

Bushtucker diet

There's something new on the menu: Insects. Believe it or not those six-legged critters are crawling closer and closer to a plate near you. But will you bite?

This spring will see a drive towards removing the yuck factor from insects and putting them into your mouths.

Not a chance you gasp! It's taboo to eat bugs in the western world.

They are ugly, gross, dirty even. Who would choose to chomp on caterpillars or gobble grasshoppers over a juicy steak?

We already eat honey, essentially bee vomit. And mushrooms taste just like worms, we're told.

The thought of an I'm a Celebrity bush tucker diet makes us squirm. But Selfridges and Harrods already sell edible chocolate covered ants, vodka with scorpion, worm crisps. And Some posh restaurants, serve chili and garlic crickets. Will we really be chowing down on the little fellas too? Maybe.

This month a food festival, London Festival 2013, sponsored by the Wellcome Trust, aims to get creepy crawlies off experimental menus and on supermarket shelves.

Mexican restaurant chain Wahacca is stepping into bug territory by adding grasshoppers to its menu. They'll import them from Mexico, fry them with shallots, garlic and chillies and serve them covered in cheese and with tortilla chips. Why? To promote sustainable protein.

Because there is some method in this madness. Experts see clear environmental benefit to eating insects. For every human, there are 40 tons of insects so there is little chance of them becoming endangered.

And insects are good for us. We asked two experts LighterLife nutritionist Dr Kelly and nutritionist Sally Wisbey to compare the nutritional value of insects with foods we eat a lot.

Dr Kelly says: 'If prepared carefully insects at least are a nutritionally viable alternative to traditional meat.'

Meal Worms vs Chicken

471 calories in 100g, 27.2g of fat

Dr Kelly says: 'Meal worms are high in protein with just under 50g per 100g serving and are low in carbohydrate. However, high in calories and fat, they are not the best weight-loss resource.'

Sally says: 'These wriggly worms contain high amounts of protein and low carbohydrate. Apparently tasty, they are however, not the best diet food. Packing in 470 calories per 100g and over 25g of fat, you'd be better off with an organic chicken breast providing less than half the amount of calories and fat and even higher protein.'

Winner: CHICKEN

Witchetty Grubs vs Cheese

245 calories in 100g, 19.2g of fat

Dr Kelly Says: 'Witchetty grubs are rich in vitamins – 100g provide 100mg of thiamin and 5mg of vitamin C.'

Sally says: 'These may be high in fat but witchetty grubs are rich in protein. They contain good levels of magnesium, calcium, vitamin B1 and iron. Compared with cheese, 100g of witchetty grubs gives you slightly less protein but half the amount of calories and fat, plus more iron and vitamin C.'

Winner: BUGS

Grasshoppers

257 calories in 100g, 6.1g of fat

Dr Kelly says: 'Grasshoppers are a good, low-carbohydrate, high-protein option, with a fifth of a 100g serving being protein. They also provide 35.2mg dose of calcium and 5mg of iron.'

Sally says: 'Grasshoppers are a great food for weight loss and muscle gain. Swapping a starter of duck (which is high in fat) for 100g of grasshopper would be a healthier choice.'

Winner: BUGS

Crickets vs Beef

122 calories in 100g, 5.5g of fat

Dr Kelly says: 'Crickets are a great source of calcium – just four crickets will provide 30 per cent of your RDA of calcium. They are also high in protein and iron so a great addition to any diet.'

Sally says: 'These noisy creatures (shown top) are high in protein and low in fat. Per 100g they contain 13grams of protein, 120 calories, 5g of carbohydrates and 5 grams of fat per 100g. With beef you'll get more protein (23g) but more than double the calories (300) and a lot more fat (25g) so crickets are the healthier alternative. They are also great for bone health and like beef, are a great source of iron.'

Winner: DRAW

Caterpillars vs Fish

370 calories in 100g, 14g of fat

Dr Kelly says: 'Caterpillars are a useful source of iron with 35.5mg in a 100g serving. A 100g serving of caterpillars contains 10 times the iron of 100g of lean beef.'

Sally says: 'If you're trying to lose weight choose this bug! These pack in around 28g of protein per 100g along with several vitamins and minerals including B vitamins and iron. Protein levels are similar to fish but caterpillars have a far higher iron content.'

Winner: BUGS



BUG SNACKS

BBQ Flavoured worm crisps **£2.79**

lazyboneuk.com

Toffee Scorpion **£5.79**

selfridges.com

Curried Flying Grasshoppers

£4.99 edibleuniqu.com

Weaver ants eggs, purified

water, salt **£14.99**

edibleuniqu.com

Bamboo grubs **£4.99**

edibleuniqu.com

Cricket Lolly **£4.99** bugsdirectuk.com

Giant Toasted Ants **£16.00** edible-shop.com

