

Check It Out! Podcast Transcript
Episode #55
“Sometimes, a guest's gift can be hard for hosts to swallow”
Sno-Isle Libraries, April 13, 2020



Jim Hills:	00:00	In this episode, we're joined by David George Gordon, the author of the Sasquatch Seekers Field Manual and the Eat-A-Bug Cookbook for an adventure in, bug eating and learning more about, the next big revolution in food production. Make sure you listen carefully, as we crunch down literally, on some delicious insects.
Ken Harvey:	00:29	Welcome to season three, episode 55 of Check It Out, the Sno-Isle Libraries podcast, for lifelong learners with inquiring minds.
Jessica Russell:	00:37	The views and opinions expressed on this podcast may not necessarily reflect the official position of Sno-Isle libraries.
Ken Harvey:	00:45	Hi, I'm Ken Harvey.
Jim Hills:	00:47	And I'm Jim Hills.
Jessica Russell:	00:48	And I'm Jessica Russell.
Ken Harvey:	00:49	And we are here in the Check It Out podcast studio, actually in a new location within the building. I think this is our first time in a room here, that is called the... Which room?
Jessica Russell:	01:01	Tamarack room.
Ken Harvey:	01:02	The Tamarack room. So, we have been moving in and around the building, as we have now, more spaces to podcast from.
Jessica Russell:	01:11	I'm terribly wrong.
Jim Hills:	01:14	It used to be the Tamarack room.
Jessica Russell:	01:15	It used to be. That's how I remembered it.
Ken Harvey:	01:17	It is now called?
Jim Hills:	01:19	We have to go out and look.

(Continued)

Jessica Russell: 01:21 It is something to do with an island.

Ken Harvey: 01:23 We are in an unknown location within the building.

Jessica Russell: 01:26 Undisclosed.

Ken Harvey: 01:27 Hey, we are delighted to have with us David George Gordon, who has appeared on the Conan O'Brien show, The Late Show with James Corden, ABC's Nightline and The View. As the bug chef, he's shared his exotic cuisine with visitors to the Smithsonian Institution, Robert Mondavi Institute for Food and Wine Science, The Singapore Food Festival, Yale university and Ripley's Believe It or Not museums, located in Hollywood, San Francisco and Times Square. We'd like to welcome, to Check It Out, the award-winning author of the Eat-A-Bug Cookbook and 19 other published works, David George Gordon.

David George Gordon: 02:06 Hey, thank you so much, for having me on the show.

Ken Harvey: 02:09 We are delighted to have you here and we're going to be talking about some really yummy things, but also, maybe some strange and some people might consider, kind of French science things that you've written about and you are the expert in the room. So, we're going to tap into your brain. And I should just say, right off the bat to our audience, that David has shown up with some cuisine, that he's hoping, that he at least, is allowing us to take a look at, but he's also inviting us to sample, if we're adventurous enough during this podcast.

Jim Hills: 02:48 So, the thing that I'm most happy about, is that those plates of things that we get to sample, if we choose, aren't moving at the moment.

David George Gordon: 02:58 And they're small plates as well.

Ken Harvey: 03:00 They are small plates.

Jim Hills: 03:00 Small things on small plates.

David George Gordon: 03:02 We're not having ribs today.

Jim Hills: 03:03 That's a very trendy thing, is have small plates, right?

David George Gordon: 03:06 That's right. That's right.

Ken Harvey: 03:07 This are weight watcher portions.

Jim Hills: 03:08 That's like a 4:00 PM to 6:00 PM things, small plates.

David George Gordon: 03:11 Yeah.

Jessica Russell: 03:12 There you go. They look crunchy, which I also find reassuring.

Ken Harvey: 03:15 Well, weight watcher portions, but as I understand, are actually quite nutritious.

David George Gordon: 03:22 Yeah. We're talking, for those of you in the audience who can't see this, we're talking about plates of insects and I have actually, four different delicacies that I've brought with me. These are leftovers from a bug... What we say, a festival or a feast that I had last night at the Rose Tavern in Shoreline.

Ken Harvey: 03:44 Wonderful.

David George Gordon: 03:45 And what we have on these little plates, we have, I'm just going to go from this end to that end, so you can see it.

Ken Harvey: 03:52 So, a sportscaster's reference would be, the action is going from left to right.

