

Eating Bugs!

I was going to write about heavy metals and how to detox them out of your system until I was surfing the net and ran across an article about eating insects and thought it was just too funny not to share. So, stay tuned for my next article about detoxing heavy metals and I hope you enjoy this piece.

As Kids, "I double-dog dare ya!" is usually what you hear before you'd pop a bug or worm into your mouth. Now, all over the world, people are paying good money to dine on delectable insects. I recall back in the 60's in the states, bees, crickets and grasshoppers covered in chocolate emerged briefly during the Age of Aquarius. The whole family tried then once, and only once. Seemed the "Ewww!" factor was a bit much for our traditional eat and potatoes clan.

In the States, they have been known for grinding crickets into a powder and added to protein shakes and you can already find "cricket flour" in one brand of chippies. Crickets are full of iron, protein and even Vitamin B12. Apparently, there is a shop in Southern California that makes and sells bugs in lollies and I've seen chocolate-covered bugs there, too.

South of the border, down Mexico way, you can find a bug smorgasbord! They eat grasshoppers and caterpillars for protein, fry them up with a little hot sauce and wrap them in a tortilla. You can wash your Bug Burrito down with a swig of Mezcal, often mistaken for tequila, that has a caterpillar/worm as a treat to eat in the bottom of the bottle. I'd have to drink the whole bottle to be able to eat that worm! They do eat different bugs in many ways; fried, buttered, dry roasted or dipped in chocolate. Mealworms, a rich source of Omega 3, protein, and assorted vitamins and minerals like copper, selenium, iron, zinc and potassium, are dried and ground up to add with flour to make tortillas. Mmmm....

Further south in the Americas a certain variety of lemony flavoured ant larvae was eaten as chefs used them in high end restaurants. Meanwhile in Brazil the high protein Queen Ants were traditionally eaten by poorer families but now these bite-sized snacks have become a popular fare.

I only found one country in Europe, the Netherlands, that began embracing the bug eating idea. The head of a meat department for a Dutch food distributor was helping to encourage eating insects like crickets for a protein source.

The high protein grasshoppers seem to be more popular worldwide, especially in Mexico, Latin America, Africa and Asia. In Uganda, grasshoppers can cost more than beef per kilo!

The rainy season in Ghana is the place to be for a feast of a bug that is jam-packed with protein, fatty acids, iron, calcium and other micronutrients. The voracious termite may eat your house but in many parts of Africa as well as other parts of the world, it is a springtime specialty. It is roasted, dried, smoked or fried and even in Ghana, they grind it fine into a flour to make..um..Bug Bread!

Now, in Thailand and China the bug eating craze is in full force. You can find grasshoppers, crickets, woodworms and giant water bugs fried in a wok on the streets. Bee larvae full of amino acids, B vitamins and other nutrients are a staple and ant larvae is popular, too. But, the funniest photo I found was one of the giant water bugs roasted or fried and skewered on a stick. Here's your "Bugs on a stick!"

Japan is famous for their inago (fried grasshopper), sangi (fried silk moth pupae) and a type of bug larvae called Zaza-mushi.

Most bees are high in amino acids, B vitamins and other nutrients and it is the larvae that is usually eaten. However, here at home in the Land of Oz, the Aboriginals delight in a stingless bee variety often called the Sugarbag bee. They are found mostly in hollow trees in tropical areas but it's the honey, not the bees that is eaten. Another sweet treat they dig up is the honey ant and a good source of sugar. I actually liked eating them. Yummy! Let us not forget the eggy-tasting witchetty grub that can be easily digested, eaten raw and wiggly or roasted and boasts a high concentration of protein, fat, Thiamine (vitamin B1) and vitamin C.

After all the research so far, it begs the question, are insects the sustainable food source of the future? Are more people going vegetarian because they can't imagine eating a little lamb, cow or anything with a face but will happily eat some tortilla chips made from ground up crickets for iron and protein?

There are some enterprising entrepreneurs around our country that have been raising bugs for a food source and have a fun line of treats, chips, flours and other delectable goodies made in a safe, government approved facility. Who knows? Maybe Shop for a Good Life will start carrying this product line!

One last important note to remember, if choosing insects for your protein source appeals to you, do not just collect your own and chow down. Many in the wild have been tainted with toxins, pesticides or have infections and disease carrying. Only get yours from a registered, approved supplier.

Bon Appetit!

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