

Eating Bugs, Floaters and Bums in Australia

Australian foods sometimes have off-putting names

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Platter of Bugs at an Aussie Pub, courtesy David Hammond



By **David Hammond**

Australians are an irreverent bunch, militantly down-to-earth, not folks to put on airs, and thus quite likely to

get along well with Yanks, who share some of those same tendencies.

In line with their tongue-in-cheekiness, Aussies have named some foods in ways that seem intended to challenge, to make potential eaters think twice before consuming them.

“Bugs” as served in the restaurants of Oz are not insects but rather crustaceans, though ones that look somewhat more alien than lobsters or shrimps. Before my trip Down Under, I thought these bugs were langoustines; turns out, they’re something else entirely.

I enjoyed a bevy of bugs at an pub in the Outback.

The texture of these creatures was more like lobster than shrimp, though in taste much less assertive than either.

A few days ago, I spotted bugs in their raw state at the Adelaide Central Markets. These little bastids were the most expensive item in the seafood case.

At Arkaba Station, in a converted sheep shed, I enjoyed a Lamb Pie Floater, which is a minced lamb pie dropped into the center of minty pea soup. Figuring these were all flavors I liked, I had to order one. I enjoyed the zany novelty of a pie in a bowl of soup, the crunchiness of the pastry was as pleasing as croutons, and it was a very tasty dish, but “floater,” really? My Aussie bros, did you have to name it that?

We ended our meal at Arkaba Station with a Cat’s Bum, a lemon tart of sorts. Where’d the name come from? Well, when you eat something sour, like a citrus fruit, imagine the shape your lips take. Got that image in your head? Good. I believe you receive the meaning.

Perhaps the British heritage is at the root of this nomenclature (after all, it was the Empire that gave us Spotted Dick), but these unappetizing Aussie names for foods starting me thinking about American foods that are similarly named. So far I’ve come up with Shit on a Shingle (creamed chipped beef on toast – this naming convention originated with GIs who did not intend it to be complementary), Dirty Martini (and Rice) and, as I think about it, Cod. You may know a few others...