David George Gordon: 03:57 There we go.

Ken Harvey: 03:58 On the field.

David George Gordon: 03:58 Yeah, exactly. Well, follow with me, if you will.

Jim Hills: 04:01 The open end of the stadium.

David George Gordon: 04:03 Picture, if you will. On the far left plate, those are called chapulines. They're from Oaxaca, Mexico. They are wild harvested grasshoppers, so they're not farmed. These are actually, just taken out of corn fields, all over the Oaxaca regions. And these are roasted and seasoned with chili and lime and adobo spices. So, they have a little bit of punch. They're a little salty, but you know what? They're selling them at Mariner's baseball games.

Jessica Russell: 04:36 Oh, wow.

David George Gordon: 04:37 The first season that they did that, they sold 1,550 pounds, of these chapulines, in four ounce portions.

Jessica Russell: 04:46 That's amazing.

David George Gordon: 04:47 So, obviously, they were popular.

Ken Harvey: 04:49 Yes.

Jessica Russell: 04:49 Yeah.

David George Gordon: 04:49 There were selling out. Okay. Well, right next to that, these I get shipped to me in a big box and I'm really excited about it, because it says on the box, that they are Kosher and we're talking about farm reared locusts. So, locusts are the official Bible's food. If you think about it, John the Baptist lived on a diet of locusts and honey. Exactly.

Jim Hills: 05:15 Lots of honey. Lots and lots of honey.

David George Gordon: 05:15 It says in Leviticus. Well, John the Baptist was an interesting person. He was the original back to the earth hippie kind of guy. He lived in a cave. He wore animal hides. He ate locusts and honey, but he was the one who was chosen to usher in the coming of the Lord.

Ken Harvey: 05:35 Yeah. And he wore the sandals.

David George Gordon: 05:36 That's right.

Ken Harvey: 05:37 And they come back in the sixties or seventies.

David George Gordon: 05:40 That's right. I think we're talking to Anthony Quinn here. No. those were the shoes of the fisherman. Anyway, those are quite delicious. And they're eaten today. Like there was a big swarm of locusts, a few years ago, that went right through Israel and Egypt and man, people were out harvesting.

Jim Hills: 05:59 Well, and so, these locusts actually, came Kosher from Israel.

David George Gordon: 06:02 Oh, I'm sorry. Yeah. These were shipped from Israel from a farm called [Hard Gold 00:06:06] Technologies. And they raise locust and ship them all over the world. So, next to these, now, we're getting into the good one, both in terms of the taste, I believe, but also, in the popular name in Mexico. These are called chinicuils. What a nice word. Next time you're playing Scrabble or it is, chinicuils, and they're actually little goose. They also call them gusanos. They're little Caterpillars of a sphinx moth. Have you ever seen a sphinx moth? They're big. You could actually mistake them for hummingbirds.

Jessica Russell: 06:40 Oh wow.

David George Gordon: 06:41 And they fly around in the Southwest. Sometimes late at night. They're moths.

Jessica Russell: 06:47 That's a lot of moth.

David George Gordon: 06:48 Yeah. It is a quite large animal flapping away in the middle of the night. And they're attracted, they lay their eggs on the blue agave plants.

Jim Hills: 06:59 Better known for?

David George Gordon: 07:01 Yeah. From which we get mezcal and tequila.

Jim Hills: 07:04 Yeah, there you go.

David George Gordon: 07:05 So, inside one of those plants, and they're really large, you could barely fit one in your living room, are about a dozen of these little caterpillars. As the sphinx moth lays its eggs in the blue agave they hatch out and eat the agave plant. So, there's an animal plant association going on there, which we love, because eventually, they go off and do their thing. We harvest the blue agave. And oftentimes they put one of these caterpillars in a bottle of mezcal, the proverbial worm at the bottom of the tequila bottle. And it's a proof that this actually, came from the blue agave of course. But also that the spirit, strength of the spirit, the proof as it were, is high enough to preserve the caterpillar. Otherwise, you just have this little mushy thing at the bottom of your bottle.

Jessica Russell: 08:00 Oh, wow. I didn't realize that.

David George Gordon: 08:01 So, it's an interesting little... I love the animal follicular, that's one of the things I collect.

Ken Harvey: 08:07 Fascinating.

Jessica Russell: 08:07 Very cool.

