

Living on insects for one month?

Would you eliminate, starting from tomorrow, all traditional meat from your diet and replace it with insect proteins, every day for one month?

There are thousands of scientific evidences that insects are healthy and rich in nutrients, but Loredana H. wanted to prove it in person. She a young scientist and wanted to prove that insects are nutritious, tasty and can become indeed part of a daily diet. Applying a truly empirical methodology she decided to demonstrate the hypothesis directly introducing insect food in her meals for one month.

Insect food is one of the so-called alternative proteins, already well established in some countries and a pure novelty in other, in many cases a cultural change. **This experience eliminates the doubts that people have and gives a clear picture of the opportunities to come.** We met Loredana, a Food Scientist and HACCP certified Auditor, for an interview to understand the approach, the experience and the learnings.

Ciao Loredana, how did you come up with this experiment?

Good to meet you and thank you for your interest in my story. I become interested in entomophagy during my years at the university, and then I decided to take action and contact different companies worldwide that were working



SPAGHETTI
MINT AND ZUCCHINI

with edible insects. I was looking for an internship or a project, with the aim to gain “field experience”. After exchanging a couple of ideas with Mercimercado, a company based in Mexico and ENTOTRUST certified, they accepted my idea of “**one month challenge**”, where I would have eaten their products alongside a vegetarian diet. As we already know edible insects are far more

sustainable and richer in nutrients than beef or pork, so I said to myself: why not checking out their versatility in the kitchen too? The goal was to promote entomophagy while also demonstrating that no side effects would evolve or develop by doing this change.

How did you approach your new diet and how did you organize it?

My idea and the approach itself were quite simple. Every time I was going to cook myself a meal with meat or fish, I would replace that ingredient with the grasshoppers supplied by Mercimercado, both whole dried insects and powder as well. As I don't have animal protein for breakfast, I introduced edible insects only in my lunches and dinners, experimenting new recipes and combinations with different ingredients. For example, one of my favourite recipes was the "pumpkin risotto", a dish I learned to cook during my years in Italy. I also loved



the addition of grasshopper to the classic combination of avocado toast and eggs, as well as rocket pesto pasta with parmesan cheese with sprinkled grasshopper. Dessert choices were also in my menu, to name one: grasshopper, walnuts, and dark chocolate were a great combination for amazing brownies!

I admit I was quite suspicious myself, the very first time I tried grasshoppers. They didn't look as tasty as they actually were, and I was assured by the fact that they were certified safe as sustainable with the green Entotrust logo on the packaging. I'm happy I overcome my fear and I gave it a chance! The flavour reminded me immediately of the sunflower seeds which I really like!



**BLUE CHEESE
GNOCCHI**

What did you experience along this journey?

By trying to obtain the most scientific results as possible, I kept track of my glucose, ketone bodies and proteins content through a regular urinalysis, to make sure I wouldn't lose any important or high amounts of nutrients, and I am happy to say that I didn't experience any physiological change, and everything was under control.

I did lose a bit of weight the first seven days, but I did gain everything back the next couple of weeks as it would normally happen by switching to a high protein-



based diet. So, we could assume that 30 days are not enough for any change to develop, or simply no major differences will ever occur by switching to an entomophagy diet.

I now, more than ever, believe that entomophagy is the future. Edible insects are sustainable, rich in proteins essential for our body, and safe to eat for a person, like me, that does not have any allergies.

I know may be hard to give up on meat, and not everyone is ready to become vegetarian, but I think is important to step out your comfort zone and give it a try! I am personally still eating meat, but now and then I like to consume grasshoppers or crickets with my meals and create classic or new recipes. I actually used this experience to step out of my comfort zone myself and try other edible insects too, and I must admit that mealworms and crickets are also great!

How would you summarize the experience and what were your key learnings?

My overall experience was absolutely terrific, I had fun experimenting new recipes and new combinations with different ingredients and I loved convincing my friends to try it too!

I am very happy that I am not scared anymore of trying new things and that I opened the door to new incredible flavours and combinations that I didn't even know about before.

What do you foresee in the future of insect food consumption?

I really hope that more and more people will decide to try and incorporate edible insects to their diet, just as other 3000 ethnic groups in Asia, South America, and Africa are already doing.

As I already mentioned, entomophagy is the future, in regards of sustainability and nutrients availability.



Many sceptical people want to first know if insect-based foods are safe and more nutritional than other processed foods. For me, the Entotrust certification represents the evident assurance of this. Indeed, quality standards must be applied by insect food producers, to show that edible insects are safe to eat, as widely seen in many food categories.

Thank you Loredana, your experience is enriching all of us for the positive feedback on the insect-based food movement, and even more valuable for the ones that still have doubts.