

Dodgy Dinner, Nasty Nosh, Terrible Tucker

You thought your chick's cooking was bad? Well, be thankful she doesn't make you any of these delightful dishes that can be found on restaurant menus overseas.

Awful Offal

Chinchulines

A Chilean speciality resembling skinny cannelloni that is cooked on the braai. A common feature of any asado or mixed-grill that looks quite appetising. As we have all found out one drunken night or another, looks can be deceiving. It is not a Bolognese-filled pasta shell from Mamma's Ristorante Italiano, but uncleaned cow intestine. Inside that appealing exterior is, literally, a load of shit. The locals will try and tell you that it is from between the first and second chamber and therefore more grass than dung, but your olfactory senses will tell you otherwise when you get this baby in your cakehole.

Ubre

A Patagonian braai speciality, it's preferable not to know what this is before you tuck in. Looking like a charred bit of blubber, it does nothing for either appetite or digestion. Feeling spongy and rubbery in the mouth, it's best given a couple of quick chews and then a good gulp to get it all down, followed by a quick prayer to hope it stays down, because when the waiter responds to your enquiry as to what it was by miming tits and mooing, you'll need all the help you can get to keep the udder down.

Langue de Boeuf

The French love a bit tongue, that's why they invented French kissing, isn't it? Maybe, but you would want to snog this. Served in a lekker sauce, this tender and succulent piece of meat scores better than Thierry Henry but is totally ruined by imagery. Order this and a cooked cow tongue, pimply skin and all, will be presented whole at your table floating in the sauce of your choice. As you look at it you cannot help but think of Daisy in the field licking the snot from her nostrils and the after-birth from a newborn calf.

Haggis

A much-maligned Scottish Highland favourite that can be absolutely fantastic fodder, although its ingredients would make you think it more suitable for the mother-in-law. Offal (lung, heart, and liver), blood, oatmeal, suet (a reduction of beef fat) onions, and seasoning are mixed and stuffed into the stomach lining of a sheep and then boiled. Somehow it all comes together to make a dish that is actually pretty palatable (or was until you knew what was in it).

Animal Appetisers

Cuy

Remember that fluffy guinea pig that kept your sister out of your way from time to time (before she discovered ecstasy)? Well, the Peruvians don't keep them in hutches in the garden, but farm these furry critters and serve them up with alarming regularity. Last year 65 million were served up, making them the undisputed national dish. Genetic research has recently been completed allowing "Superpigs" weighing in at over 3kgs to be produced; 50% up on normal weights. It is most commonly served grilled, spatchcock style but with the head on and tongue poking out one side. Other grim variants include deep-fried, whole, and with the fur on (a real delight to peel off). As with many odd meats, it tastes a bit like chicken, but it's hard to forget the grilled face and tongue and appreciate it, and being an oversized rat it is a fiddly eat. If you still fancy a go but the supermarket has run out, a dassie should make a fine substitute.

Monkey Brains

A delicacy mainly attributed to the Chinese that are allegedly common fodder in the neighbouring province but hard to track down

locally. Legend has it that the monkey is strapped under a table with his skull sticking out of a special hole in the table. The skull is cracked off and the brains eaten live with a garlic, ginger, and chilli dressing to liven up the bland flavour, supposedly increasing the dirty diner's IQ (possible if it was lower than the monkey's and given the choice of meal this could very well be true). Whilst documented in a couple of early books and portrayed on Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom, little evidence of live brain munching exists. Princess Di's ex-butler, Paul Burrell, does claim however to have been served a freshly killed version. The Chinese aren't alone in indulging in a bit of grey matter gobbling: Mexican "Tacos de Sesos", French "Tete de Veau", and Pakistani "Maghaz" are all variations with different animals on the same Hannibal Lecter-esque theme.

Rocky Mountain Oysters

a.k.a Montana tendergroin / swinging sirloin / cowboy caviar

When male calves are branded their danglers are lopped off, essentially to make them behave better, but the crazy Yanks and Spanish love to eat them. Once separated from their owner (ouch) they are peeled (double ouch), washed, rolled in flour and then either deep-fried whole or pan fried thinly sliced. Ancient customs, still practised today, believe that eating certain animal parts have beneficial effects on the same part of the human body, and hence intensely-flavoured bulls' bollocks are considered an aphrodisiac. The Spanish call these liver-tasting sweetmeats Criadillas, but be warned - portions can be small when the matadoe doesn't win.

Tri - Nations Maggot Munching

Mopane worms

Closer to home the large, edible Emperor moth larvae is a multi-million Rand business in Limpopo, Mpumalanga, Botswana and Zimbabwe. 1.6 million kgs are harvest each year in SA alone, with 8 million USD generated in Botswana per annum. Simply pinch off the head and squeeze out the green and slimy gut contents before frying in its own body fat or boiling and then drying for a tasty tea leaf-flavoured snack containing 61 % protein.

Huhu grubs

Never ones to be outdone, the Kiwis like to collect 6cm long grubs from dead rotting wood as their Maori ancestors have done for centuries. Hard-core fans pick them when fully grown (so the gut is thankfully free of digested matter), hold the head and bite off the raw abdomen for a peanutty delight. The fainter of heart fry or roast them for chicken-like crispy skin with a creamy almond centre. Honest.

Witchetty Grub

Of course, whatever the Kiwis and us can do, the ever-modest Aussies can do bigger and better. Their maggot meal comes in at a whopping 12cms in length and 3cms in diameter (the size of the average Aussie erection according to my Sydney-based sister). Once the Ghost moth larvae has been dug out of it's hidey hole in some tree roots, the aboriginals traditionally eat it raw and alive to savour its egg-like flavours. Tinned Witchetty Soup can be found in supermarkets and poncey poofs in swanky Sydney eateries fry it two minutes each side with garlic and parsley butter to bring out its prawniness, but however you dress it, it's still a shosolozza-sized shongololo.

Still hungry?

Other dishes that didn't quite make the cut:

Pig's trotters

Horse steak

Walkie-talkie stew (chicken feet and heads)

Fertilised duck egg

Dog fried rice

Tripe in jelly

Cow snout in vinaigrette