David George Gordon: 08:08 Cultural entomology.

Ken Harvey: 08:10 So, you've worked your way through three of the plates.

David George Gordon: 08:12 That's right. I'm almost too tired to go to the fourth one.

Ken Harvey: 08:15 No.

David George Gordon: 08:18 This last one is produced by a company called exo, E-X-O protein. I believe they're in San Francisco, but these are cricket energy bars. Actually, I have one out here that's a chocolate peanut butter flavored one. So, what's not to like, I just had one the other day. Oh, I'm sorry. It's not, it's actually the coconut flavored one.

Ken Harvey: 08:41 Better.

David George Gordon: 08:42 They come in a variety of flavors. If I didn't tell you they were crickets in there, you would never know. You'd be eating the blueberries. What they do, is they grind up crickets.

Jessica Russell: 08:51 Into powder?

David George Gordon: 08:52 Yeah. They roast them and then they grind them up. So, we're not talking [babajigu 00:08:55], we're talking about a flower like thing. They mix that in with other ingredients. And then, you now have, a really high protein, lots of vitamins and minerals, omega 3 fatty acids are in there, you'd only get those normally by eating salmon, let's say. And so, they're really good for you, a super strength and you can just take it with you in your day pack and go climb Mount Sinai or something and then take a break and eat one.

Ken Harvey: 09:24 Well David, we have several of your books in our collection here, it's in our libraries. And one of them that we've got on the table here, and it is the Eat-A-Bug Cookbook. And for those in the audience, we'll probably share something on our show notes that, so you can help you find it, within our collection. But I'm just going to describe what's on the front and back cover. On the front cover below the title, is what looks like a container for dipping. And it looks like there's chocolate inside the container, and there's something that's spear, that you can dunk into the chocolate. And it now, appears to be a chocolate covered cricket or-

David George Gordon: 10:10 Well, it's one of those chapulines, the grasshoppers.

Ken Harvey: 10:14 Okay.

David George Gordon: 10:15 And I cannot tell you how much trouble, the photographer work took, to make everything look just right.

Jim Hills: 10:22 Yeah. It's a good picture.

Jessica Russell: 10:23 I like the way his, the little, the legs dangled.

David George Gordon: 10:26 Yeah. Right, exactly. That one was cast for that role. To be in pale and then, have chocolate painted on that in the just-

Jessica Russell: 10:35 Very carefully.

Ken Harvey: 10:36 Yeah, carefully. Well, the chocolate looks really, really scrumptious, so-

Jim Hills: 10:40 So, it's the back cover that's of interest me.

Ken Harvey: 10:43 back cover?

Jessica Russell: 10:43 Oh, wow.

Jim Hills: 10:45 So, I would describe that as a miniature king crab, not the crab body of these enormous legs that stick out. And is that sprinkled with paprika or something?

David George Gordon: 10:57 That's right.

Jessica Russell: 10:59 I'm seeing some torrential tempura. That's what I'm seeing.

Jim Hills: 11:03 Yes. Yeah. I'd say that too. Yeah.

Ken Harvey: 11:05 Absolutely.

Jim Hills: 11:06 Torrential tempura.

David George Gordon: 11:07 I have to tell you, that recipe for the deep fried and buttered tarantula. I found out later through a really weird set of circumstances, that there's a restaurant in Cambodia, in Siem Reap, that serves bugs to foreigners, who want to eat bugs. And they actually, ripped off that recipe and they're calling it, I love this tarantula donuts.

Jessica Russell: 11:29 Oh, my.

David George Gordon: 11:30 So, that's, I mean, if you're going to rip off of the recipe, all power to you, but if you can give it a good name like that, with my blessing.

Jessica Russell: 11:37 I like the sound of tarantula fritters.

Jim Hills: 11:40 Yeah, right.

Jessica Russell: 11:41 Sounds pretty festive.

