

# Gourmet Grasshopper

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Grasshopper has been long accepted as an exotic food by many countries in the Southeast Asian region especially Thailand, Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, Philippines and Indonesia. In the case of Malaysia, traditionally, grasshoppers particularly belalang padi is quite popular among the local farmers most notably at the countryside, where the grasshopper can be eaten raw, sun-dried, fried, flavoured with spices, and used in soups or as fillings for various dishes. In line with the increasing trend of introducing insects in high-end dining restaurant in the Western culinary world, restaurants in Malaysia has put an effort to introduce stylish and chic feast from grasshopper as a fusion culinary feature. Among the popular snack is the delectable crunchy grasshopper tempura which demonstrates a delightful East-meet-West charm. Malaysia has the potential to introduce boutique cuisine based on grasshopper as an exotic food, in line with the Malaysian food tourism campaign launched by the Ministry of Tourism Malaysia in 2009. With the rising interest of tourism in Malaysia, grasshopper can play a significant role in promoting 'bush tucker' tourism experience. Far from it being labelled as a pest, the grasshopper's potential for commercialization as an eccentric delicacy and rural tourism attraction is tremendous. Today there is a movement in the replacement of insecticides by manually harvesting grasshopper and at the same time generating economic benefits. Farmers who adopt manual harvesting in pest control can enjoy profit from sales of grasshoppers rather than spending money for insecticide application costs (Teo, 2011).

