

## **The Incredible, Edible Bug**

**By-Leslie C. Wood**

There's something 'bugging me'. Soon, it will be summer and for my best friend this means it's time for her to get serious (again) about losing that excess winter weight. And, what really 'bugs' me about this is that at one time or another during her life she has been on just about every diet known to man – some with great (albeit fleeting) success and some without any success at all. Her goal, she contends, is to find a diet that is truly low in fat, low in cholesterol, high in protein, includes ingredients that are simple to find, and has recipes that are quick and easy to prepare. Enter the bugs. That's right, bugs – those creepy crawly things that I consider to be the thing on this planet that you can kill at will and not go to prison for doing so. And, that, the folks who practice entomophagy – the eating of insects – actually consider healthy, tasty, foodstuff.

### **It's a bug's life**

Apparently creepy crawlers are extremely low in fat and cholesterol and quite high in protein. In fact, according to the Entomological Society of America, by weight, creepy crawlers such as cockroaches, termites, spiders, and flies are better sources of protein than beef, chicken, pork or lamb. Also, according to those same folks, many bugs are 'cleaner' in their preferred food intake (grasshoppers, for example, dine on fresh, clean green plants) than some foodstuffs that we consider gastronomical delights such as lobster, whose primary food intake includes some pretty foul stuff. But, how many of us would choose two pounds of roasted termites over a broiled, two-pound Maine lobster?

And, it's not as though folks who dine on bugs need to go out of their way to buy the ingredients in order to partake in a delectable, creepy crawler feast as most edible bugs are readily available at pet stores, bait shops, and insect supply companies, which as far as I am concerned gives an entirely new meaning to the term 'whole foods.' And, how difficult could it be to prepare teriyaki cockroaches (the scourge of mankind, the king of evil) for the main entrée at your next chic chic dinner party?

### **Save a cow, eat a bug**

Although entomophagy is not a 'foodstuff' of choice for most Americans (despite their alleged superior nutritional content), it is widely practiced by many cultures around the

globe. Case in point: boiled or roasted grubs are eaten quite often by folks in Papua New Guinea. Locusts are a favorite foodstuff of folks in the Philippines who fry, broil, and (a big favorite) sauté them with veggies. And, if you happen to be in Columbia and find yourself munching on something that looks like pâté on toast points, there's a good chance that you're eating ground up ants!

### **Tantalizing your taste bugs**

Of course, this eating of creepy crawlers does not come without its gourmet dishes. As, if you really want to tantalize your taste buds and keep your waistline slim and trim, you could try maggot-covered strawberries, scorpions on toast, earthworm stir-fry, mealworm maki, banana canapés with maggot pupae, scorpions on cucumber slices with herbed cream cheese (low fat, of course) or roasted tarantula with a honey and vinaigrette glaze. I am told that this last dish, which while I am writing this I am getting out a bottle of insect repellent, actually tastes like shellfish and has a creamy, meaty center. Yuk – I mean Yum!

### **Bugging out vs. pigging out**

Apparently, along with the nutritional value of eating creepy crawlers comes the added benefit of good taste. However, the problem for me with all of this is twofold. First, I don't eat meat and haven't figured out whether or not creepy crawlers fall into the meat category on the food pyramid. And, second, is the 'I am so grossed out factor,' which for me definitely out weighs the 'meat or not meat' issue. But, if you are one of the many folks, who, like my friend, want to shed some excess winter weight and are seeking a new diet that is low in fat and cholesterol and high in protein, it may be time to take a trip to your nearby bait shop and start grocery shopping. Bon Appétit!

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