Vending machine selling edible bugs is an instant hit in Kumamoto

Jan. 16 05:30 am JST

Photo: Twitter/@hinorj516

Ever since October last year, when someone spotted an empty vending machine in Kumamoto that advertised edible insects, local residents have been eager to see just what manner of bugs would be stocked inside.

And when the merchandise finally came in November, people were fascinated by the ten products on offer, which included mostly crunchy stuff like Japanese rhinoceros beetles, mole crickets, diving beetles and pupae. Most were dried and packed into large sealed packets, while others were coated with chocolate for a delightful twist.

The Cricket Protein Bar was the cheapest product available, at 700 yen, but if you fancy something a little more akin to a nice bag of potato chips, a pack of the popular Salted Crickets would set you back 1,300 yen.

The vending machine was installed by 34-year old Tomoda Toshiyuki, the owner of a balloon specialist store called Discover Balloon. Curious about edible insects, Tomoda set up the machine to see if Japanese people would warm up to the idea of bug consumption.

As it turns out, his expectations were blown out of the water, as the vending machine sold over 500 units and made about 500,000 yen in the space of a month.

On their own, the crickets are said to taste similar to shrimp and shellfish. “It’s best to eat them with a bit of mayonnaise or a dash of red pepper,” said Tomoda. “But diving beetles and giant water bugs are meant for more adventurous consumers.”

Perhaps the biggest irony was Tomoda himself, as he admitted that he once hated bugs, to the point of getting his wife to chase away stray insects that entered their store. “Bugs always seem ready to fight but I’m the peaceful type.” When asked about his first time trying crickets, he replied, “It was pure hell for me, but the taste was surprisingly similar to shrimp.”

Tomoda’s venture into edible insects and its potential in fighting world hunger may very well help overcome his fear of the little six-legged beasts one day. We would tell him that it’s not all that bad, as we at SoraNews24 have gobbled down a platter of grubs, grasshoppers and silkworms before.

Source: Livedoor News, Asahi Shimbun via Otakomu

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