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[FEAST]  
GUIDE

**WORTH CHIRPING ABOUT**  
The Black Ant serves grasshoppers on tortillas (shown here), as well as antichut on shrimp to-facio.

## Bug Appétit!

Inspired by Halloween spirit, we highlight a new take on insects... as artisanal ingredients: Rather than squishing or swatting them, chefs are carefully sourcing, cooking and coaxing out their delicate flavors. —Bonnie Davidson

Health-minded foodies with a taste for adventure are buzzing about insects—nutrient-dense critters that are a staple of cuisines worldwide but traditionally considered pests in this country. Proponents insist insects are an excellent source of protein, vitamins, minerals and fiber. They're also natural, economical and environmentally friendly—and surprisingly delicious.

"Bugs, if prepared properly, have a contrasting texture between exterior and interior," notes Andrew Zimmern, host of Travel Channel's *Bizarre Foods*. "They can stand up to techniques as diverse as wok cooking and steaming."

Zimmern's favorite crawler, steamed goliath beetles in sea salt and butter ("they taste like sweet shrimp"), aren't available outside of Madagascar, but plenty of chichatanas (flying black ants), chapulines (grasshoppers) and gusanos de maguey (worms) appear on the contemporary Mexican menu at **The Black Ant** (60 Second Ave., blackantnyc.com), where Executive Chef/Partner Maria Hernandez regularly gets a fresh supply of specimens

from Oaxaca, Mexico. Big black ants are sprinkled over guacamole; powdered grasshoppers encrust shrimp in soft tacos; and teeny, sautéed 'hoppers—plus cheese, salsa and beans—are heaped on a crisp tortilla. Owner/mixologist Jorge Guzman coats the rim of tequila-based cocktail glasses with smoky ant salt.

The Mexican tradition of insect eating continues with chef Julian Medina's chapuline tacos—dried grasshoppers sautéed with onions, jalapeños and lime juice—at his trio of **Toloache** restaurants (toloachenyc.com).

In parts of Asia, silkworms are the arthropods of choice. Locally, they're deep-fried at chef Pichet Ong's Northern Thai outpost, **Qi Esarn Thai Kitchen** and **Qi Thai Grill** (qirestaurant.com). Crisp on the outside, creamy on the inside, silkworms are "like french fries with a protein flavor," says Ong, adding that the best way to eat dug-dar gub thuggaton tohd—inch-long fried silkworms and jumbo fried grasshoppers, with Sriracha dipping sauce—is with your fingers, washed down with beer. "It's a great bar snack."

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