

Insect ice cream could be coming to your grocery store

By Nathan Chandler, How Stuff Works, adapted by Newsela staff on 08.23.19

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Image 1. Gourmet Grubb has pioneered insect ice cream, using its special EntoMilk. Photo by: Gourmet Grubb

The next time you head to your local ice cream shop for a scrumptious sundae, maybe you'll skip the double-chocolate fudge and opt instead for ... caramel cricket? That's one idea floated by a South African company. They make ice cream with insect milk.

Leah Bessa completed her master's degree in food science. She studied using insects as an alternative food course. Then she set out to develop insect-based "dairy" products through the Cape Town-based company she cofounded, Gourmet Grubb. The products come in fancy packaging. They are also featured on a cool-looking website. The products look like they would fit in at your local organic supermarket. The company wants to change people's perceptions of bug consumption by incorporating creepy-crawlies into delicious confections that no one can resist.

The ice cream Gourmet Grubb developed has just three ingredients: honey, flavorings (such as cocoa or chai spices), and the magic ingredient, EntoMilk. EntoMilk is the company's top-secret proprietary product and is made with black soldier fly larvae. This "milk" is about five times higher in protein than dairy, is lactose-free and contains plenty of minerals, from calcium to zinc to iron.

The insects are reared on a farm and cleaned and sterilized before they are used, Bessa explained to the South African website Crush.

Of course, for a lot of people, there is the "squeamish" factor to get over. Rest assured you won't see any recognizable insect parts in the ice cream. "This ice cream is made in a batch freezer, very similar to gelato-styled ice cream. The only difference being that we don't use any dairy in it, we use a 'milk' we developed from insects," Bessa says in an email interview. "We then use honey to sweeten it and natural ingredients such as cocoa to flavor it."

And what does it taste like? It wouldn't surprise you that Bessa loves it. "It tastes delicious! It's very rich due to the natural and authentic ingredients and it has an earthy undertone," she says.

But she's not the only one who enjoys it. In at least one blind taste test, the bug-laced product actually fared better than some traditional ice creams.

With the United Nations projecting fast population growth — our 7.7 billion neighbors might number 9.7 billion by 2050 — there are going to be a lot of hungry mouths to feed. Traditional protein forms consume far too many resources for the amount of food they provide. They also imperil water and land quality. And they raise concerns about animal welfare and human health, too.

But bugs are everywhere. They are scrambling and buzzing their way through virtually every part of the globe. There are roughly 2,000 edible species out there just waiting to tempt your palate. Gourmet Grubb wants to "redefine the way you think of insects as an alternative food source and, specifically, an alternative dairy product," according to its website. Currently, the product is only available in South Africa. But the founders hope one day to expand to other countries.

Gourmet Grubb isn't the only insect-ice cream peddler on the planet. Scoop shops in New York, London and Sydney, Australia have tried the concept before, usually as a novelty offering or pop-up act. But if cockroach milk is already a thing, can bug ice cream for the masses be far behind?

