

Cicada sushi, anyone? US chef serves up sustainable 'Brood X' delicacy

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Chef Bun Lai seasons cicadas with salt as he fries them at Fort Totten Park in Washington.

After 17 years underground, swarms of cicadas are emerging across the eastern United States—and for one Washington chef, the rare bug invasion was his cue for a cookout, with a side of food ethics.

Bun Lai, an advocate for the sustainable food movement, invited locals for an insect hunt in a city park followed by a taste of his fried cicada sushi.

"In a world where we're suffering from the biggest pandemic in history—which is not COVID, but diet-related diseases—we're going to have to take a revolutionary approach to how we're used to eating," he said.

Over the weekend, the Hong Kong-born American chef showed residents how to harvest, cook and prepare [cicadas](#) as a way to talk about alternative methods of farming and eating.

Billions of "Brood X" cicadas are appearing in US states including Maryland, Pennsylvania, Virginia, Indiana and Tennessee.

Using his Instagram and Twitter accounts, Bun announced when he would be catching and cooking a few—and then sharing them free of charge.

"Free cicada hunt and cookout," Bun tweeted. "Bring ingredients to cook with and join me in getting creative or just eat!"

For those who answered the call, the culinary adventure began by collecting some of the tastiest-looking bugs.



People collect "Brood X" cicadas and invasive edible plants to cook with.

Stella Roque, a 36-year-old who grew up with a fear of insects, was not overly eager, but she viewed it as a way to overcome her phobia.

"I'm here today because Bun Lai invited me to try cooked cicadas, and I thought it was going to be an interesting experience," she said.

"I decided to come along, given that I had heard about the whole cicada apocalypse happening in the area."

And she's not alone in trying some creepy-crawly cuisine. Cicada tacos are popular menu items in restaurants just now, according to The

Washingtonian magazine.

However, Bun cautioned against cicadas becoming a "gourmet food," fearing they could even be "eaten away like we have with so many species that we've become obsessed with over time."

The group collected cicadas and edible greens from around the park under Bun's guidance. The cicadas were then placed in a jar near other fresh ingredients beside a charcoal fire.



Cicadas are fried as they are prepared for the sushi recipe.



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Ready for tasting—fried cicadas in a sushi roll.

The chef seasoned the cicadas with salt before frying them in a large skillet. Finally, the fried insects were rolled into sushi, getting wrapped in large leaves with rice and vegetables, before being served.

Roque, expecting the worst, said she was in fact "delightfully surprised."

"I was actually terrified when holding it in my hand," she said. "But... it was actually really tasty."

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