



BUG FOOD, BUSINESS, ENTOMOPHAGY, INTERVIEWS, NOVEL FOOD

Bugsolutely: Pasta with cricket flour

Lorenzo Pezzato Jan 12, 2016 230 Views 0 Comments



We interviewed Massimo Reverberi, founder of Bugsolutely

Did you decide to become an entrepreneur in the field of edible insects when you were in Thailand? Or did you come up with this idea in Italy and then you moved for other reasons?

It's something I've decided to do in Thailand. The idea arose long before, from a research carried out on behalf of a person who was interested in business related to insects. But the Western market of edible insects developed later, I would say in the middle of 2015, and that's when I founded the company.

Tell us something more about the project Bugsolutely and the products you sell.

Bugsolutely is one of the many edible insects company, but is one of the few, if not the only one, offering pasta among its products. We know that of a couple of other companies have been advertising pasta made from cricket flour, but their product does not seem to be marketed yet. Cricket flour has great nutritional value, and compared to other insects, the cricket seems to meet an easier acceptance among western consumers and their cultural taboos.

Where do you find the raw material?

On the one hand there are flour cricket producers in Canada and USA, but their prices are extremely high. On the other hand there are the producers in Thailand: here the cost of agricultural land and labor is much lower, the temperature is perfect (while in Canada heating is necessary), therefore cricket flour costs three times less. Local producers possess international certifications and follow international standards in terms of food safety. Western Countries represent their market so they aim at developing a product that respects American and European requirements.

Did you face any bureaucratic or legal obstacle to launch your business?

Thailand is a very bureaucratic country, similarly to Italy, and in some cases it is even more complex. However we obtained the approval for Cricket Pasta from the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), our suppliers are registered and FDA, GMP and HACCP approved.



What kind of market have edible insects in Thailand?

As in the majority of Asian countries (and I suppose even in African and South American ones) insects are usually

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fried and flavored with spices. Asians conceive them especially as a snack, but there are also a few eastern cuisine recipes involving the use of an insect. In Thailand insects consumption amounts to nearly 7.000 tonnes per year and the takings for the farmers who raise them is over 30 million dollars. On our blog there are some articles that give an idea of this world, which is strange for us, but normal for millions of non-western people.

What will be your target market?

The product was launched in December 2015. We will focus primarily on the USA and some European Countries. The Americans are open-minded and curious towards foods, and therefore are used to multicultural cuisine from around the world. The American wealthy class is sensitive to environmental issues. We should not forget that the reasons to eat proteins derived from insects are mainly two: they are healthier and require far fewer resources to be produced, sometimes ten times less resources than the ones needed to raise a beef. We will contact European distributors that have revised their legislation in order to admit edible insects. Moreover, anyone who wants to buy a Cricket Pasta can do it on our website, because we ship worldwide.

bugsolutely

Do you think that this sector will grow rapidly in Europe?

Absolutely yes. Market research and tests carried out during events (such as the Expo in Milan) indicate that more than a third of people eat a bug without any problem. When a bug becomes flour and is just one of the ingredients of a food, the majority is not restrained by cultural taboos. As for pasta, the fact that it is boiled and seasoned helps overcome the psychological block linked to entomophagy. We count also on the Nordic countries for their sensitivity to ecological issues.

Will edible insects make it harder than elsewhere to be accepted as food in Italy?

Italy is characterized by a traditional mentality, and this is even more marked in the field of food. It represents one of the worst places to experiment novel food requiring curiosity towards the tastes of the rest of the world. But in the past there have been exceptions, such as sushi. Few would imagine such a widespread diffusion of unusual flavors like horseradish and a massive consumption of raw fish. There are also pioneers: in France, edible insects are earning more and more success, even if France is traditionalist.

Italian companies will probably have an advantage over their competitors, as usually happens in the food and wine sector?

I fear that Italian companies will find it difficult to enter this market for a long time. The European Community seems to be really slow in regulating this sector, and in case individual Countries will have the faculty to further specify what is allowed and what is not, Italy may be at the very bottom. Instead, Belgium, Netherlands, United Kingdom and now maybe Spain decided not to follow the EU timing, and gave a substantial go-ahead to edible insects.

How would you define the business of Bugsolutely, if I made you the question ten years?

Funny and profitable. Funny because it's not often one discovers new things, finds market niches, invents products and is also useful from an ecological point of view. Profitable because despite many skeptics, the insect-based food market will grow, and the ones who believed in it from the very beginning will see significant returns on the investments they made.

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