

What's the Most Delicious Thing You've Eaten?

by BILL BUFORD

For the last two and a half years, I've been able to declare, without hesitation and with only a modest sense of theater, that the most delicious thing I've eaten in a long time was a bowl of warm pig's blood. I had it on a cold day in February 2009, in a gravel- and-straw courtyard, on a farm, in the hills above the Rhone River, in France.

Two friends slaughtered the animal that morning, following an old-fashioned approach. I had wanted to witness it, mainly to see how the deed was done but also to learn what the effect on me might be. Every meat eater participates indirectly in an animal's death, normally at a very far remove. Few of us have the opportunity to get close enough to the meat we eat to experience that death that makes it possible. This was that opportunity.

The animal was raised by one of my friends, and it seemed fitting, by the perverse logic of food, that he should be killing it. You are not only what you eat, but what you've fed. A farm pig is different from an industrial animal. This one was uneconomically huge and had been luxuriously fed. It was strong -- it took four of us to pin it down--and had an abundance of character and a withering self-awareness: it knew it was going to die and knew enough to spot the wuss in the group and fix on him pretty much exclusively. (Wuss = me.)

Its wail was piercing and relentless and at a pitch that you couldn't block out; the whole valley knew that a pig was being killed, and it didn't diminish until the animal was secured, and soothed, and calmed, and the artery in its throat was pierced by the tip of a knife. My friend raised and lowered the animal's foreleg, like a pump, pushing blood through the hole in throat and out and into a bucket, where it then coagulated instantly.

My task was to keep it moving with my hand. I stirred, and a hundred pieces of string thickened against my fingers. I stirred and stirred and seemed to become aware of everything at once. The blood up to my armpit, the smell of the animal, the low wheezes of its last breath, the clear winter light, the color of the sky, the dirt under my knees, the smoke from a fire that had been made to heat water in an old-fashioned cast-iron stove for cooking the boudin noir. That's what the blood was for, blood sausages that would be cooked to a weightless custard.

The strings dissolved, the blood was ready. A friend gave me a ladle, and I dipped into the bucket, and drank it, a little sloppily, aware that I now had a red moustache.

We eat a lot of meals in a life. Sometimes I don't know why some foods break through, elevate themselves in my consciousness and manage to stick. It is often for reasons besides the food itself, the theater surrounding it's eating, the culture of the experience, the otherness that naturally gathers around the things we eat: history and grandmothers and death and the mechanics of surprise. The blood was good. It was ridiculously vital, as rich as it was vibrantly red, and weirdly, unapologetically full of health. It had a taste that I hadn't known, and like the experience, like the theater where I drank it, is something I won't forget.

Текст №1

Teen's Junk Food Diet Caused Him to Go Blind, Doctors Say

by Rachael Rettner

He was reportedly a "fussy eater."

A teen who ate nothing but fries, chips and other junk food for years slowly went blind as a result of his poor diet, according to a new report of the case.

The case highlights a perhaps little-known fact about poor diets: In addition to being tied to obesity, heart disease and cancer, they "can also permanently damage the nervous system, particularly vision," according to the report, published today (Sept. 2) in the journal *Annals of Internal Medicine*.

The teen's problems began at age 14, when he went to the doctor's office complaining of tiredness.

The teen was reportedly a "fussy eater," and blood tests showed he had anemia and low levels of vitamin B12, the report said. He was treated with injections of vitamin B12 along with advice on how to improve his diet.

However, by age 15, he developed hearing loss and vision problems, but doctors couldn't seem to find the cause — results from an MRI and eye exam were normal.

Over the next two years, the teen's vision got progressively worse. When the boy was 17, an eye test showed that his vision was 20/200 in both eyes, the threshold for being "legally blind" in the United States.

Further tests showed the teen had developed damage to his optic nerve, the bundle of nerve fibers that connects the back of the eye to the brain. In addition, the teen still had low levels of vitamin B12, along with low levels of copper, selenium and vitamin D.

These deficiencies prompted doctors to ask the teen about the foods he ate. "The patient confessed that, since elementary school, he would not eat certain textures of food," the authors, from the University of Bristol in the United Kingdom, wrote in the report. He told doctors that the only things he ate were fries, chips — specifically, Pringles — white bread, processed ham slices and sausage.

After ruling out other possible causes for his vision loss, the teen was diagnosed with nutritional optic neuropathy, or damage to the optic nerve that results from nutritional deficiencies. The condition can be caused by drugs, malabsorption of food, poor diet or alcohol abuse. "Purely dietary causes are rare in developed countries," the authors said.

It's known that the B vitamins are essential for many cellular reactions, and deficiencies in these vitamins can lead to the buildup of toxic byproducts of metabolism, and eventually to the damage of nerve cells, according to the University of Iowa.

