

# GOOD WORK

meet some clever types working  
to do a little good in the world.

WORDS KOREN HELBIG

## EAT ME CHUTNEYS

**Ankit Chopra has always felt a bit weird about the perfectly shaped, brightly coloured flawlessness of veggies sold in Australian supermarkets. "We grew up with wonky carrots and crazy-looking tomatoes in India; Dad was growing his own stuff in the backyard. A wonky thing is normal for us, as opposed to the other way around," he says. So it's not all that surprising that Ankit has dedicated his latest social enterprise, Eat Me Chutneys, to 'rescuing' slightly-ugly-yet-edible veggies that would otherwise be chucked away.**

It all began with his mum, Jaya, and her famed tamarind chutney – made using a traditional family recipe. The chutney tasted so damn good that Ankit convinced Jaya to start selling jars at local Sydney markets. Pretty quickly, they swapped out imported ingredients in favour of things grown closer to home. "The idea was to use ingredients that we knew were being sourced ethically and sensibly," he says of the decision to get fairtrade certified.

Surrounded by mountains of yum organic produce at the farmers' markets, Ankit and Jaya decided to expand into chutney combos

like eggplant and curry leaf, tomato and ginger, and cumquat and Korean chilli. "One day we bought some rhubarb from one of the farmers, and on the way out from that guy's farm, I saw this other rhubarb sitting around, which was quite frail and limp. And the conversation was like: 'Dude, what are you going to do with this?' And he was like: 'I don't know.' As a population, we've got a habit of picking out the amazing-looking stuff and leaving behind the really ripe stuff, which is actually gorgeous for chutneys, because a nice ripe tomato makes a better chutney, anyway."

In the past year alone, Eat Me Chutneys has saved more than 1.2 tonnes of organic veggies from landfill. They've taken on their first employee, a woman from Sydney's Asylum Seekers Centre. But perhaps most importantly, the chutneys are now sparking conversations about food waste. "People look at you funny, like, 'What's a rescue chutney?' and then you have that conversation, and maybe next time they open a fridge, they think, 'Well shit, maybe I shouldn't throw this food away.'"

Jaya says working in a mother-and-son team can sometimes be tough – Ankit's "the annoying son, and throws me little curveballs at times," she jokes. And the operation is still incredibly low-tech, with everything chopped and stewed by hand. "My husband is the labelling machine," she says. But popping the lid on a freshly made jar of chutney makes all that work worthwhile. "That jar tells us we've saved produce, we've given wages to someone, we've used our authentic cultural techniques. That's my zen moment," she says.

