

Student Eats Bugs For A Month

There are a lot of different diets out there. Some diets cut down on fat. Others cut down on sugar. A few very popular diets cut back on carbohydrates while increasing protein. Some diets are essentially all protein.

Alabama student Camren Brantley-Rios recently went on a high-protein diet, but he used a very non-traditional source of protein: bugs.

That's right, bugs. The 21-year-old student documented his bug-eating experience on his blog, "30 Days of Bugs." Throughout the 'month of bugs', Camren ate three meals with bugs in them every day.



But why bugs? Well, Camren is thinking about the future. He believes that traditional meats like pork and beef are unsustainable sources of protein. Raising animals like pigs and cows requires a lot of natural resources, including grains, water, and land. Bugs, Camren thinks, are going to be the diet of the future.

Before he went on a month-long bug diet, Camren admits, he thought the idea of eating bugs was pretty gross. But now, he says it really wasn't all that hard to get used to. He mainly stuck to a few varieties of bugs:

"I'm mainly sticking to three species," he said. "Mealworms, waxworms, and crickets. Those are definitely the bulk of my diet. But I'm trying here and there to incorporate things a little bit more exotic."

Obviously, "Exotic" is a relative term. But Camren incorporated these bugs into some pretty normal meals. For example, he made bug-burgers with crickets. He also mixed waxworms into scrambled eggs. One dinner he had fairly often was mealworm fried rice.

What does mealworm fried rice taste like? "It was pretty good," Camren said. "I seasoned the mealworms with soy sauce and threw them in."

The mealworms were a bit of a challenge to cook, however. "I had a bit of trouble with the mealworms," Camren said. "They were still squirming around."

But surprisingly, they actually tasted pretty good. "It wasn't as bad as I thought it would be. It was nutty, a little buttery and kind of reminded me of popcorn," he said.

Not all of the bugs Camren ate were that tasty, though. "Silkworm wasn't my favorite by any means," he said. "They stank."

Some scientists like Camren's diet. Audrey Maretzki, a professor of food science and nutrition at Pennsylvania State University, says that bugs are "high in protein and high in calories. They've got other trace minerals. It makes them a desirable part of the diet."

Jason Dombroskie, is Cornell University's coordinator for the insect diagnostic lab. He's an insect expert. He said he hopes projects like '30 Days of Bugs' will encourage more people to try out insect-based meals.

Maybe Camren is right. Maybe bug-based meals will be the diet of the future. Not only is a bug-based diet environmentally friendly, it's also a lot cheaper than traditional sources of protein.

"There are over a thousand edible insects with unique flavors and an infinite number of ways to prepare them," he said. "Why not try something new?"

507

Do you think bugs could replace our traditional sources of protein?

Have you ever eaten an insect on purpose?

Would you be willing to try a cricket cheeseburger?