- David George Gordon: 11:42 That's right. I mean, you're making me hungry.
- Ken Harvey: 11:44 So, David, I understand that you wrote this book back in 1998. So, what got you started? Well, what got you to write this book and then what got you started to actually, write in the first place?
- David George Gordon: 11:57 Well, two really good questions. I'm going to tackle the one about the bug cookbook. To tell you the truth, because I did start working on it in 1996. Things suddenly got super cool to be, if you're in this business in 2013, when the UN came out with this, the food and agriculture organization, came out with 180 page report. And now, everyone thought, "Gee, what a great idea." Well, I had actually written a lot of that same stuff, in the front manner to my cookbook, in 1996. So, I'm, "Oh, hum." But that book has been in continuous print for 22 years and yes, you would know for a paperback book, that's a long life.
- Jessica Russell: 12:40 That's amazing. Yeah.
- David George Gordon: 12:42 I think it's almost running out of it's printing right now, and there's a little bit of, "Gee, maybe we should do it again."
- Jessica Russell: 12:48 I think so.
- Ken Harvey: 12:50 So, Jessica, let me, David just mentioned about how long, books are typically in print and so, do you have more, that you can just add to that, in terms of our books, typically, do they go out of print fairly soon after being common in the market.
- Jessica Russell: 13:09 That's become more than norm. That books go out of print much more quickly than they used to. The publishing cycle, I think has, the output has increased and there just isn't the space to store as much stock. So, it happens to the library that will purchase something and it'll be popular and we'll need to get replacement copies, because public library life is hard on books. And we won't be able to get copies, because it'll have gone out of print. So, congratulations. That's really an accomplishment. And shows that, there's been that continued desire for your title.
- David George Gordon: 13:44 It's really funny. I was thinking about that as I was driving here. When you write books, I've written 20 of them, so I have a big family of books. But they are like your kids and when they go out into the world, you have no idea whether they're going to do really well or whether they're going to do terribly and wind

up living in a box onto the via brook. We don't really know. And I bet you have a copy of my Heaven on the Half Shell, a book I wrote about, the oyster industry in the Northwest, literally was launched the day after 9/11.

Jessica Russell: 14:15

Oh, wow.

David George Gordon: 14:16

We had to cancel a book launch party and all of that stuff, because we were all devastated of course. And that book became the best kept secret in the Americas. It wasn't about Islam or anything necessarily germane at that time. And it was ignored for its first year in print, which is a long time. That's usually when books are getting all of their reviews.

Jessica Russell: 14:41

Well, the first, I guess like two months too, are viewed as being really critical to a book success. And there's so many factors that are outside of control. Yeah.

David George Gordon: 14:53

People couldn't even fly to the Pacific Northwest book event, because all the airplanes-

Ken Harvey: 14:58

Everything was grounded.

Jessica Russell: 14:59

Yeah.

David George Gordon: 14:59

So, it was a weird weekend. But I was going to say, that book, I love that book. I'm working on an update of it now. But on the other hand, you have the Eat-A-Bug Cookbook, which has been in continuous print and getting me gigs all around the world for 22 years. That's like ridiculous. And that's way beyond, "I want my son to be a doctor," a level of expectation for a book.

Jessica Russell: 15:25

That's fantastic. Congratulations.

Ken Harvey: 15:28

So, the Heaven on the Half Shell book has a subhead, subtitle, the story of the Northwest love affair with the oyster.

David George Gordon: 15:38

That's correct.

Ken Harvey: 15:39

And could you just describe, since you're calling it heaven, could you describe to someone who is a non oyster eater, why there is a love affair in there?

David George Gordon: 15:49

Well, first I have to just point out that the title, Heaven on the Half Shell is actually a quote from Mark Twain, he was writing about living, staying in a hotel in San Francisco where they're completely oyster bonkers. That book is about the history of the

oyster industry on the West Coast, which is interesting, because most of the time with all the media being on the East Coast, hanging around in New York, as soon as there's a story about shellfish, it's let's go to Chesapeake Bay. Even though, that Bay completely died out, and has been since rebuilt slowly.

Jessica Russell: 16:24

I grew up in Louisiana and oysters were very much a thing, in Louisiana as well.

David George Gordon: 16:31

Louisiana was one of the highest oyster producing States in the nation before hurricane Katrina.

Jessica Russell: 16:40

Yeah.

David George Gordon: 16:40

And that really wrecked things. In fact then, they were suddenly selling oysters from Washington State down there. You can still get them there. It's interesting though, I guess, to really get back to your question about the heaven aspect of all of this. If you talk about history, as soon as the gold rush hit in San Francisco, people came out here in droves from the East Coast in steamers and however, they can get there as quickly as possible. The golden spike hadn't been driven, so you couldn't take the train. But all of a sudden, that population boomed and for whatever reason, all they wanted was to eat oysters. And gold nuggets swapped for plates of oysters and all that stuff. They literally ate every oyster in San Francisco Bay.

