

It's our food!

By JOLEEN LUNJEV

Eating creepy crawlies and grubs might sound like something straight out of *Fear Factor* for some, but for people in the following countries, bugs are as common as fast food.

Australia

Abundant in southern New South Wales during summer, witchetty grubs – the small, white larvae of ghost moths – have been an essential part of the Aboriginal diet for centuries. The grubs are dug from the gum tree roots and eaten live or barbecued. They are rich in protein and would make a nutritious source if you're lost in the bush.

Supermarkets even have them in soup tins.

Thailand, Laos and Cambodia

Walk the markets of these countries and you will be greeted by street vendors selling an amazing variety of fried insects as snacks.

These orders of insects are commonly found: *odonata* (damselflies and dragonflies), *orthoptera* (crickets, grasshoppers, katydids), *mantodea* (mantids), *isoptera* (termites), *hemiptera* (water bugs, cicadas, backswimmers), *lepidoptera* (silkworm moths are popular), *coleoptera* (weevils, wood-boring beetles, diving beetles) and *hymenoptera*



Red ant eggs

Serving size: 100g

Amount per serving
Calories: 83
Total Fat: 3.2g
Phosphorus: 113mg
Iron: 4mg
Calcium: 8mg
Carbohydrate: 6.5g
Protein: 7g

(bees, ants, wasps). Some restaurants serve insects as part of their regular menu as well.

China

Chinese people are known to eat "anything that moves" so finding locals delighting in insect snacks and delicacies shouldn't come as a surprise. Just head to a local street market such as the one in Tianjin, Hangzhou, Canton or the Wangfujing Night Market in Beijing for a weird and wonderful array. Silkworm cocoons, cicada larvae, fried locusts, crickets and grasshoppers and eight-legged critters such as scorpions, tarantulas and spiders are a common sight.

South Korea

Beondegi or silkworm pupae is a popular snack for South Koreans. They can be bought on the street, are served in bars and restaurants as appetisers, and are even canned. *Beondegi* can be eaten boiled, steamed, stewed or stir-fried.

Japan

The Japanese have been eating insects for centuries, especially aquatic insects which were an important source of protein. Restaurants in Tokyo and many parts of Japan still offer various insect-based dishes such as *hachinoko* (boiled bee larvae), *Inago no Tsukudani* (stewed grasshoppers or locusts in sweet soy sauce), *zaza-mushi* (aquatic insect larvae), *semi* (fried cicadas) and *sangi* (silkworm pupae; known as *beondegi* in Korea).

Columbia

Hormigas culonas, literally "big-butt ants" in Spanish, is a prized delicacy in Columbia. These leaf-cutter ants are aptly named because of their large lower abdomen. Only the young queens and drones are harvested in the Santander region in spring after the rainy season when they surface to establish their own ant colonies. The ants are roasted and eaten as snacks, a favourite for moviegoers and as bar snacks.



Giant water bug
Serving size: 100g

Amount per serving
Calories: 62
Total Fat: 8.3g
Phosphorus: 226mg
Iron: 14mg
Calcium: 44mg
Carbohydrate: 2.1g
Protein: 19.8g



Small grasshopper
Serving size: 100g

Amount per serving
Calories: 153
Total Fat: 6.1g
Phosphorus: 238mg
Iron: 5mg
Calcium: 35mg
Carbohydrate: 3.9g
Protein: 20.6g



Cricket

Serving size: 100g

Amount per serving
Calories: 122
Total Fat: 5.5g
Phosphorus: 185mg
Iron: 10mg
Calcium: 76mg
Carbohydrate: 5.1g
Protein: 12.9g

Termites and palm grubs are popular edible insects as well.

Mexico

The agave worm, also known as the maguay worm, is the worm you find in tequila bottles. They are also eaten roasted, fried, cooked inside a tortilla or as part of a recipe for a meal. Chapulines or fried grasshoppers are a common snack that can be found commercially canned and sold in supermarkets and local grocery stores. Ants, rich in thiamine and riboflavin, are consumed both in egg form and as adults.

Ant eggs, which are common in Mexican markets, are often cooked in butter and served in tacos. Ant larvae are canned and exported as gourmet food.

Africa

In Africa, many tribes eat insects like termites, grasshoppers, caterpillars, palm weevil larvae, beetles, ants and locusts. The wings of the

termites are removed before roasting or being fried.

Guts of crickets and grasshoppers are removed before frying. Locusts are typically boiled and salted prior to eating. Another widely eaten insect is the westwood larvae, a caterpillar known as *kanni*. They are boiled and dried in the sun before being eaten or used as an ingredient in vegetable soup.

Another larvae, the palm weevil larva, is a large insect that is fleshy and grub-like with a high fat content. They are collected from the trunks of palm trees and fried. An even larger insect, the compost beetle larvae, can be found in garbage, manure piles or swampy areas. The lower abdomen containing the guts is removed before washing and frying. Some refuse to eat them because they are taken from "dirty" places.

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