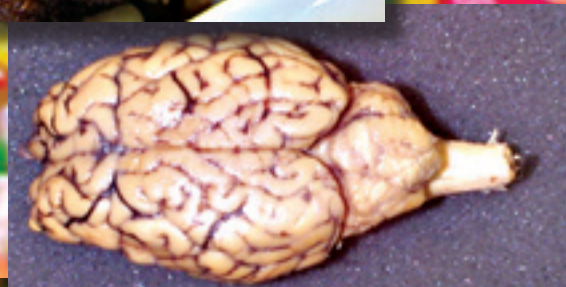


WEIRD FOODS I'VE EATEN

BECAUSE I'M A WEIRD MAN



Humphrey Bogart said he didn't trust anyone who doesn't drink. In the same way, I'm immediately suspicious of anyone who isn't adventurous when it comes to food.

A reluctance to eat "weird" foods tells me a person probably isn't too adventurous with ideas, either. Most of the idiots I grew up with still live in the same area, go to the same church, think the same thoughts, and eat the same food. And one day, they'll all rot together in their normal caskets.

I've eaten interesting foods in the same way I've gone to interesting places and done interesting things and thought interesting thoughts. I get bored with ordinary things because I'm an interesting person. You might think that "interesting" equates to "weird," but that's only because you aren't interesting. Eating weird foods isn't the only thing that makes me interesting; it is merely further evidence that I'm interesting. When I was a young pink-skinned prepube and hadn't so much as eaten out a chick, I had already eaten snails and frog legs and chocolate-covered grasshoppers.

God made me interesting and he made you average. You've always lived a TV Dinner Life. You eat only what you're "supposed" to eat. The weirdest thing you've ever shoved in your maw is the Rooty Tooty Fresh 'n' Fruity special at IHOP. When it comes to sex, you use the missionary position exclusively. You've been to two states—your home state and the one next to it. I've been to all fifty.

You don't make any sense. You'll make out with the ugliest chick at the bar, but you'd never touch eel? You smoke cigarettes knowing they'll give you cancer, but you have a problem with frog legs? If you understood what goes into a hot dog, why should any of this faze you?

Because you don't like variety, your life ain't very spicy. I'm a Spicy Beef Vindaloo, and you're only a Saltine cracker, my friend.

Basically, I tried all the following weird foods because I had the opportunity to try them. There has never been an edible item I've had the chance to try but was too scared to try. In the same spirit of brash adventurousness, I've tried every illegal drug I've ever had the chance to try and traveled everywhere I've ever had the chance to go. Although I am by no means a homosexual, I AM fabulous, and your feeble disapproval of my culinary bravery has no effect on my fabulousness. In fact, I find you so dull, I'm going to stop talking about you right now.

None of these "weird" dishes *tasted* disgusting. One realizes quickly that most mammals taste kinda like beef, most birds taste kinda like chicken, and most aquatic creatures taste kinda like flounder. Still, even I couldn't get past the innate yuck factor with a couple of them.

I don't care that these animals have suffered to feed and amuse me. That's nature's way. I don't believe I accrue any bad karma or am eating their souls. Many of these animals would eat *me* if they could, so I shed no tears for any of them. And I might be reluctant to eat human flesh, but trust me—you don't want to dare me.

KANGAROO

I've eaten kangaroo twice. First time was back in the late 80s at a Manhattan restaurant called the New Deal, whose menu featured "game meats" such as elephant and buffalo. New Deal served up their kangaroo in thin curly meat strips, and I'll be doggoned if I could tell it apart from beef. The second time was at an outdoor restaurant a couple years ago in Melbourne, Australia, where many cars are rigged with "hopper choppers" on their front grilles to kill the pesky jaywalking beasts. That time my kangaroo was served as a thick slab of steak alongside sugar beets, and it still tasted like beef. Note to myself: Kangaroo tastes like beef.

ALLIGATOR

I've gobbled on alligator sausage down in New Orleans during Mardi Gras, eaten deep-fried gator bites at restaurants

throughout Dixie, and even feasted on gator steak on an outdoor wooden deck right above a skeeter-laden Florida swamp wherein live gators dwelt. In every instance, I was grateful to be eating the alligator rather than the inverse. It tastes like a salty mix of fish and chicken.

FROG LEGS

Being part-Frog myself (I'm a self-hating partial Frenchman), I've eaten frog legs since childhood, and just like alligator, they taste somewhere halfway along the fish-poultry continuum. A couple years ago at a Chinese restaurant in rural Pennsylvania I ordered me some frog legs and then watched with mild remorse as waiters removed a live, healthy, happy frog from an aquarium, only to march him back to the kitchen and murder him. My remorse soon faded because I was hungry, and I eagerly devoured the freshly slain frog's fishy-chickeny legs.

EEL

This is the only item on the list that has made me puke—and twice at that. Once was after eating big eel chunks at a Chinese joint in lower Manhattan, and the other was after some Vietnamese eel curry in Orange County, CA. Eels are a visually repellent creature, and even though they've made me vomit twice, I still boldly order eel sushi every time I'm able. I TOLD you I'm crazy.

SNAILS

Chewy and rubbery, but if you dip them in enough melted butter, you can get around the idea that they leave a slime trail everywhere they go. A few years ago I ordered some mini-sized snails at the same Chinese restaurant where I saw the frog get murdered. The waiter told me these snails would clean my insides of harmful toxins. Instead, I was THIS CLOSE to shitting blood for a week.

SHEEP BRAINS

After watching the monkey-brain-eating scene in *Faces of Death*, I knew I had to order me some brains, and I did so at a sit-on-the-floor Moroccan establishment on Capitol Hill in Seattle. They were white and soft and tasted mildly like cream cheese.

ROCKY MOUNTAIN OYSTERS

AKA Bull Testicles. I had a basket of deep-fried bull balls with a side of fries at a honky-tonk bar in Jackson Hole, Wyoming. I'm still unsure whether this makes me more macho or more effeminate. The bull testicles in question tasted like beef.

PIGEON'S HEAD SOUP

When I ordered this item at a Vietnamese place in Orange County, CA, I figured it was like ordering the "Spicy Dragon Bowl" or something similarly symbolic. I didn't expect to dip my spoon into the thick brown mess and lift up an *actual cooked pigeon's head* with its gnarled eyeball looking straight at me. I only took one sip before pussying out. It tasted like soup.

ANT LARVAE

Yup. Pearly white ant maggots. Some of them had even started blossoming into young teenaged ants before being freeze-dried or whatever it was that killed them. I bought them at a Thai grocery store in LA, took them home, and folded them into an omelette with cheese. I took a couple bites and stopped. Even I can only take so much.