Wageningen Academic Publishers

BOOK REVIEW

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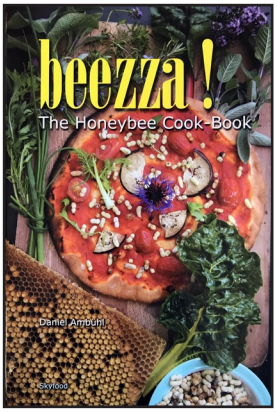
Book review: Beezza! The honeybee cook-book



Author: Daniel Ambühl
Price: € 35
Hardcover: 136 pages
Publisher: Skyfood Publishing (2017)
ISBN: 978-3-9524760-0-0

Why are honeybees or bee larvae almost completely excluded from the current topic 'edible insects as future protein suppliers in Europe'? This is the legitimate question of the Swiss author Daniel Ambühl. Entomophagy is becoming more and more the focus of future diets across Europe, but then only rearing insects such as mealworms, crickets and grasshoppers are considered. The consumption of bee larvae remains almost unnoticed. Changing this was the motivation of the author. What started with research, lectures and cooking events was the basis for 'Beezza!' The reader will be introduced to the subject by first providing interesting information on beekeeping, worldwide entomophagy and individual edible insects. This is followed by the presentation and history of the project 'Beezza!'.

The chapter 'Know how' gives an insight into the harvest of bee larvae, instructions for the removal of the honeycombs, the correct storage as well as tips and information for the further processing of drone larvae. This is followed by the chapter 'Recipes'. The major themes, soups, main dishes, snacks and desserts, show the variety of preparations of these certainly underestimated edible insects. The book ends with interesting background knowledge on the political situation with regard to edible insects, possibilities for future agriculture as well as information on general health risks when eating insects. 'Beezza!' is not just a versatile recipe book. Due to the discussed topics and the given background information it can rather be described as an 'all-round manual of honeybees'.

Also, I find the initial question of the author quite justified, why we do not use existing farmed insect as food insects. Not only that bees or bee larvae are already traditionally valued as foodstuffs worldwide, but this insect species also enjoys the highest acceptance in the European population. Due to the fact that my brother is a professional beekeeper, I got a direct insight into the topic and was able to receive concrete feedback from several German beekeepers. The problem, which has been raised repeatedly, was simply the perishability of the drone brood and the very short 'harvesting period' when the drone larvae reached the desired stage. To be able to use drones as food on an industrial scale, they would then have to be cooled down directly on site and stored accordingly. However, if the market for drone broods develops, then solutions to this problem could certainly be developed.

More problematic is the industrial use of bee larvae farmed from many small hobby apiaries. In Germany, private kept bee colonies are not necessarily constantly monitored by the Food Administration offices. Health certificates are currently only needed when moving to other locations. Thus, drones are not necessarily checked for quality or disease. There is a need for improvement here. I have already eaten drone pesto and I will certainly try some of the featured cooking recipes in the coming season. I think we should by no means exclude the topic 'bees' from the consideration of 'edible insects'.

In Germany too, there have been unclear and divergent specifications by the regional authorities regarding the marketing of edible insects for years. Hopefully, the new Novel Food Regulation will provide clarity in the months to come and pave the way to successfully integrate insects into our diet as a sustainable food in Europe as well. Perhaps this will then also help to recognise and use bee brood as food in the future. The book 'Beezza! will certainly contribute to this.

Many thanks to Daniel Ambühl for his commitment and this great book!