



Bug Appetit

Edible insects aren't as crazy as we think

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Edible insects give the term 'bug bites' a whole new meaning



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When the concept of eating bugs is on the table, it probably conjures
up memories of childhood double dares or mishaps during an outdoor yawn.

More than likely, you don't think of creepy crawlers as deliberate snacks.

But elsewhere — meaning 80 percent of the rest of the world — bugs as grub aren't a crazy notion.

“I have eaten bugs a number of times,” said Kevin McPherson, who splits his time between Boston and Chiang Mai, Thailand, and runs his furniture stores Mohr & McPherson. “In China, I ate crispy caterpillar larvae. Here in Thailand, I have eaten crickets cooked several ways. Ant eggs are also cooked ‘Northern style’ in a pungent stew with chilies, anchovies, garlic, fish sauce and vegetables.”

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He also tells of local Thai markets full of tables selling various insects for cooking. America is slowly coming around to entomophagy, or insect eating.

In fact, Time magazine named eating bugs No. 6 of 2015's top food trends. Ick factor aside, why shouldn't we eat them?

Grasshoppers, for instance, have almost the same protein amount as a chicken breast. Turkey legs have nothing on some caterpillars, which boast more protein and fat gram for gram. Cricket flour has 10 percent more iron than spinach, two times more protein than beef, and as much vitamin B12 as



(<http://cdn.lifezetete.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/140515-078.jpg>)

Credit: Next Millennium Farms

salmon. Bugs also are a greener alternate protein source.

In 2012, the United Nations issued a report that noted insects as possible key factors in feeding the growing world populations.

“Ninety percent of global water use goes to agriculture. Eighteen percent of global greenhouse gas emissions come from livestock alone,” said Pat

Crowley, co-founder of Salt Lake City-based Chapul, a company that makes gourmet edible insect bars with protein derived from cricket flour.

“That’s more than the entire transportation sector,” Crowley said.

While cattle and pigs require a huge amount of feed and water, crickets need very little water and can be grown indoors in containers. Goodbye, seasonal worries.

But how do we conquer the meal vs. squeal reaction? While being comfortable popping an entire bug — wings and all — into your mouth is probably far off, companies are feeding the thriving concept bit by bit. Or should we say bar by bar, chip by chip.

Chapul created a “California roll” of insects, a soft starter for our palette to eat bugs mixed with nuts, berries and fruits.



<http://cdn.lifetzette.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/crickets-shrunk.jpg>

Credit: Next Millennium Farms

“There’s a cultural barrier to address,” said Crowley, drawing a sushi parallel. “Fifty years ago in the U.S., we made that funny looking face at the concept of eating raw fish.”

Then the California roll was born in Los Angeles, and our love affair stemmed from this gentle introduction.

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“It’s visually recognizable to our culture as what food is. It’s a gentle intro, but also a wrecking ball to that cultural bias,” he said.



<http://cdn.lifetzette.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/Cricket-Powder->

“When you’re actually growing these insects, they’re fed on gluten-free organic feed (think corn husks and broccoli stems), so they’re actually one of the cleanest foods we could be eating,” said Rose Wang, co-founder of Six Foods, a Harvard University Innovation Lab project that turned into a successful cricket flour chip company called Chirps Chips. “It’s just we have to get accustomed to the cultural shift of how we view we a certain type of product.”

“We’ve created a food that looks nothing like a

Image.jpg



Credit: Next Millennium Farms

bug. (Our chips) taste like what people expect them to taste like, so that removes the ick factor,” she said. “People are becoming more intrigued with eating bugs. If you look at food trends and industry reports, it’s on the rise. It’s like kale was a few years ago.”

The food industry is working the bugs out.

Hopper offers cricket granola, Exo makes insect energy bars, and Bitty Foods has cricket flour cookies. DIY people order recipe-ready Aketta crickets (perfect for crunchy salad toppers) from Aspire Food Group, America's first farm growing insects for human consumption. They can also get roasted flavored mealworms from Next Millennium Farms, the first, and only farm, to have a certified organic product.



<http://cdn.lifezette.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/meals-shrunk.jpg>

Credit: Next Millennium Farms

The concept isn’t lost on the dining out crowd. Several restaurants around the country are crawling with bugs on the menu.

Don Bugito, an edible insect street food project in San Francisco, has a popular blue corn waxworm taco, while Santa Monica’s Typhoon is known for its stir-fried silkworm pupae. Strip-T’s in Watertown,

Massachusetts, has seasonal fried Mexican chapulines (grasshoppers) with cayenne-spiced sour cream.

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“The way we look at the vision is that if we can provide an alternative sustainable protein, that’s the goal,” said Wang.

Crowley said this is the start of the world’s food revolution.

“The future survival of our species depends on our appetites,” he said. “If we can incorporate more efficient forms of foods, it will prove that our diets will dictate our destinies. And yes, some of those more efficient foods crawl on six legs.”

Bug appetit.

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