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TOM TOM ENGLISH



Bug food - a gourmet adventure

VOCABULARY

Simmer =

To cook at just below
boiling point

Sauté =

Fry quickly in fat

Innovative =

Advanced, original

Infuse =

A method used to
bypass a problem

Discussion questions

1. Have you ever eaten insects? What did you eat? How was it?
2. Would you like to try any of the dishes in this article? Which ones? Why? Why not?
3. Have you ever been to South East Asia? Did you try insects there? How were they?
4. Why do you think insect food is popular in some countries but not in others?
5. Do you think eating insects is different from eating food such as prawns or snails? Why? Why not?
6. This article uses lots of French loan words - sauté, hors d'oeuvre, consommé. Do you know any other French words that are used in English? Do we use any French words in Japanese?

VOCABULARY

Hors d'oeuvre =

Small savoury dish,
usually served as an
appetizer

Abdomen =

The part of the body
containing the stomach,
digestive organs etc

Bizarre =

Very strange or unusual

Consommé =

Clear soup made with a
concentrated stock

Bugs in a gourmet kitchen are usually something to be squashed or swatted. But at Le Cordon Bleu, the esteemed French cooking school, chefs and food scientists spent a week **simmering, sautéing** and grilling insects to extract **innovative** flavors. They say this could be the future of gourmet cooking.

The school's Bangkok branch held a seminar called "Edible Insects", which was sold out. The event included lectures and a tasting menu for 60 open-minded people. The participants were a mix of student chefs, scientists, professors and insect farmers.

The first dish was a vial of ant-**infused** gin, followed by a shot glass of warm cricket consomme, then an **hors d'oeuvre** of cockchafer butter and herb crisp. A cockchafer is a giant beetle.

The insects were not visible in the final products but were artfully hidden, pureed into batters, and their juices extracted.

"We didn't want to just put a bug on a salad and say, 'Voila!' We wanted to know, can we extract interesting flavors, new textures, aromas and turn it into something delicious?" said Christophe Mercier, an instructor who helped organize the event. "This is the first time that insects have been granted access to the Cordon Bleu," Mercier said with a smile.

At the school's entrance, a welcome table was decorated with tropical flowers and bowls of bugs – crickets, silk worms, bamboo worms and live water bugs.

The idea for the event was inspired by local eating habits in Southeast Asia. In Thailand, many people eat fried insects as snacks. This

lead Mercier and his colleagues to wonder if they could learn from the locals.

"You have to approach this with a really open mind," said Roberto Flore, head chef at the Nordic Food Lab. The lab started a project called the "Deliciousness of Insects" in 2012 and was invited by the Cordon Bleu to work with its Bangkok chefs this week and help develop the recipes that were presented at the seminar.

Flore created the cricket consomme and the gin, which he described as having "an explosion of lemony taste" that came from acid produced in the ants' **abdomens**. It was the gin that helped win over the chefs.

"Some things were very impressive, and some things were very **bizarre**," said Fabrice Danniell, master chef at Bangkok's Cordon Bleu. "The taste of the alcohol was amazing. It's more than alcohol. The taste was unique. I was very surprised with the **consomme**, too," he said. Participants described it as meaty, nutty, flavorful, subtle and not-at-all grainy. "It was light, yet full with aroma and flavors – flavors of the insect," Danniell said.

Chef Christian May, admitted that he was initially repulsed by the intense aroma of the grilled crickets for the broth. He encouraged his colleagues not to demonstrate how the consomme was made but just serve it elegantly on trays. "It tasted good. You just have to remove the image of the insect from your mind," he said.

Insects have been part of human diets in nearly 100 countries, particularly in Asia, Africa and Latin America. In Thailand alone, there are 200 species of insects eaten as food.