

A close-up photograph of a person's face and upper torso. The person is holding a pair of red chopsticks in their mouth, which are holding a large, reddish-brown centipede. The centipede is positioned vertically, with its head near the person's lips and its tail extending downwards. The person is wearing a black sleeveless top. The background is plain white.

# EXTREME CUISINE

**Exotic tastes from around the world**

# FROM THE AUTHOR

**T**he only difference between 'tasty' food and 'nasty' food is one letter. I don't say this just to be flippant, or cute – it's just that, in much the same way, it can be a small twist that causes a food to be perceived as good or bad, and that twist is often in who is doing the eating. Food is a very cultural, very personal experience. Indeed, it's as much about the mind as it is about the mouth. When it comes to food that is unfamiliar, the mind determines exactly where this food rests within one's culinary comfort zone. A slice of processed American cheese hermetically sealed in plastic may speak of the wonder years to one person. To a Sardinian gourmet, *casu marzu*, a sheep-milk cheese infested with cheese-fly larvae, is the height of home and hearth and the absolute definition of comfort food. On the flip side, both of these cheeses can be thought of as food nightmares – it just depends on who's doing the eating.

In order to write a book like this one, it was imperative that I be open to a variety of foods. Some people consider themselves gustatorily liberal, but when push comes to shove, or when eggs over easy become *balut*, these eaters curl up into a foetal position – much like the prehatched duck in the *balut*. As a guy who, like an undernourished zombie, was voraciously devouring pig brains at six years of age, to me it's not only a matter of powering through a menagerie of strange chow, thumping my chest triumphantly upon keeping the meal down and then writing about it. The challenge is also appreciating why a delicacy can be construed as revolting by someone less adventurous.

I think most of the delicacies in this book are scrumptious and it's my hope that readers might be swayed to add some of these experiences to their own must-eat menus. Take baby steps. Start with the lime green Jell-O salad and move up to the blood

tongue – they're sort of related in a gelatinous way. Trust me, they're both good. And, like my mother always told me: 'You'll never starve if you eat everything'.

Speaking of whom, I'd like to thank my mother for serving me that first dish of pig brains when all of my other friends were eating macaroni and cheese. Also thanks to my dad for allowing my mum to spend the grocery money on the weird stuff even though he hated it. Thanks to my wife, Diane, and girls, Chloe and Phoebe, for letting me subject them to all kinds of odd eats and for leaving me alone as I wrote this book. Thanks also to Eric Alba and my wife for guidance. Thank you too Janet Chute, Mark Moss and Scott Ahlberg for your exotic eats expertise. Finally, many thanks to Lonely Planet's Ellie Cobb, Jessica Crouch and Kate Morgan for their patience and kindness in shaping this book.

## **AUTHOR BIO**

Since ingesting his first plate of weird food, Eddie Lin has wandered the earth seeking to sate his lust for the next strange bite, wherever it may lie. This former breakdancer turned food writer traded in his adidas for a fork and a laptop. Eddie's work has been printed in many publications including *The New York Times* and *The Guardian*. He has appeared on *Travel Channel*, *Playboy TV* and *CSI: NY*.

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**SNAP IT UP, BEFORE IT SNAPS BACK AT YOU.**

# ALLIGATOR CHEESECAKE: USA

07

## WHAT IT IS

Some foods mingle scrumptiously like star-crossed lovers. The bacon-wrapped hot dog comes to mind. Other foods just boggle the brain and make you wonder 'WTF?' Say hello to the alligator cheesecake.

## WHERE IT IS

It's brought to you by New Orleans, the town that's turned tossing beads and flashing breasts into an art form. Jacques-Imo's Cafe, a Cajun-Creole restaurant and unofficial carnival under one roof, is where you can eat it.

## HOW IT WORKS

Wild creatures revel in Louisiana's swamps like the other 'wildlife' does on Bourbon St. Alligators are abundant in the wild as well as on farms, so they're worked into the local fare whenever possible – in this case, a savoury cheesecake.

## THE EXPERIENCE

This is cheesecake with a bite, and not just because of the gator sausage. Its spicy and sweet seasonings will make you take notice, much like you would if you were staring down the swamp beast. The fusion of meaty alligator sausage, snappy shrimp and creamy filling make the cheesecake's texture as exciting as the spices.

» Order it here, and don't forget your beads. Let the good times roll! **Jacques-Imo's Cafe**  
*www.jacquesimoscafe.com; 8324 Oak St,  
New Orleans, Louisiana, USA*



**WHEN WE SAY 'BRINGING HOME THE BACON', WE REALLY MEAN IT.**

# BACON EXPLOSION: USA

09

## WHAT IT IS

The internet is a marvel. One day something doesn't exist, and the next it explodes all over the world. The Bacon Explosion is one such eruptive thing. This extreme carnivore concoction is the invention of two Kansas City competition barbecuers who were challenged to create something incorporating bacon. A massive, smoked bacon-and-sausage log was the result.

## WHERE IT IS

It's not available in stores...yet. However, you can easily make it yourself by following the recipe online.

## HOW IT WORKS

Get 1kg of thick-cut bacon and 1kg of Italian sausage meat. Weave some of the bacon into a 12.5cm-by-12.5cm mat. Layer the sausage meat over the bacon mat. Chop and crisp up the remaining bacon, then

distribute it evenly over the sausage layer. Season the meat and then roll up the bacon beast into a log. Smoke cook the log at 107°C for about 2½ hours. Sauce, slice and eat. Have a defibrillator standing by.

## THE EXPERIENCE

This is a pork-on-pork orgy – it's fat with meat, tender and crispy, sweet, spicy, savoury and succulent. There is no more perfect an example of something so bad for you tasting so good. The danger here lies not with the bacon exploding, but your heart doing so.

» For step-by-step instructions, go to the Bacon Explosion's official website. **BBQ Addicts**  
[www.bbqaddicts.com](http://www.bbqaddicts.com)