

Researchers still insisting that people in the U.S. will eat bugs for protein

January 20 2017, by Todd Hollingshead



Crickets vs. cricket flour. Credit: Brigham Young University

For most folks in the United States and Europe, the thought of eating bugs is repulsive. For the majority of people everywhere else, it's just part of life.

And while crunching on a cricket or slurping down a grub (ala Simba in Lion King) seems like something only people on Fear Factor would consider, the truth is, insects are an excellent source of [protein](#).

That's why food science researchers at BYU, led by assistant professor Laura Jefferies, are looking at how to process insects, specifically crickets, to make them more palatable to the western world.

"By themselves they taste kind of earthy, but when you eat them with other things they don't necessarily have their own flavor," said student Fred Bassett. "I've had them chocolate covered and the taste and texture is a lot like a Kit Kat bar."

"But," adds Jefferies, "Most people [in the western world] don't want to eat a whole cricket."

As such, she is working with a small Utah company to put ground-up cricket powder in protein bars. As part of her research, they are sampling the bars to willing students and faculty and tracking how the experience shapes their opinions about eating bugs.

And while the BYU researchers believe mass acceptance of edible bugs is still a long way off for westerners, people in the lab are having a positive experience eating the bars, resulting in an increased willingness to eat insects going forward.

"It does take a little bit of wrapping your mind around the idea of having crickets in your protein bar," said one study subject. "But it's got a really nice flavor and texture."

Jefferies and her students are pursuing crickets because they are a source of protein comparable to beef, but require far fewer resources to produce. Specifically, it takes about 25 kilograms of feed to get 1

kilogram of edible beef protein, compared to slightly more than 2 kilograms of feed to get the same amount of edible insect protein.

Plus, Jeffries adds, crickets have the nine [essential amino acids](#) (you will get more than 100 percent of the daily recommended values with a normal serving of [crickets](#)), have lots of Vitamin B-12, and are an excellent source of iron.

More information: Gastón Ares et al. Do we all perceive food-related wellbeing in the same way? Results from an exploratory cross-cultural study, *Food Quality and Preference* (2016). [DOI: 10.1016/j.foodqual.2016.03.014](#)

Provided by Brigham Young University

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