

CRUNCHING ON CRITTERS: SWEDISH STRIVING FOR SUSTAINABILITY PUTS BUGS ON THE TABLE

Posted on March 29, 2024



Fears of war and food shortages raise questions about

the future of food

Category: [COMMENTARY](#)

Tags: [climate policies](#), [food](#), [food shortages](#), [insects](#), [sustainability](#), [Sweden](#)

The Swedish city of Södertälje, just outside Stockholm, has decided to be at the forefront of “climate smart” and “sustainable” eating habits—apparently in particular when it comes to *tacos*.

The cafeteria in city hall, in an effort by the city to “support businesses that develop sustainable foods,” recently tested the waters by serving its patrons tacos with mashed larvae instead of the customary beef.

According to Sara Seing, the city's dietary manager, the mashed larvae—no joke—[taste like chicken](#).

“It’s environmentally friendly and sustainably produced,” Seing said, adding that, while larvae-mash will not be part of the regularly offered fare for right now, maybe in the future, “when people have added it to their culture and can accept insects, then it may be possible.”

Lunch guests at city hall were informed of the unusual (to put it mildly) ingredient and able to elect not to indulge if they found the prospect unappealing.

That was not the case a couple of weeks ago when state television was invited to a high school in the same city to [record the reactions](#) of unsuspecting students who had unwittingly been fed tacos made with—you guessed it—larvae.

Students, state television SvT [reported](#), “get to learn that insects are both climate smart, healthy, and that the little animal has lived a good life.” (Yes, both three.)

In the case of the high school, enlightening the students on the environmental virtues of consuming bugs was only part of the scheme. At least as important—in line with recent [Swedish government hype](#) of what to do “[if the war comes](#)”—was finding answers to the question of how institutions like schools and retirement homes would be able to feed their clients during a war or other crisis.

In a country where the number of animals harvested in the annual moose hunt has dropped from almost 100,000 to 57,000 in the past ten years, hunter education would seem like an obvious solution to feared food shortages—but no, the go-to protein is, once again, larvae. (Which, admittedly, are quite easy to hunt and kill and turn into something that the apostles of the new environmentalist religion consider ‘food.’)

During “Science Week” in February this year, Södertälje was home to other food experiments with the [stated aim](#) of “limiting the climate footprint”:

"Everyone who wants to will have the opportunity to taste this delicious combination—crispy mealworms and a tasty soft-serve ice cream! This is a way to highlight new types of food and emphasize the need for innovative thinking about food," [said](#) Eva Helén, responsible for Science Week.

The Swedish bug-eating vanguard may be sad to find themselves somewhat behind the curve. Already in 2022, hundreds of state-funded primary schools in the Netherlands offered students lunches of [worms and insects](#) under the pretext of “saving the planet.”

But we’d all apparently better [get used to the idea](#). The first insect-additive was approved by the EU in 2021, with the bloc passing another law allowing [ground insects in food products](#) in January 2023 (lesser mealworms and powdered house crickets, if you were curious). And the push for more insect-based food-like products is ongoing. The International Platform of Insects for Food and Feed ([IPIFF](#)) is actively lobbying the EU for “the use of insects and insect derived products as a top tier source of nutrients for human consumption and animal feed.”

Making your own food from scratch never felt more appealing.