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Insects as Food? Trying to Change 'Ick' to 'Yum'

By JOHN TAGLIABUE

'S HERTOGENBOSCH, the Netherlands — Johan Van Dongen sells insects.

A bright, engaging man, Mr. Van Dongen is head of the meat department at Sligro, a kind of Costco on the edge of this trim Dutch town. Besides steaks, poultry and others kinds of meat, he offers mealworms, buffalo worms, locusts and other insects, as well as prepared products containing insects like Bugs Sticks and Bugs Nuggets — not for pets, but as a source of protein for people.

On a recent afternoon he arranged two sample stands, one with chunks of chocolate laced with ground mealworms (larvae for a type of beetle), another with various kinds of whole insects for munching, including worms and crickets, in small plastic containers.

At a nearby stand with a Dutch name that translated roughly as the Tasting Garden, there were more insects than garden. While shoppers gazed with puzzled looks, Mr. Van Dongen, 41, warmed up portions of an Asian vegetable dish with crickets



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Customers at a Sligro store in 's Hertogenbosch taste insect dishes made by Johan Van Dongen.

"Children have no problem eating them," he said.