

The Weird Sustainable Foods We Could All Be Eating Soon

Sustainable is big buzzword with the brightest minds of today looking for ways to feed an ever growing population in the face of an increasingly unstable and degrading Earth. People ignoring the environmental factor of the sustainable equation claim that GMOs are the answer to feeding the world's people, but if you believe where people live is as important as what they live on, there has to be another answer.

Those bright minds have to be good for something; they are presenting some unusual, innovative, thought-provoking solutions. There's evidence that conventionally icky stuff like bugs, pond scum, and strange fish offer a new notion of edible while also opening up a potentially bountiful source of needed nutrients.

Edible Creepy Crawlers

The idea of eating bugs is not unusual. Bugs are popular street snacks in Asia, and bugs like crickets have long been an important protein source for farmers in Africa. In North America and Europe, the idea of eating bugs remains squirm-inducing. But can we see past the ick factor to the nutritional and sustainable possibilities?

Grasshoppers and crickets are commonly eaten in many parts of the world thanks to their ability to live everywhere, their ease of capture, and their neutral taste. Mealworms are also very popular, and in some countries eating ants and cockroaches isn't uncommon. As the gateway bugs of choice in the U.S., crickets are showing up as protein powders, supplemental flours, and at an adventurous fast food chain that is introducing milkshakes with cricket powder. Crickets and grasshoppers are a great source of protein (including

essential amino acids lysine and tryptophan that are hard to find in conventional protein sources) and are recognized by the United Nations' Food and Agriculture Organization as a good source of heart-healthy unsaturated fats. While chicken, pork, and beef might have more protein, they also require more space to grow and are responsible for egregious environmental degradation through increased methane gases, deforestation, and massive amounts of toxic animal waste.

In contrast, growing edible insects are far more efficient. To raise one kilogram of beef, you need eight kilograms of food, and you usually only eat about 40% of the cow. Crickets are 80% edible and only need 1.7 kilograms of feed to arrive at one kilogram of food. If you consider that someone somewhere is going to come up with the idea feeding bugs the 40% of food we waste in the U.S., it's a sustainable slam dunk.

Strange Seafood



Our oceans are in crisis mode as more and more species die off. Soon the yellowfin tuna and the king crab we're accustomed to seeing on our plate at seafood restaurants will be gone due to overfishing, fluctuating water temperatures, and increasing pollution. We'll have to learn to adapt... and eat the food that already have adapted.

While the fish populations we've become accustomed to eating are dwindling, other invasive yet edible creatures are thriving in spite of the environment changes. Asian shore crabs, Asian carp, blue catfish, and lionfish are all experiencing growth as they displace native species.

In an effort to focus on managing an unbalanced fish population, some restaurants are adding these invasive fish to their menu. Even grocery giant Whole Foods is getting in on the action, announcing plans to make lionfish available to their customers over the next six months. With its venomous

spines, lionfish doesn't look too appealing, though it is popular in other regions of the world like the Caribbean. But with female lionfish laying 30,000 eggs every four days and a population so voracious it's eating itself, this fish is a prime example of a new, sustainable seafood.

Starting at the Bottom of the Food Chain



Algae is a huge group of organisms that, odds are, are already available at your nearest grocery store. Sheets of dried seaweed abound in the ethnic aisles of the grocery store and at sushi restaurants, kelp is aking off amongst the health enthusiasts, and nearly every green nutritional powder has spirulina and/or chlorella in it. The health benefits of those two particular algae are impressive. Not only do they detox

heavy metals and toxins from the body, and they contain omega-3 and omega-6 fatty acids, antioxidants, and all of the essential amino acids which makes them complete proteins.

Seaweed is also a fantastically sustainable food. It can grow at a rate of almost six inches a day, and it doesn't require any other resources other than the ones readily available to it. It also leaves the environment cleaner than it was before the it grew. People who understand the benefits of crop rotation will also appreciate the idea of farming seaweed opposite of shellfish season, which pairs two of the only farmed products that leave their environment cleaner than they found it. With its rapid growth, abundant nutrients, and cleaning habits, seaweed is a uniquely sustainable food.

It Will Become The Norm

Bugs are gross. Most people would sooner smash them under their foot than put them in a skillet. The green sludge found in ponds or the weird spiny fish that looks like a zebra pincushion don't seem any better. But in the next fifteen years, we'll have an estimated 8.5 billion people living on a planet that virtually everyone agrees we're in the process of destroying. The "weird" and the "gross" are just foods we're not used to yet, and these foods can provide for so many while slowing our negative impact on the environment. It's time to get creative and do what we can to present sustainable options for everyone that might be little out of the ordinary. Here's a good start, check out *Total Nutrition – Make your own Homemade Multivitamin and Mineral Formula* and *How To Grow Spirulina at Home*.

Related Reading:

- [Algae-Growing Nuns In Central African Grow Spirulina For Malnourished Children](#)
- [Health Benefits of Kelp](#)

Sources

- *The Nutrition Values of Edible Bugs and Insects* – sfgate.com
- *Why Should We Eat Insects? It's the Future of Food* – nature.com
- *7 Restaurants Where You Can Eat Invasive Seafood* – azula.com
- *Whole Foods Will Sell an Invasive Fish Species in Six Months* – grubstreet.com
- *Top 5 Foods That Detox Heavy Metals and Toxins – With Protocol* – organiclifestylemagazine.com
- *Seaweed is Easy to Grow, Sustainable, and Nutritious. But It'll Never Be Kale.* – washingtonpost.com