

BUG-EYED TIME

By Tim Evans

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Diana Wilcoxon took a deep breath, wrinkled up her nose and tossed a tiny chocolate-covered morsel into her mouth.

As her teeth pierced the crunchy tidbit, the 23-year-old Indianapolis resident grimaced and frantically fanned her face with her hands.

"Eeww!" Wilcoxon proclaimed, shaking her head in disbelief at what she had just eaten.

Wilcoxon's afternoon snack was a chocolate-covered cricket — one of the most popular offerings Sunday at the Insect Cafe, a highlight of the 13th annual Bug Fest at Southeastway Park.

"It's not that bad," she said unconvincingly. "Kind of like a crunch bar, only sweeter."

And with wings and legs.

The cafe was one of more than 15 interactive exhibits at Bug Fest, where children of all ages got a chance to see, handle and learn about insects.

In addition to the chocolate-covered crickets and larvettes (a slightly more appetizing moniker for mealworms), the cafe menu included crickets seasoned with popular potato-chip flavors such as sour cream and onion, salt and vinegar and bacon and cheese. There was a line most of the day — and a lot of puckering, gasping and gagging afterward.

"They're good. Really!" Shayla Bauchle, 8, Indianapolis, said more convincingly than Wilcoxon. A veteran of past Bug Fests, Shayla snacked on several different varieties of crickets Sunday.

"The chocolate one just tasted like chocolate," Shayla reported. "The other one tasted like cricket."

For those less adventurous or with weaker stomachs, Bug Fest still offered plenty of fun and entertainment.

Attendees got to watch Brownsburg beekeeper Rob Green display his "bee beard," a collection of several thousand honeybees that swarmed his face to get near the queen bee inside a small box tucked under his chin.



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Don't flinch now: Brownsburg beekeeper Rob Green still managed a smile while wearing about 4,000 honeybees who were seeking the queen bee tucked away in a box under his chin during a demonstration at the 13th-annual Bug Fest. "For every third bite of food you take," Green told Sunday's audience, "you have to thank honeybees."

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