

By Nancy Whitaker

JIMINY CRICKET

When the days begin to get shorter and the weather turns cooler, can you hear the crickets chirping? Now, I am definitely not fond of crickets and usually scream when I see one, but when I hear them chirping, I know winter is approaching and it is time to get ready for some winter weather.

I can hear them singing their merry song around my house now, but have not seen any in the house.

I have always been curious about these insects and I did not know this, but only the male crickets chirp. I would not have made a happy cricket, because the females just don't sing or make any noise.

It is a popular myth that crickets chirp by rubbing their legs together. Another interesting fact is there are four types of cricket songs and a cricket does not have to get in the right key to sing them.

One cricket song is the calling song. In this song, the male chirps really loud to call the females to come to him. My question is, "I wonder how many gal crickets the male attracts with his calling song. (If I were one of them, I'd at least want to be taken out for dinner.) When females gets close, the male cricket will go into a courting song. He sings this very quietly.

His aggressive song is one that is triggered by receptors on the antennae that detect the near presence of another male cricket. The fourth song is produced for a brief period after a successful mating. (I do not know how that is determined.)

The folklore and stories surrounding crickets are extensive. Some believe that the singing of crickets is taken to be a sign of impending rain. In some places a black cricket in a room is said to foretell illness; a gray one, money; and a green one, hope. Others believe that a cricket announces death, thus it is killed if it chirps in a house.

Folklore also says that a constantly chirping cricket foretells pregnancy, but if it pauses, money is expected.

In many countries in the world, if a cricket exists in the house, it is treated with respect. They are placed in small cages and given food and water. It is thought that their existence brings good luck.

The lifespan of a cricket is less than one year. This span increases if there is someone to provide them a home, water and food.

But crickets can also affect crops and gardens as they munch away and forage for food.

In my quest for knowledge about crickets, I discovered that some countries have cricket fights and bet on them.

Now if you don't want to find out anymore about crickets, stop reading, because in some countries crickets are considered a delicacy. I cannot ever imagine eating one, but I will share a recipe for "cricket fritters."

CRICKET FRITTERS

Makes about 20

ingredients:

200 grams flour

1 cup water

1 cup crickets, chopped (pre-boiled but not roasted)

1 cup water

1 teaspoon chili paste

a large red onion, finely chopped

1 red chili, thinly sliced

3 small chives, cut to 1 inch strips

1 cup cooked corn kernels

1/4 cup finely chopped fresh cilantro leaves

1 teaspoon salt

Directions:

Mix flour, chili paste, salt and water and combine until the texture is smooth. The texture should be thick but not watery.

Throw in the chopped onions, chives, sliced chili, corns, crickets and combine.

Heat a large pot with cooking oil. When the oil is heated properly, it's time to deep fry.

Scoop a spoonful of the mixture and drop it into the oil for frying. Don't put too many pieces in at one time, as they need room to fry around until they turn a golden brown color, which should take about 3-5 minutes.

Transfer to a cooling rack and repeat with remaining mixture.

Serve with rice and garnish with chopped cilantro leaves.

Have you ever heard any folklore concerning crickets? Have you heard them chirping yet this fall? Have you ever tried eating them? Let me know and I'll give you a Penny for Your Thoughts.