

What Kind Of Bugs Have You Eaten?

Edible Insects

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Emily Main, health researcher and author, wrote an article for *Rodale's Organic Life* on August 16, 2016, titled "8 Gross Bugs You Don't Know You're Eating." A subheading continued, "Find out which of your favorite foods contain the most creepy crawlies." Well, obviously that grabbed my attention, so I had to read the article. According to Miss Main,

Sure, bugs can be considered one of the world's healthiest foods because they're eaten as a healthy source of protein. But in most places, the people who are eating them know they're eating them. That's not the case here in the United States, where we're still a bit squeamish about eating insects as our sole source of protein. In a lax food-safety loophole, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has decided that allowing insects like mites and maggots is perfectly acceptable, to a degree, provided they don't hinder the "aesthetic" quality of foods. [The food has to look good; that is all that matters, it seems.] Aesthetic or not, do you want to eat caterpillars? In the United States, it's estimated that the average person unintentionally eats a pound of insects every year. Here are a few of the more disgusting bugs sneaking into your food.

The title of her article here is "8 Gross Bugs..." and I'm only going to cover six for the sake of time.

Thrips: "At anywhere from 1/25 to 1/8 of an inch long, these tiny little winged parasites are legally allowed in apple butter, canned or frozen asparagus, frozen broccoli, and frozen Brussels sprouts." [Brussels sprouts are everybody's favorite!]

Aphids: "Those same little green or black bugs that can destroy a bouquet of flowers can infiltrate your frozen veggies, particularly spinach, broccoli, and Brussels sprouts. And if you home-brew beer, you might consider growing your own hops: The FDA legally allows 2,500 aphids for every 10 grams of hops. [That's 0.35 oz., roughly.]

Maggots: "If you've ever eaten canned food, you've probably also eaten a maggot. These disgusting little critters abound in things like canned mushrooms, canned tomatoes, tomato paste, and pizza sauces, as well as fresh, frozen, or Maraschino

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cherries. Mushrooms are by far the worst: 20 maggots are allowed for every 100 grams [that's about 3.5 oz.] of drained mushroom and five for every 500 grams [which is about 17.5 oz.] of tomato products." [A lot of protein you're getting in there and didn't know it.]

Fruit Flies: "Buy a piece of fruit covered in fruit flies and you can wash them off. Buy a can of citrus juice and you'll be swilling five fruit flies with every eight-ounce cup of juice. Grab an eight-ounce handful of raisins and you could be eating as many as 35 fruit-fly eggs." [It takes your appetite away, with some of these things.]

Corn Earworms: "Corn is notoriously difficult to grow organically being that it's so prone to insect infestations. But in most cases, it's easy to avoid eating the earworms that burrow into corncobs and eat the silk—just cut the kernels off the cob and voilà, bug-free veggies. However, canned sweet corn will come with some extra crunch from all the larvae, skins, and skin fragments allowed by the FDA."

Caterpillars: "Fuzzy, ugly caterpillars are supposed to turn into beautiful butterflies for people to marvel at—not eat in a mouthful of frozen spinach. But along with the 50 or so aphids, mites, and thrips allowed in 100 grams [0.35 oz.] of spinach, you may also find yourself munching on caterpillar larvae and larval fragments."

There are 1900 species of insects. Most are wrongly considered to be edible by the world, according to the United Nations. The United Nations considers that many insects edible. While not popular in the U.S., insects are part of the traditional diet of two billion people in the world. Having been influenced by the traditional Western mindset, the thought of eating an insect encourages my gag reflex. Nevertheless, God, in His wisdom, has designed some insects as food for humans.

So, which insects did God design as food and which are biblically clean to eat?

Leviticus 11:20-21 All flying insects that creep on all fours shall be an abomination to you. [Well, the world is eating abominations left and right, its appears.] Yet these you may eat of every flying insect that creeps on all fours: those which have jointed legs above their feet with which to leap on the earth.

So, all insects are forbidden except those with wings and have jointed hind legs used for jumping, such as locusts and grasshoppers. Therefore, the locust and grasshopper are the only ones biblically clean and allowable for food. Actually, in a general sense, locusts are a type of grasshopper, so they're of the same family. The locust, like all

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insects, have six feet, but the two anterior feet—front ones—go in a different direction from the four posterior legs of insects, so Leviticus 11:21 speaks of them as going on four legs. Therefore, it considers the two anterior legs as something like arms (according to Kirby and Spence in their *Introduction to Entomology*, page 24). I always wondered why insects had six legs—I mean, all of them had six—but He talked about four legs here. That's the reason why, apparently.

In Leviticus 11:21, the jointed legs above the feet are called the tibia, and this is the part of the legs from the knee to the ankle. It is called this because it is bent under when kneeling or lying down. This applies to the feet of the locust, which are designed for leaping or skipping. The tibia were placed in such a manner above the tarsi as to fit the creature for leaping.

Just to recap quickly, they must fly, they must leap, they must have jointed legs above their feet, and creep on all fours in order to be clean. The only insects that fit those qualifications are grasshoppers and locusts.

Leviticus 11:22-23 These you may eat: the locust after its kind, the destroying locust after its kind, [this is in the New King James Version; also the ESV and other versions say similar things, but here's a mistake: the next thing it mentions is] the cricket after its kind [the crickets are not clean. They do everything but fly. People think they fly, but they do not. They prefer to creep and they do not really fly.], and the grasshopper after its kind. But all other flying insects which have four feet shall be an abomination to you.

God repeats that twice to make sure we understand that. The identity of these four locusts is uncertain. This is as far as their specific types, but they are all of the locust family or grasshopper family. They are sure to be different kinds of locusts. Anyway, crickets are not clean because technically they do not fly. They prefer to creep and they eat other insects, compared with locusts and grasshoppers, which are herbivores. So the crickets do not prefer grass and things like that— plants. But locusts and grasshoppers prefer green grass, being herbivores, and also they are out during the day, whereas crickets come out at dusk and dawn so they are creepy crawlers. They do not truly fly.

It took me a massive amount of research to figure this out, because crickets were the one thing I was trying to determine. Part of the reason is that when our son was in Thailand, he ate "crickets" over there, so I thought, "Wait a minute—is that clean or unclean?" So, in researching it and knowing what he ate, what he really ate were

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grasshoppers or locusts. It's just that in different countries, in different areas of the world, they call things differently, but crickets in the Western world are not clean.

Matthew 3:4 records that John the Baptist, who followed God's laws, lived primarily on a diet of locusts and wild honey. That must have been like eating manna for years. I wonder if he found different ways of making or cooking it.

Nutritionally, grasshoppers or locusts yield about five times more edible protein per unit of food than cattle. They have varying amounts of potassium, sodium, phosphorus, calcium, magnesium, iron and zinc. If you want to try them, here are some kitchen tips: Grasshoppers or locusts are prepared and served in various ways. They are often fried, smoked or dried. You have choices. The most common way is to remove the head, legs and wing (so far, so good). They're often fraught alysia and dropped in meal and then fried and oil or butter. So, *bon appetit*.