Vision loss from nutritional optic neuropathy is potentially reversible if caught early. However, by the time the teen was diagnosed, his vision loss was permanent. What's more, wearing glasses would not help the teen's vision, because damage to the optic nerve cannot be corrected with lenses, said study lead author Dr. Denize Atan, a consultant senior lecturer in ophthalmology at Bristol Medical School and Bristol Eye Hospital.

The teen was prescribed nutritional supplements, which prevented his vision loss from getting any worse.

The teen was also referred to mental health services for an eating disorder. The researchers note that the teen's diet was more than just "picky eating" because it was very restrictive and caused multiple nutritional deficiencies.

A relatively new diagnosis known as "avoidant-restrictive food intake disorder" (previously known as "selective eating disorder") involves a lack of interest in food or avoidance of foods with certain textures, colors, etc., without concern to body weight or shape. The condition usually starts in childhood, and patients often have a normal body mass index (BMI), as was the case for this patient, the authors said.

Текст №2

Delicious or Disgusting? Odd Museum Serves Up Sheep Eyeballs and Frog Smoothies

by Mindy Weisberger

Is maggot-covered cheese disgusting or delicious?

That's not a trick question. To people from Sardinia, the cheese known as "casu marzu" — a sheep-milk pecorino seasoned liberally with fly poo and crawling with thousands of larvae — is highly prized for its unique flavors, and is eaten along with mouthfuls of the plump maggots that writhe on its surface.

However, if you're encountering casu marzu ("putrid cheese" in Sardinian) for the first time, you might find it a little hard to swallow. The same might be said for certain other regional delicacies, such as China's spicy rabbit heads, Kazakhstan's fermented mare's milk or Peru's roasted guinea pig. All of these are highly popular in their countries of origin but can inspire revulsion or dismay in diners who have never sampled them before.

If you're curious about which bizarre foods are the most likely to trigger queasiness in first-time tasters, wonder no longer. You can now find 80 of the world's most distinctive (and repulsive) edible oddities — including maggoty cheese — in one place: a new exhibit called the Disgusting Food Museum, in Malmö, Sweden.

Unfamiliar scents and flavors abound in the museum. Some of the very special foods include frog smoothies from Peru, the foul-smelling durian fruit from Thailand, Finland's salty black licorice, slimy, fermented soybeans — a dish known as "nattō" that is popular for breakfast in Japan.

To be included in the exhibit, each dish had to qualify not only as potentially gag-inducing due to its smell, taste, appearance or texture, it also had to be thought of as delicious "somewhere in the world," curator and museum director Andreas Ahrens told Live Science.

With those criteria, the exhibit makes it clear that when you call a food "disgusting," that response reflects your cultural background as much as it does the signals from your senses, Ahrens said.

"There is a purpose for disgust," he said. "Disgust is a universal emotion that exists to warn us of potentially dangerous, poisonous foods." However, if a person grows up eating a certain food, they don't feel the aversion that may be experienced by someone who's a newcomer to the dish.

For example, a well-known Philippine dish called "balut" serves up partially developed duck embryos that are boiled alive inside the egg and then eaten whole. Ahrens told Live Science that he considers himself fairly adventurous when it comes to food — and when he tried balut, he just couldn't keep it down.

"It made me throw up," he said.

On the other hand, Ahrens' wife, who grew up in the Philippines, considers balut to be "absolutely normal," he said.

Another food in the museum that challenges the untrained palate is fermented shark from Iceland called "hákarl"; Ahrens described it as "death in a little can," saying it smells worse than anything in the world.

But there's something that tastes even worse than hákarl: "su gallu," another cheese from Sardinia. To make su gallu, a person would slaughter a baby goat that's just enjoyed its last meal of mother's milk. Then, they would remove the stomach and hang it up to dry, with the cheese fermenting from the milk that's still inside the kid's gut.

"It tastes like gasoline," Ahrens said. "If you eat too much of that, you have an aftertaste in your mouth for several days afterwards."

Of the 80 "disgusting" foods featured in the exhibit, most are represented by real food; many are "smellable"; and some are available for tasting, according to a museum statement. Perhaps after experiencing the sights and smells of these one-of-a-kind foods, museum visitors will find themselves a little more open-minded about dishes and cultures other than their own, Ahrens said.

Speaking of which, do you remember that maggot-infested cheese from Sardinia? If you try it, make sure to cover your eyes before you take a bite — not to hide the sight of the maggots you're about to gulp down, but to protect your eyeballs from the larvae, which can leap to heights of about 6 inches (15 centimeters), according to Ahrens.

The Disgusting Food Museum is open until Jan. 27, 2019.

Текст №3

How food — yes, food — can be a tool for social change*by Patrick D'Arcy*

Chef David Hertz is trying to build a movement that uses food to create jobs, increase empathy, and even address inequality. Everything changed for Brazilian chef David Hertz when he visited a favela for the first time. It was 2004, and he'd just quit his job as a chef at an upscale restaurant on the most expensive street in São Paulo. A friend was visiting a favela in Jaguaré, and Hertz tagged along.

