

KINO LORBER

Presents

BUGS

A Documentary by Andreas Johnsen

Tribeca Film Festival, Official Selection

Seattle International Film Festival, Official Selection

Cleveland International Film Festival, Official Selection

Edinburgh International Film Festival, Official Selection

2016 / Denmark / 74 min. / In English

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Film website: www.bugsfeed.com/film

Distributor Contact:

Kino Lorber

333 W. 39th Street

New York, NY 10018

(212) 629-6880

Rodrigo Brandão, Rodrigo@kinolorber.com

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BUGS

Entomophagy (noun) – The practice of eating insects, especially by people.

Synopsis

With upcoming global food shortages an almost certainty, forward-thinking chefs, environmentalists, and food scientists are turning toward an unexpected, and for many a deeply unappetizing, source of protein – insects. Shocking, nauseating, and wildly unsettling, consuming the creepy-crawly creatures we spend most of our lives avoiding at first seems impossible, but BUGS artfully and thoughtfully provides us a perfect entry point to insect cuisine.

For three years, a cast of charming and brave food adventurers from the Nordic Food Lab, made up of chefs and researchers Josh Evans, Ben Reade, and Roberto Flore, traveled the world to learn what some of the two billion people who already eat insects had to say. Filmmaker Andreas Johnsen followed them as they foraged, farmed, cooked, and tasted insects with communities in Europe, Australia, Mexico, Kenya, Japan, and beyond. During their journey, they encountered everything from revered termite queens and desert-delicacy honey ants to venomous giant hornets and long-horned grasshoppers.

Throughout the team's experiences and conversations in the field, at the lab, at farm visits, and international conferences, some hard questions started to emerge. If industrially produced insects become the norm, will they be as delicious and as beneficial as the ones in diverse, resilient ecosystems and cuisines around the world? And who will actually benefit as insects are scaled up? Are insects a mirror that reflects our broken food systems, or the silver bullet that will fix them?

BUGS is part travelogue, part unflinching nature documentary, part food porn, and part political treatise. A beautifully shot film that takes the viewer surprisingly fast from repulsion to curiosity (and maybe even hunger!) making a convincing argument for the inherent flavor of insects over their practical agricultural benefits, and raising unexpected and important questions about the future of our food culture along the way.

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Q&A With Filmmaker Andreas Johnsen

WHAT MADE YOU WANT TO DO A FILM ABOUT EATING BUGS?

I wouldn't label myself as a foodie but I'm extremely interested in what people eat around the world, and I have run a Thai restaurant in Copenhagen for the past ten years. My first job was at a fine restaurant in Copenhagen.

I have a friend at Noma and through them heard that the Nordic Food Lab was about to embark on a three-year research project about edible insects. I saw the potential for an interesting documentary, but also for my personal interest, I wanted to go on this journey.

HOW DID YOU MEET JOSH AND BEN?

We had an initial meeting in summer of 2013. They were very keen to get someone professional to document all the research they were going to do. We met again in October 2013 in the airport in Rome, Italy. We went to Sardinia together, and that was the first footage we shot of the film. It was a great four days together, and we decided to keep going.

On that trip, we met Roberto. Ben had met him previously at the Slow Food University when he was studying there. The initial meeting with him was in Sardinia where we stayed with him and his family, and he very organically became part of the team as well.

AS A FILMMAKER, HOW DID YOU GO ABOUT MAKING BUGS APPETIZING ON SCREEN?

My goal was not to get people to eat bugs. My goal was to show how people eat bugs around the world – however it looks, I can't really change that. I'd rather have people thinking about what they eat and why they eat it, and if they consider eating bugs I wanted to make sure I'd shown the culture surrounding the practice in a respectful way.

WHAT IS THE AUDIENCE REACTION TYPICALLY LIKE AT A SCREENING?

The film has played more than 100 festivals, and I've attended many of those screenings, and most people are surprised that it's actually appealing to them. I think this is because they see Ben and Josh taking it seriously. Most people are surprised they are hungry after seeing the film. In fact, at many screenings, we've done multi-course dinners afterwards with different insects. Of course, there is a small segment of people that don't want to see the film because of a phobia to bugs.

