

Insects Innovation in Gastronomy

COURSE SUPPORT



Module 2 Unit 5:

Customers debate

Disclaimer:

This project is co-funded with the support of the European Union.



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This last unit aims to foster a structured discussion on the incorporation of edible insects into gastronomy, focusing on consumer perspectives. Two participants with different dietary preferences, an omnivorous consumer and a vegan consumer, will debate two central questions regarding the incorporation of insects in gastronomy and their sustainable role in cuisine. The first explores the general perception of insects in gastronomy and whether consumers are open to including insect-based products in their diets. The second examines the potential benefits and drawbacks of using insect-based ingredients, such as insect flour and protein, with a focus on sustainability, nutrition, and consumer acceptance. Other than subjectivity and preferences, the debate will be based on the Cluster Collaboration Platform's agri-food industry report, incorporating the Farm to Fork strategy and the EU code of conduct on responsible food business and marketing practices.

This course support will not incorporate the direct answers given by the debaters, moreover will be taken as a sort of introduction to what might be their possible view-points through the debate.

Dietary differences: omnivorous and vegan diet and the possible viewpoints in the debate

An **omnivorous** diet includes a wide variety of food sources, encompassing plants, meat, fish, eggs, dairy products, and potentially insects. They may perceive incorporating insects into meals as another form of animal protein, similar to consuming seafood or poultry. Omnivorous consumers may recognize the nutritional benefits of insects, which are rich in protein, vitamins, and essential minerals, and appreciate their low environmental impact compared to traditional livestock. This consumer may also value the culinary creativity associated with insect-based dishes, particularly in innovative restaurants exploring novel flavors and textures. However, some omnivorous consumers may express hesitation due to cultural norms or unfamiliarity with insect consumption, requiring reassurance regarding safety, taste, and preparation methods, as stated in the previous units. A **vegan** diet strictly excludes all animal products, including meat, fish, dairy, eggs, honey, and insects. Vegan diets are primarily driven by ethical, environmental, and/or health considerations. Individuals who follow a vegan lifestyle might oppose insect consumption, categorizing it as the exploitation of living beings. Since veganism excludes all animal products, insects are generally seen as incompatible with this lifestyle. Ethical concerns may focus on the treatment of insects during farming and processing, reinforcing the belief that alternative plant-based proteins are a more appropriate solution for achieving sustainability goals. Some vegan consumers may also question the scalability of insect farming and emphasize the need to promote legumes, grains, and algae as sustainable protein sources.

The farm to fork strategy and the EU Code of Conduct

The European Union's Farm to Fork Strategy is a plan designed to create a sustainable food system across Europe. As part of the European Green Deal, the strategy aims to reduce the environmental impact of the food industry while ensuring food security, nutrition, and affordability, while promoting the adoption of more sustainable agricultural practices, improved food production methods, and a reduction in food waste. Incorporating insects into the food system aligns with this vision, as insect

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farming requires fewer natural resources and produces lower greenhouse gas emissions compared to traditional livestock. This strategy also emphasizes the need to educate consumers about sustainable choices, making public awareness campaigns crucial for the acceptance of insect-based foods.

Support link:

https://food.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2020-05/f2f_action-plan_2020_strategy-info_en.pdf

The EU Code of Conduct is another key initiative supporting sustainable food practices. It encourages food industry stakeholders, including producers, retailers, and food service providers to commit to actions that promote healthier, more sustainable diets. The code outlines specific goals for reducing food waste, improving nutritional standards, and enhancing supply chain sustainability. Promoting insect-based foods can contribute to these objectives by offering a resource-efficient alternative protein source.

Support link: https://food.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2021-06/f2f_sfpd_coc_final_en.pdf

Conclusion

We hope that this unit has provided valuable insights into the complexity of promoting insect-based foods in gastronomy. While some consumers may see insects as a sustainable and innovative protein alternative, others may remain hesitant due to cultural norms, ethical considerations, or unfamiliarity. Understanding these diverse perspectives is crucial for encouraging acceptance.