

What's for dinner? Sushi, with a side of crickets

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While insects have been consumed for centuries worldwide, many people still haven't warmed to the idea of a creepy-crawly on the tongue.

But if your next dinner recipe involves raw fish, seaweed, wasabi and rice—the key ingredients for sushi—chances are you might enjoy some deep-fried crickets or beetles on the side.

For the first time, an international study led by La Trobe University and the University of Pennsylvania, has found that people who frequently consume sushi are more open to introducing [edible insects](#) into their diets.

This was particularly the case with the American sample—of the 82 per cent of participants questioned in the study who said they would be willing to eat [insects](#), 43 per cent ate sushi on a regular basis.

Co-author Dr. Matthew Ruby, Lecturer in Psychology at La Trobe University, said sushi

could be considered a gateway [food](#) to insects.

"Until relatively recently, the idea of trying sushi—let alone having it become a mainstream menu item—was often thought of with disgust in many societies," Dr. Ruby said.

"Just like eating sushi, eating insects will take some getting used to."

"It appears the more open you are to 'exotic' foods, the more willing you'll be to taste-test a grasshopper, or an ant, or even a spider."

The researched involved 476 participants—275 from the United States and 201 India. In addition to the link between eating [sushi](#) and consuming insects, other key findings included:

- 82 per cent of American participants said they would consider eating insects in general, compared to 34 per cent of Indian participants

- 80 per cent of American participants said they would consider eating foods containing whole insects, compared to 48 per cent of Indian participants—In both countries, a higher percentage of men than women were willing to eat insects, both whole and incorporated into other foods—Almost 26 per cent of Indian participants felt that eating insects violated a protected value (meaning, they would not eat insects no matter how great the benefits, nor how minor the risks), compared to just 4 per cent of American participants—65 per cent of American participants agreed that rearing insects as food generates less pollution and [greenhouse gas](#) than rearing conventional livestock, compared to 28 per cent of Indian participants

Co-author Paul Rozin, Professor Emeritus of Psychology at the University of Pennsylvania, noted that 28 per cent of Indian participants and 65 per cent of American participants were willing to try food containing at least 1 per cent insect flour.

"Insect flour can be found as a protein-rich substitute for some standard grain flours in products like crackers, biscuits and protein bars," Professor Emeritus Rozin said.

"This could be another way to introduce insects into your diet, if the idea of crunching into a whole bug doesn't appeal to you."

There are over 2,000 edible species of insects throughout the world. Many species are non-toxic and can serve as a source of high-quality protein and micronutrients.

Furthermore, raising insects for food is typically much more environmentally sustainable than many commonly consumed animals in terms of food efficiency, water use, required farming space, and [greenhouse gas emissions](#).

The research has been published in *Food Quality and Preference*.

More information: Matthew B. Ruby et al, Disgust, sushi consumption, and other predictors of acceptance of insects as food by Americans and Indians, *Food Quality and Preference* (2019). [DOI: 10.1016/j.foodqual.2019.01.013](#)

Provided by La Trobe University

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