

A Change in the Menu

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Adapted by Fishtank Staff

- 1 According to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, an estimated two billion people eat bugs as part of their standard diet. That's nearly a quarter of the global population, and yet most countries in Europe and North America, despite the nutritional and environmental benefits, are fiercely reluctant to the idea of consuming bugs. So why should Westernized countries subscribe to the inclusion of bugs in their daily diet?
- 2 Eating bugs as a substitute for larger livestock could contribute substantially to a more sustainable world. Bugs have an efficient feed-to-product ratio and consume much less than traditional livestock per pound. To farm bugs, forests do not need to be cleared, fields do not need to be irrigated, and crops need not be sprayed with toxins and pesticides. According to an article written by the former manager of the Toronto Food Policy Council, Wayne Roberts, "Edible insects don't appear on any endangered species lists, and their sustainable use could help conserve other wildlife since the tactic may contribute to habitat protection."
- 3 The nutritional benefits of eating bugs are serviceable and can be instrumental in combating childhood mortality, and malnutrition rates. Monica Aiyeko of the Food and Agriculture department at Bondo University College has studied and published the effects of integrating native crickets into school meal programs in Kenya. Her studies have found that roughly 30% of Kenyan households are food insecure, leading to massive malnutrition amongst children, particularly under the age of 5. This is due to a lack of both macronutrients and micronutrients, including protein and zinc. Incorporating bugs into school feeding programs could provide children with the necessary nutrients to prevent stunting. Overall, bugs and insects are incredibly nutritionally beneficial. The New York Times states that "Some 2,100 insect species worldwide have been identified as edible...Their nutritional benefits, while varied across species, are substantial: high in energy yield, rich in essential amino acids and comparable and sometimes superior, per ounce, to beef, chicken, and pork in amounts of protein, omega-3 fats, iron, magnesium, calcium, and zinc."
- 4 The Western consensus is best stated by New York Times writer Ligaya Mishan: "Europeans, and by extension European settlers in North America, never had a bug-eating tradition. Indeed, we largely consider insects dirty and drawn to decay, signifiers and carriers of disease; we call them pests, a word whose Latin root means plague." This is a ridiculous stigma that we need to shake. The adoption of bugs into a normal diet would not be unlike the transition from raw fish being largely unaccepted in America, to sushi becoming a normal meal option.
- 5 All I want is a culinary cultural revolution, is that so much to ask?