Ken Harvey: 17:27

Oh, wow.

David George Gordon: 17:27

And then, suddenly, it was gone. This is what we're talking about a couple of years of the gold rush, and they're going, "Now, what are we going to do?" And someone showed up with a steamer from Willapa Bay, in Washington, with oysters and it was front page news on the newspaper. And that's basically what created the Northwest, what is now, the single largest shellfish industry in the United States, perhaps in North America. And that all began, because of the gold rush. I just love that sort of stuff.

Ken Harvey: 18:00

Yeah. How amazing.

Jessica Russell: 18:01

Do you think it was the novelty? It was just something they'd never had before or just something truly sublime about the nature of oysters?

David George Gordon: 18:09

Oh, I think they already had established on the East Coast, because they were eating Virginia oysters.

Jessica Russell: 18:14 Okay.

David George Gordon: 18:16 All the way up and down and into Florida and around into the Gulf. Those were already established as a gourmet item. There was a seafood mania that was going around in the 1860s. I read that Abraham Lincoln had, an all seafood banquet at the white house. That was just what you did then. And recipes would begin with, take 12 lobsters and dot, dot, dot. So, there was already a seafood mania, but it was like the food of Kings, to eat or oysters. Even the beds themselves had been colonized and claimed way back, in the early days of the colonies. So, to come out here and have all the oysters you could eat, it was like manifest destiny for gold rush people. And it really was the food of commerce. I love that.

Jessica Russell: 19:12 Wow.

Ken Harvey: 19:12 Well, very fascinating and congratulations on the longevity of this title. It's just, it's neat to have it as part of our collection and so, we're glad to have that reflected.

David George Gordon: 19:24 I'm sorry. Can I just throw in really quickly?

Ken Harvey: 19:27 Yes.

David George Gordon: 19:27 I wrote this book while working as a science writer for Washington Sea Grant, that's a branch of NOAA, but they're at the University of Washington. And I'm now, working on a revised and updated version of that book. Also, through Sea Grant. So, three cheers for them.

Jessica Russell: 19:43 Yeah. Fantastic.

Ken Harvey: 19:45 Well, we have a couple of minutes, before we're going to take a slight break. And I thought that, we might want to just swing back to the Eat-A-Bug title. And as we start moving towards a break, this might be a great opportunity for you to allow us, to sample one of those plates.

David George Gordon: 20:04 That's right.

Jim Hills: 20:04 I feel we should have some soft music.

Ken Harvey: 20:06 Right after that, because I think right after we sample it, we'll want to take a short break.

Jessica Russell: 20:11 Because, we'll be blown away by the experience.

Ken Harvey: 20:14 Yeah. Because then, when we can come back from the break and we can talk about the experience and also go to some of the other titles that you've penned.

David George Gordon: 20:23 Absolutely. Sounds good.

Ken Harvey: 20:24 So, do you want to just talk us through again what the attractiveness is, that would make one of these-

David George Gordon: 20:34 You know what? Normally, when I do a cooking demonstration, I like to start with the things that are the least gnarly, so people can get comfortable with that, and work their way up.

Ken Harvey: 20:44 Okay.

David George Gordon: 20:44 You're experienced travelers, I'm going to go with the most narrowly, but play a flavor profile, probably the least dramatic. These are the locusts and we're talking about, for those of you who cannot see, including their wings, they are probably a couple of inches long. They're basically flying grasshoppers. They've had their long flight wings left on, but their legs have been removed. So, the people who raised them, knew what they were doing, in preparing them. And these have been oven dried, but they have not been seasoned with anything.

Jim Hills: 21:22 Oh, let's see. I was hoping you going to tell me they were seasoned with something, so I could focus on this seasoning.

Jessica Russell: 21:27 No. I'm game for the other bugs, but the locust, there's something about the way, they're looking at me, that just isn't quite cutting it for me.

David George Gordon: 21:36 I never make anyone eat food. This is not Russia.

Jessica Russell: 21:38 I'm going to try the other ones.

David George Gordon: 21:40 All good. Yeah.

