

Smita Shankar is the SVP of Biomanufacturing at Impossible Foods. She leads the team responsible for manufacturing and scaling Impossible Burger's "magic" ingredient – soy leghemoglobin, or "heme" – which provides the unmistakable flavor and aroma of meat. Previously, Smita was the VP of Biomanufacturing at Impossible Foods, and before that she was the VP of R&D.

Smita joined Impossible Foods in 2013 as one of the company's first R&D hires. Following Impossible's discovery of heme as a key ingredient in 2014, she built the company's microbial strain development program from scratch, leading to industrial-scale production of recombinant proteins. Over the next seven years, Smita oversaw the implementation of new research and technology, built multiple production plants, and established a world class team of scientists and engineers. In 2017, her work resulted in a mission-critical patent covering Impossible Foods' unique method of producing heme at scale.

Prior to Impossible Foods, Smita worked at Codexis engineering microbes to make sustainable bio-based detergent alcohols.

Smita got her Ph.D. in Biochemistry, Molecular and Cellular Biology at Cornell University, where she studied bacterial gene expression. Following her Ph.D. she was a postdoctoral fellow at the University of California, San Francisco, where she researched the genetic manipulation of yeast through a fellowship from the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society.