EATING BUGS IS UNUSUAL IN WESTERN CULTURES, BUT QUITE COMMON IN OTHER PARTS OF THE WORLD AND THE FILM REALLY CAPTURES THIS CONTRAST. DO YOU THINK BUGS WILL HAVE THE SAME TRAJECTORY AS SUSHI?

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It depends on how it's portrayed by the media. Right now there is a very positive image of entomophagy in the media. Many fine dining restaurants, including Noma, are now incorporating insects into their dishes. This is helping to change the public image of it.

In Holland, the government has worked to promote insects as food. It's common to find them in the supermarket. There's even a fast food chain that serves a burger with mealworm in the bun. Because of this effort, it's well-perceived by the Dutch.

WHAT WAS THE MOST SURPRISING THING YOU LEARNED WHILE MAKING THE FILM?

What surprised me is that most of these bugs are so delicious, especially the termite queen and the termites themselves. I was also struck by how much hard work goes into hunting for insects. Sometimes you find nothing and come home empty handed. Sometimes you have to eat the insects on the spot because they're so hard to find.

Hunting for bugs is a great way to experience nature, and it's a great way to socialize across generations. Once in Mexico, we spent a full day with four generations of the same family. It was beautiful to see how the younger generations were learning from the grandmother.

WHAT DO YOU THINK THE FUTURE OF EATING BUGS WILL BE?

I think it will be big. I don't think there's a reason for the whole world to eat insects but I think the industry will pick up on it and start mass-producing insects. But I don't feel like we all need to start eating insects. In the richer part of the world – the best idea is to just eat less meat and more vegetables.

DO YOU THINK BUGS CAN BE SUSTAINABLE OR ARE THEY DOOMED TO BECOME PART OF THE INDUSTRIAL COMPLEX?

I'm sure there's a way to do it sustainably, but it would cost a lot of money.

What shocked me the most was when we were in the Netherlands visiting an insect farm where they produce insects for human consumption, and we asked them if they had tasted any of their own product. They said no – they hadn't. I was very scared about that. I think that's something very scary.

THE FILM DOESN'T OFFER EASY ANSWERS ABOUT THE FUTURE OF FOOD AND EATING BUGS IN PARTICULAR – BUT WHAT DO YOU HOPE AUDIENCES WILL TAKE AWAY?

I hope they will think about what they are eating, and how it was produced. I hope they will question why they do or do not eat certain foods. I hope they will ask themselves, "what is sustainability?" I cannot answer all these questions but it's my responsibility to ask these questions.

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WHAT IS BUGSFEEED.COM?

We wanted to make something that was more than just an information page about the film. We wanted to create a place where people could go after they've seen or heard about the film and get information about entomophagy.

There are articles from people all over the world and a lot of the research that Nordic Food Lab has produced. We have a newsletter and a place for people to exchange information. It's also a place to support debate.

DO YOU EAT BUGS YOURSELF?

I eat anything. I will eat anything you serve me. If I'm served insects in the right context, yes, I will eat them with pleasure.

About The Nordic Food Lab

In 2004 two Danes, René Redzepi and Claus Meyer, gathered fellow chefs and food specialists from all over the Nordic countries for a discussion that would give birth to a food movement dubbed "new Nordic cuisine."

This movement is characterized by a focus on seasonal, traditional, and exciting food. The Noma restaurant in Copenhagen has been at the heart of the developing scene since its inception, growing to become world-famous. Short for *nordisk mad* – Nordic food – Noma has been named the 'world's best restaurant' no fewer than four times, inspiring a spate of "new nordic" restaurants around Europe and the world.

Copenhagen has remained at the heart of the food movement, and in 2008 Nordic Food Lab came onto the scene. A non-profit that brings food and science together, the lab is unique in its collaborative, open-source approach and the strong emphasis on diversity and deliciousness. The "edible potential of the Nordic region" is what inspires them – food rooted in its geography, its culture, its socioeconomic system. For the lab's team, the exploration of food has a global, humanitarian purpose: achieving a system in which "everyone can not only eat but eat well."

