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Piz-zz-zz-za

By David George Gordon
From "The Eat-a-Bug Cookbook"

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Yield: 4 servings

Periodical cicadas should be harvested immediately after they have undergone their final molt -- usually within minutes of their appearance above ground. Clinging by their claws to the bark of trees, these freshly formed adults have yet to develop fully functional wings. As such, they are sitting ducks, easily captured by hand or with a small net. To arrest any further development, we recommend plunging these captives into ice water or flash-freezing them. Otherwise you may have to mount an aerial search to recapture your ingredients.

In 1987, when I suddenly found myself up to my elbows in Cassin's 17-year cicada (*Magicicada cassini*), I took the advice of University of Chicago professor emeritus Monte Lloyd. His suggestion -- to prepare the catch as a topping for pizza -- was an immediate hit in my kitchen.

Dough:

2 1/4 cups bread flour

1/3 cup cornmeal

1 teaspoon active dried yeast

1 teaspoon sugar

3/4 cup warm water

1 tablespoon olive oil

Tomato sauce:

1 pound peeled tomatoes, sliced into 3/4-inch chunks

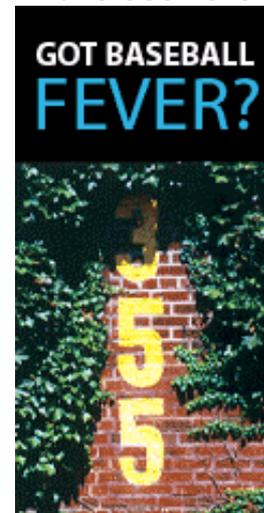
2 tablespoons olive oil

1 onion, finely chopped

1 clove garlic, crushed

1 tablespoon tomato paste

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1/2 teaspoon sugar

1/2 teaspoon chopped fresh oregano

1/2 teaspoon chopped fresh basil

Salt and pepper

Toppings:

8 sub-adult periodical cicadas, thawed frozen or freshly caught

1/2 cup grated mozzarella cheese

6 marinated artichoke hearts

8 sun-dried tomatoes in oil

1 teaspoon red pepper flakes

Begin by making the dough. Combine yeast, sugar and one-fourth cup water. Add this liquid, the olive oil and remaining water to the flour and cornmeal. Mix to a soft dough, then knead on a lightly floured board until smooth and elastic (about 10 minutes).

Place dough in a greased bowl and cover with a cloth or plastic wrap. Let rise for 45 minutes or until doubled in size.

While waiting for the dough to rise, begin making the tomato sauce. Heat the olive oil in medium saucepan. Add onion and garlic, and cook until soft. Stir in tomatoes, tomato paste, sugar, oregano and basil. Season with salt and pepper. Cover saucepan and simmer for 30 minutes, stirring occasionally. Remove from flame.

Punch down risen dough and knead briefly. Place in the center of an oiled 12-inch pizza pan. Press outward, using the knuckles, until dough is evenly spread, filling the pan. Pinch a lip around the edge to contain the sauce. Brush the dough with olive oil.

Preheat oven to 425 degrees.

Spoon tomato sauce over the dough. Spread mozzarella cheese uniformly over the sauce.

Drain the sun-dried tomatoes, reserving the oil. Coarsely chop them and the artichoke hearts, artfully arranging the two items over the cheese.

Top with fresh or thawed frozen Periodic Cicadas; if unavailable, use Crispy Crickets instead.

Sprinkle the completed pie with 1 or 2 tablespoons of the reserved oil. Bake for 15 to 20 minutes, until the cheese has melted and dough is crisp and golden. Dust with red pepper flakes and serve.

Wait 17 years, and repeat this entire sequence.

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