) has found a wide variety of delicious applications for the nutrient-dense food. The roast breadfruit-inspired Bajan street-food brand is best known for its bowls served in a roast breadfruit shell—among them, the Buljol bowl, which is made from a pickle of cucumbers, tomatoes and sweet bell peppers and loaded with succulent flakes of salted pollock.



Bajan celebrity, Peter Ram, enjoying one of Yelluh Meat's famous buljol breadfruit bowls PETER RAM

In Hawaii, [Adela's Country Eatery](#)— number five in Yelp's 2023 "Top #100 Places to Eat"— has become famous for its homemade, colorful noodles made out of local ingredients including breadfruit or ulu, which customers can purchase directly from the restaurant either as a pre-cooked menu item or packaged, to cook at home.

"People can enjoy the unique flavors of the noodles and add a touch of Hawai'i to their own dishes," says owner Millie Chan.



Millie Chan harvesting breadfruit for her famous noodles ADELA'S COUNTRY EATERY

Also in Hawaii, The Westin Hapuna Beach Resort's signature restaurant, [Meridia](#) benefits from a hyper-local 10,000 square foot garden which grows local crops such as breadfruit (ulu) which is a staple on its menu.

In the United Kingdom, Barbadian celebrity chef, Jason Howard makes a seared sea bass, salt fish and mushroom ragu wrapped in squash blossom served with a seared scotch bonnet, garden green tomatoes and breadfruit and garlic purée with flying fish caviar.



Chef Jason Howard's sea bass with bread fruit and garlic purée JASON HOWARD

In Barbados, the scenic [Animal Flower Cave](#) located on the country's northern coast, boasts Barbados' original breadfruit taco. The breadfruit taco main course is made with three breadfruit taco shells, loaded with coleslaw, onions, cilantro, and pico de gallo with an option of fish, channa, barbecue pulled pork or jerk chicken.



Animal Flower Cave boasts Barbados' first breadfruit taco JENZEN WELLNESS

And in St. Croix, **Mutiny Island Vodka** is made of a unique combination of breadfruit and Caribbean rainwater, which the company says are “distilled to perfection.”

“Breadfruit is truly a gift for our planet and community,” says Todd Manley, CEO of Mutiny Island Vodka. “By making conscious, sustainable choices like supporting breadfruit, we can create food security, a sustainable economy, and better our environment at the same time.”



Mutiny Island Vodka is made of breadfruit and Caribbean rainwater "distilled to perfection" MUTINY ISLAND VODKA

On the African continent, researchers have **found** that there is immense untapped potential for growth of the nutritious super food.

In Nigeria, breadfruit— known locally as ukwa in the Igbo language — is processed by [Phronesis Foods](#) and made into dried ukwa, roasted ukwa snacks, ukwa pondo (a type of dough) and ukwa flour.

Phronesis foods encourages the public to join the ukwa movement, and other African countries are slowly catching on. In Uganda, there is breadfruit processing facility in Jinja, and in Kenya, at the Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology (JKUAT), researchers have made vodka made from the super food.

There are currently a number of NGO's that have attempted to bring the breadfruit tree to Africa; among them, The Trees That Feed Foundation.

The [Trees That Feed Foundation](#), a U.S. non-profit that plants fruit-bearing trees to feed, eradicate poverty, and benefit the environment, is so convinced that breadfruit trees are the route to sustainable development, that for every \$15 donation, it plants a breadfruit tree in a developing country, and for a donation of \$150, it donates 60 pounds of breadfruit flour, which can make about 500 meals for a school.

In the Caribbean, Trinidadian NGO Breadfruittrees.com touts the benefits of breadfruit as a social safety net and income generator, and makes breadfruit trees accessible to local homes, stating that “breadfruit trees empower people to feed themselves.”

Omardath Maharaj, an agricultural economist at the University of the West Indies is a proponent of the nutritional and livelihood impacts of the staple crop.

“Breadfruit is literally bread that grows on trees. It is food for our future,” he says.

According to Maharaj, 105 mature breadfruit trees growing on 2.5 acres of land, each of which can produce around 300 breadfruit annually, can produce 126 tons of food mass that could impact more than 10,000 families.



Alexis Marie Denise peels breadfruits before boiling them to sell in Port-au-Prince, Haiti. (AP ... [+] CHERY

Scientists and economists have done their part in popularizing the food security, functional, environmental and nutritional benefits of breadfruit. And food predictions for 2024 point in the direction of origin-oriented, nutritious sustainability, as do the inclinations of today's more globally-informed and conscious consumers.

Says food expert, Hanni Rützler: "I define food trends as a response to current desires, problems and longings in our society in terms of nutrition or food production. A food trend must therefore always offer potential solutions. If it does not do so, it will only be a short-term phenomenon."

Whether it is called ulu or ukwa or prepared in pancakes or in a breadfruit bowl, a growing number of “global chefs who know” are also joining the movement, making mouthwatering dishes with the nutritious staple. Perhaps what is needed now, is for some food influencers to jump aboard the breadfruit train.

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