

SPIRITS FEATURE

by Julie H. Case

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## Bug Juice

### Eating and drinking insects

The first bite tastes like dried tobacco. Then comes the insinuation of cocoa and the smoky rush of ancho chiles. Wings and legs snap in the mouth; the abdomen and thorax crunch, then deliver a puff of richness. A heat—not from the peppered seasoning but from the creature itself—lingers at the back of the palate.

Turns out, *chapulines*—grasshoppers, in this case born and raised and roasted in Oaxaca—are delicious.

Especially when washed down with a Oaxaca Old-



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### Ants Soldier On

Just a pinch of black ants goes a long way. Crisp and crunchy, they start with an acidic pop and limey flavor and finish with a sort of inky note. At Black Ant, a Mexican restaurant in NYC with everything from *cocopaches* (cockroaches) to chapulines on the menu, ants add dramatic flair to the guacamole, as well as to its perfect pairing: A bright Margarita rimmed with enough crushed-ant salt to give it an extra limey kick.



Not that a bug in your drink is new: When Campari was invented in the mid-19th century, its red color came from the cochineal scale—*Dactylopius coccus*—an insect in the same order as cicadas that lives on prickly pear plants. While the aperitif switched to a less natural dye some years back, many other spirits continue to use the scale bug juice. If a spirit lists E120, carmine, cochineal or sometimes even Natural Red 4, that dye comes from the cochineal scale.