

Let them eat snail

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A nutritionist in Nigeria says that malnutrition and iron deficiency in schoolchildren could be reduced in her country by baking up snail pie. In a research paper to be published in the *International Journal of Food Safety, Nutrition and Public Health*, she explains snail is not only cheaper and more readily available than beef but contains more protein.

Ukpong Udofia of the Department of Home Economics, at the University of Uyo, has looked at the moisture levels, [protein](#) content, and iron composition of the flesh of the giant West African land snail and compared it to beef steak. Snail pie is much more nutritious than a beef pie, she says.

Udofia and her research team baked pies of both varieties and asked young mothers and their children to try the tasty meal. Most of them preferred the taste and texture of the pies baked with the snail *Archachatina marginata* to those made with beef. The kids and their mothers judged the snail pies to have a better appearance, texture, and flavor.

"Snail pie is recommended as a cheap source of protein and iron for school-age children and young mothers and could contribute in the fight against iron deficiency anemia," Udofia says.

"The land snail is a readily available and affordable source of animal protein, inhabits a lot of the green forest and swamps of most developing countries including Nigeria," Udofia adds, "It is also increasingly cultivated, although in the West it is more familiar as an unusual pet than

a pie.

[Iron deficiency](#) and a lack of protein in the diet affect young mothers and their children in many developing countries including Nigeria, according to the World Health Organization leading to serious health problems. There is no quick fix for the problem of malnutrition in such countries, but alternative to high-cost meat products could help.

Snail meat contains protein, fat (mainly polyunsaturated fatty acid), [iron](#), calcium, magnesium, phosphorus, copper, zinc, vitamins A, B6, B12, K and folate. It also contains the amino acids arginine and lysine at higher levels than in whole egg. It also contains healthy essential fatty acids such as linoleic and linolenic acids. The high-protein, low-fat content of snail meat makes it a healthy alternative food.

More information: "Snail (*Archachatina marginata*) pie: a nutrient rich snack for school-age children and young mothers" in *Int. J. Food Safety, Nutrition and Public Health*, 2009, Vol. 2, 125-130

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