Nordic Food Lab is an interdisciplinary research organization that staffs chefs, scientists, and thinkers. Professions and expertise are blurred and diverse, as are the nationalities. Over the years the lab has been staffed by Americans, Indonesians, Scots, Danes, Italians, Canadians and many more. It is in the lab's DNA to strive to collaborate with both local Nordic endeavors and international projects.

Insects as food is just one part of the Lab's work, and the ethos of curiosity and culinary context that underpins their approach makes the Lab stand out when it

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comes to entomophagy. The Lab's project *Discerning Taste: Deliciousness as an Argument for Entomophagy* is led by researcher Josh Evans, a Yale graduate and Canadian who joined in 2012.

Nordic Food Lab's discoveries, innovations and news is readily shared for everyone to use - you can learn more and support them by visiting [their website](http://www.nordicfoodlab.org) (www.nordicfoodlab.org).

The Nordic Food Lab research team, which is followed in the BUGS documentary, has been a curious mix. A Canadian educated in the US, an itinerant Scot, and a Sardinian from a small mountain village. With different temperaments and different backgrounds each one brings a unique perspective to the table.

About the Subjects

Roberto Flore | Head of Culinary Research and Development at Nordic Food Lab

Roberto is a man of Sardinia, home to the famed Casu Marzu cheese, and it is in this context that we first encounter him in the BUGS documentary. He goes on to become Nordic Food Lab's Head of Culinary Research and Development, a position he still holds.

Ben Reade | Former Head of Culinary Research

Ben is the former Head of Culinary Research at Nordic Food Lab. He is now one half of the Edinburgh Food Studio in, well, Edinburgh.

Josh Evans | Former Lead Researcher

Canadian, and Yale graduate, Josh Evans was the lead researcher and manager of Nordic Food Lab's research project "Discerning Taste: Deliciousness as an Argument for Entomophagy".

About the Filmmakers

Andreas Johnsen | Director

Danish filmmaker Andreas Johnsen is the director of the documentary BUGS. He has made documentaries on a wide variety of subjects, including art, music, abortion and gastronomy. He had his feature length debut in 2004. His filmography includes: Ai Weiwei: The Fake Case (Doc, 2013); Kidd Life (Doc, 2012); A Kind of Paradise (Doc, 2011); Murder (Doc, 2009); Natasja (Doc, 2008); Good Copy Bad Copy (Doc, 2007); Curtain Raising: Musicians in East Africa (Doc, 2006); Inside Outside (Doc, 2005); Mr. Catra: The Faithful (Doc, 2004);

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Sigrid Dyekjaer | Producer

Sigrid Dyekjær is the producer of BUGS and many other documentary films. She's been perfecting her craft for more than a decade, and she is the co-founder and co-owner of Danish Documentary Productions.

Danish Documentary | Production Company

Founded in 2007 Danish Documentary is the company behind numerous Danish and international documentaries and documentary filmmakers. The women behind it are producer Sigrid Dyekjær, and directors Eva Mulvad, Mikala Krogh and Pernille Rose Grønkjær.

<http://danishdocumentary.com/>

Rosforth Films | Production Company

Rosforth Films is founded and solely owned by director Andreas Johnsen, and all of his films have been made within this company.

<http://www.rosforth.com/>

Credits

Principal Cast: Ben Reade, Josh Evans, Roberto Flore

Director: Andreas Johnsen

Screenwriter: Andreas Johnsen

Producer: Sigrid Jonsson Dyekjær

Editor: Menno Boerema

Associate Producer: Sidsel Lønvig Siersted

Cinematographer: Andreas Johnsen

Music: Spacelab, Anders AC Christensen, Mikkel Hess, Nikolaj Hess

Co-Producers: Femke Wolting (NL), Bruno Felix (NL), Stefan Kloos (DE), Hanne Phlypo (BE)

Producer Assistant: Kirstine Barfod

Sound Designer: Philip Flindt

Additional Editor: Per Sandholt