

# #1 - Journey Foods

## Fueling the next generation of Food Founders with AI

Founder: Riana Lynn



Interviewer: Adam Amin

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### Introduction

Riana Lynn, an inventor and entrepreneur, founded an AI platform with a mission to revolutionize the food value chain. With a background in biology, chemistry, and black studies, Riana was driven by a desire to address the nutritional and chronic disease challenges that plague modern food systems. [Journey Foods](#) focuses on accelerating product development and optimizing supply chains for food companies, enabling them to create healthier, more sustainable products.

### Background and Inspiration

Riana's journey into the food industry began with a passion for nutrigenomics, driven by the realization that dietary habits have evolved drastically across generations. "My grandparents ate very differently than we do today, and that difference has contributed to the rise of chronic diseases," Riana explained. This insight, combined with her academic background and entrepreneurial spirit, led her to launch her first health-focused food business while still in grad school.

After encountering supply chain challenges with her first venture, Riana furthered her expertise by earning a master's degree in supply chain management and joining Google for a residency. She also worked with Cleveland Avenue, a venture capital firm, where she identified significant inefficiencies in food product development. "Even companies making hundreds of millions of dollars were struggling with poor efficiencies in product development," she noted, highlighting the gap Journey Foods was created to fill.

## **Journey Foods' Innovative Approach**

Journey Foods harnesses the power of AI to streamline the product development process for food companies. "Imagine you want to sell a chocolate chip cookie that needs to stay fresh on the shelves," Riana said. Traditionally, companies might undergo 60 to 80 trials in a test kitchen to perfect such a product. Journey Foods reduces this to just four or five trials, using AI to predict outcomes and optimize recipes.

The platform doesn't just focus on taste and texture but also integrates supply chain insights to ensure ingredient availability and cost-effectiveness. "We want to make sure that companies already selling to millions of people have access to the right supply chain," Riana explained. This comprehensive approach allows Journey Foods to support both large and small companies in developing better products faster and more efficiently.

## **Challenges and Strategic Decisions**

Starting Journey Foods came with its share of challenges, particularly around fundraising while simultaneously building the company. "It's a challenge to fundraise while designing and creating something new," Riana admitted. Additionally, as a minority woman in a predominantly male industry, Riana faced skepticism, especially before the recent surge of interest in AI. "Older food scientists were a little scared about it, but now there's not so much doubt," she said.

Journey Foods initially targeted smaller companies but quickly realized the need to focus on larger players to build out their data and refine their algorithms. "We moved away from the smaller guys and focused on the big guys," Riana explained. This strategy allowed the company to prove the efficacy of its software and eventually return to servicing smaller businesses with a more robust and effective platform.

## **Impact and Success Stories**

One of Journey Foods' primary missions is to address chronic diseases linked to poor nutrition by helping companies develop healthier products. "We first focus on nutrition, then we focus on saving money and improving that nutrition," Riana said, emphasizing the dual focus that led to significant success stories across the industry.

For example, Journey Foods assisted a major snack company in transitioning to gluten-free and plant-based products. They also helped a global beverage company make their smoothie line healthier and more appealing to consumers. Additionally, the platform supported a startup in launching an innovative product line aimed at providing optimal nutrition for new mothers.

## **Creating Equitable Access to Nutritious Food**

Journey Foods is not just about improving products; it's also about creating equitable access to nutritious foods. The company works with government entities, nonprofits, and large consumer packaged goods companies to ensure that healthier ingredients are more widely available. "Our goal has always been to help thousands of companies improve millions of food products for 2 billion users," Riana stated.

Journey Foods has also made a significant impact by supporting minority women engineers who are passionate about making a difference in the food industry. "We've been able to turn out dozens of engineers and data scientists who now work on real-world supply chain and food health problems," Riana noted, emphasizing the broader societal impact of her work.

## Conclusion

Journey Foods is at the forefront of using AI to transform food production. By focusing on nutrition, cost-efficiency, and supply chain integration, Journey Foods is helping companies large and small develop healthier, more sustainable products. Despite the challenges of fundraising and breaking into a male-dominated industry, Riana has successfully positioned Journey Foods as a leader in the food tech space, with a mission to improve global health through better food. As she aptly put it, "We're marching on the way to helping thousands of companies improve millions of food products for billions of users."

You can find the platform at [journeyfoods.io](https://journeyfoods.io)!

## Adam's Takeaway

The use of AI in the food industry is still in its early stages, but already we see the impact it can have on the inefficient supply chain currently in place. Not before long, AI will be integrated into all parts of the food industry, from the farm to the grocery store to the pantry, and this is something that excites me.