"That moment was my big insight for life," says Hertz, a TED Fellow. He saw firsthand, for the first time, the scale of poverty, unemployment and social exclusion in his own backyard. When he learned that 11 million Brazilians live in these urban settlements, he decided he couldn't go back to working in exclusive restaurants. "I felt that I'd found my mission, and my passion and my talent would serve that mission," he says.

In 2006, Hertz launched his business, Gastromotiva, which offers vocational kitchen training and runs programs in nutrition, food education and business incubation for people from low-income communities like those in the favelas. Based in Rio de Janeiro, Gastromotiva has now trained more than 3,500 people for food industry jobs.

In Davos this January, with financial support from the international agricultural company Cargill, Gastromotiva launched the Social Gastronomy Movement: a global effort to tackle social issues through food. Here, Hertz breaks down the principles behind what he calls "social gastronomy."

We can use food to create a more inclusive society. Food touches on every aspect of human life: the environment, agriculture, our economy, health, even our social lives. Social gastronomy "uses food to turn social inequalities — such as hunger, poor nutrition, unemployment, inequality — into dignity, opportunities and well-being," says Hertz. But what does this look like in practice?

A culinary education can bring opportunity — and dignity. When he was 27, Hertz was part of the inaugural class at Brazil's first culinary training program at Senac and it launched him on his career as a chef. He wants to give others this same opportunity to get educated — because the benefits of a culinary education go far beyond knife skills. "Social inclusion requires education, because education leads to job opportunities, which can help you provide for your family, but it also means you're known by society, you're recognized as a citizen," he says.

As a result, education is at the heart of Gastromotiva. Its signature culinary training course — which includes instruction in both kitchen skills and hospitality — is free and takes students three months and 300 hours to complete. Gastromotiva partners with universities and culinary schools in Brazil, El Salvador, South Africa and Mexico; local chefs teach the courses *and* help the graduates find jobs. "The food industry is one of the biggest employers, especially of underprivileged communities," Hertz says. "It's a good first job, and these jobs are always needed. They give space for creativity, and combine art and science."

Two years after graduation, 80 percent of Gastromotiva's alumni are employed as chefs, restaurant hosts, hotel workers and food entrepreneurs, among other industry jobs. One of Hertz's first students, Uribeia Andrade, was born into poverty in northeast Brazil. Today, she runs her own catering company in São Paulo. Another Gastromotiva student, Gleice Simão, became a star on Brazil's *MasterChef*. Diego Santos, who grew up in the Vila Ede favela, runs Gastromotiva's new catering service.

Food can build empathy and community. During the 2016 Summer Olympic Games in Rio de Janeiro, Hertz partnered with Michelin-starred Italian chef Massimo Bottura to open Refettorio Gastromotiva, a pop-up community kitchen that turned leftovers from the Olympic village into world-class meals for Brazil's homeless people. Not only did Refettorio reduce food waste, the space also gathered an amazing community of athletes, tourists and journalists who mingled with the local customers — a rare thing during an Olympics, which can often exclude local marginalized people.

Refettorio has since become a permanent space where, on any night, Brazil's most vulnerable residents can receive a delicious free meal made from surplus ingredients from the country's biggest food distributor, Benassi. Refettorio employs a staff of Gastromotiva graduates and frequently taps well-known chefs to prepare dinner; an army of volunteers serve the meals. "We were born to be afraid of the homeless, because we don't know anything else," Hertz says. "But after you serve, and you talk to people and you look into their eyes, it changes, because you see that you are not better than them. In the end, I can say that 99 percent of the people that come as volunteers, they always say that they got more than what they gave."

By sparking change at the local level, food can improve global systems. Hertz cites the Slow Food movement as inspiration: while Slow Food began in the late 1980s as a grassroots protest against the opening of Italy's first McDonald's, it's grown into an international movement with branches in 150 countries. To build a global profile for social gastronomy, Hertz is focused on bringing together chefs, social businesses,

nonprofits and corporations that are already using the power of food for the greater good. He points to organizations such as Kakao in Venezuela, which helps women from marginalized communities become cocoa entrepreneurs; The Clink, a UK-based restaurant where prisoners learn how to cook and serve; and Chef's Brigade, based in the US, which provides healthy meals to high-need public schools.

A diner enjoys a meal at Refettorio. Photo: Angelo Dal Bo.

What's next? With Gastromotiva as a model, Hertz's dream is to establish 50 more social gastronomy hubs around the world. These physical spaces will be run by locals who'll use food to address their community's needs, centered around food education.

"When I cook, I feel the journey of my life around me, and all of the places I've been — something opens my sight and also connects me to the ground," Hertz says. "I want everyone to see food as a tool for reconnecting to yourself, to your family, but also to your community and to nature. Social gastronomy can do that."

Текст №4