

Feeding the 9 billion: Insect protein case study

Baked waxworm anyone? Students hope to break down the prejudice against eating bugs by opening a pop-up restaurant with grasshopper and caterpillar on the menu

- **Eat Ento restaurant opens in south London tonight for three nights**
- **Its founders want to make edible bugs a regular part of the Western diet**
- **Dishes offered include consomme of grasshopper dumpling with locust jus**

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If you're bored of pizza and not in the mood for curry, how about trying a restaurant specialising in dishes made of insects?

Honey caterpillar canapés, consommé of grasshopper dumpling with locust jus, and burnt bee larvae are all on the menu at Eat Ento, a pop-up restaurant which starts a three-night run in south London tonight.

The ambitious menu is the brainchild of four graduates who describe themselves as 'iconoclasts of taste', and say they want to make creepy-crawlies a regular part of the Western diet.

Aran Dasan, 26, Jonathan Fraser, 26, Julene Aguirre, 27, and Jacky Chung, 25, say edible insects (not all of them) are a 'healthy, tasty and sustainable source of protein'.

They plan firstly to get people to enjoy eating them, and then to open a permanent restaurant. Their ultimate goal is to get insects onto our supermarket shelves within seven years.

'With your interest and lots of cooking and farming, we believe insect dishes could be a regular sight in your local supermarket by 2020,' said Miss Aguirre.

The students, who came up with the idea as part of their design, innovation and engineering course at London's Royal College Of Art, hope their restaurant will 'gently challenge our cultural taboo' about ingesting bugs.

Part of this involves telling people how good they are for us.

Mr Fraser said: 'We think people should know that insects aren't only more space and energy efficient than traditional livestock, but also high in protein and nutrients like omega-3 while remaining low in fat and cholesterol.'

They say the animals like to be packed closely together, and eat less food than, for example cattle or sheep, so raise fewer ethical farming dilemmas.

Packed full of protein, zinc, calcium and iron, edible insects are already eaten by millions of people worldwide

Insects are said to pose a smaller risk of passing infection on to humans compared with other mammals, and on a more pressing theme, food production will have to double to keep our rapidly-growing population fed over the next few decades.

But the most important part in persuading people to eat bugs is to make what the students call insect cuisine appetising.

Thus one of the dishes on offer at Eat Ento tonight is grasshopper and honey caterpillar medallion, in which honey caterpillars are blended and fried into a thin crepe that is rolled around fresh carrot, radish and cucumber sticks to create a canapé not entirely dissimilar to a spring roll.

Watermelon with caterpillar risotto and ground-up cricket is another dish, while fans of Chinese food might enjoy consommé of grasshopper dumpling, scorched tofu and locust jus.

'People assume the strength of the taboo is going to be reflected in the taste of the food, but it's not.'

- Eat Ento founder Jonathan Fraser

Mr Fraser told: 'People assume the strength of the taboo is going to be reflected in the taste of the food, but it's not.'

Eat Ento is not the only restaurant offering insects in London today.

Pest control firm Rentokil is also launching a pop-up 'restaurant' in the City, offering dishes such as salt and vinegar crickets, chocolate-dipped ant and, slightly less frighteningly, sweet chilli pigeon burgers.

The food will be free and diners can ask the pest-control experts on hand any questions they have on the matter.

A spokesman for Rentokil said: 'Edible insects have recently been identified by a number of different bodies, including the UN's Food & Agriculture Organisation, as a potentially valuable source of food for the world's rapidly growing population.'

'Many insects are rich in protein, zinc, calcium and iron whilst also being low in fat, and they have a high 'feed conversion rate', meaning that they can be farmed using relatively little land, water and energy compared to livestock.'

Pigeons, meanwhile, despite being a nuisance for many, are a well-recognised delicacy and wood pigeon can be found on Michelin-starred menus across the world.

Proponents of insect cuisine hope to follow the lead of sushi, once considered beyond the pale by Westerners and now a staple of British office workers.

BUSHTUCKER CHALLENGE OR THE NEW SUSHI?

- More than 2bn people worldwide already supplement their diet with insects, according to the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation
- Bugs are low fat and low calorie: 100g of crickets have 121 calories compared to 288 in the same weight of beef

- Common house crickets contain four times as much protein as the same weight of chicken
- Cattle require 12 times more feed to produce the same amount of protein as crickets
- The correct term for eating insects is entomophagy, from the Greek entomon, for insect, and phagein, to eat

Source: <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2394246/Eat-Ento-Students-hope-break-prejudice-eating-bugs-opening-pop-restaurant.html>