Jessica Russell: 21:40 Yeah. Yeah.

David George Gordon: 21:41 So, anyway, hold them by the wings. The wings are basically cellophane, that's the rough edge. But there is no nutritional value there. But they are great handles for the body and head of the locust.

Jim Hills: 21:54 And what does it taste like? Prepare me a little bit.

David George Gordon: 21:57 I personally believe, it tastes like shredded wheat, unlike cereal.

Jim Hills: 22:03 Well, I never eat shredded wheat again. Are you eating it?

Jessica Russell: 22:06 Nice and crunchy?

Ken Harvey: 22:06 Yes.

Jessica Russell: 22:08 Yeah. It's already in.

David George Gordon: 22:08 Yeah. You know, I have to tell you-

Jim Hills: 22:09 What are you still holding there?

Ken Harvey: 22:10 The wings.

Jim Hills: 22:11 You took a bite?

Ken Harvey: 22:11 I took a bite. [crosstalk 00:22:14]

Jim Hills: 22:16 I'm not taking two bites. This is going to be a one bite thing.

David George Gordon: 22:18 Well, I have to tell you, because I had time with my youngest daughter on a radio program, where she has dared to eat bugs.

Jim Hills: 22:26 I can hear that.

David George Gordon: 22:26 And I said, "Be sure, and chew with your mouth open, so it sounds the best on the radio show." Okay, so crunch away.

Jim Hills: 22:34 Don't eat the wings?

David George Gordon: 22:34 Yeah, save the wings. You can throw them over your shoulder.

Jim Hills: 22:38 So much body there by the wings.

David George Gordon: 22:41 Eat the body, but just hold it by the wings.

Jessica Russell: 22:44 I think he wants to just ankle the body out between the wings.

Jim Hills: 22:47 I want another 30, 40 minutes of instructions, before I have to eat this.

Jessica Russell: 22:50 Yes.

David George Gordon: 22:51 I know, you're tiring me out.

Ken Harvey: 22:53 Jessica and Jim, I'm taking the wings home to prove to my family-

Jessica Russell: 22:56 That you ate it.

Ken Harvey: 22:57 ... that I actually ate this.

Jessica Russell: 22:58 Okay.

Ken Harvey: 22:59 I have a reputation of being a very picky eater.

David George Gordon: 23:01 Attractive wings by the way. So, what did you think?

Ken Harvey: 23:05 It actually, it is a nice taste. I've eaten something some similar recently, and I'm trying to recall what it is?

Jim Hills: 23:18 Was it in a dream or anything?

Jessica Russell: 23:19 Similar to a locust?

Ken Harvey: 23:21 With similar taste.

Jessica Russell: 23:22 Okay.

Jim Hills: 23:23 All right. Here we go. I'm going to give it a shot.

Jessica Russell: 23:24 Okay. Do it Jim.

Jim Hills: 23:26 I personally think, if they were in... Well, I want to hear that crunch too.

Jessica Russell: 23:30 Yeah, that's a good crunch.

David George Gordon: 23:32 I personally believe, if I dip them in ranch dressing that would be really good.

Jim Hills: 23:35 Oh yeah.

Jessica Russell: 23:36 Nice. I want to try the ones that have the chili seasoning.

Jim Hills: 23:41 Yeah. Would you pass those around.

Ken Harvey: 23:45 Chipuquinos?

Jim Hills: 23:46 Or something like that?

Ken Harvey: 23:47 Or something like that?

David George Gordon: 23:47 Chapulines.

Ken Harvey: 23:49 Chapulines.

Jessica Russell: 23:49 And this whole thing can just go-

David George Gordon: 23:51 A single one is called the chapuline

Jessica Russell: 23:54 ... and I can just Chuck the whole thing in, right?

David George Gordon: 23:55 Yeah. But don't forget to chew.

Jessica Russell: 23:58 I won't.

David George Gordon: 23:58 Now, these have been seasoned, so they're salty and spicy and the spicy has a little delayed kick, so don't be surprised. It won't blow your head off. But it's definitely a spiciness.

Jessica Russell: 24:12 It's a very grassy flavor.

David George Gordon: 24:14 And I want to say, this is actually a mix of two different kinds of chapulines.

Jessica Russell: 24:18 Okay.

David George Gordon: 24:18 When I go to Los Angeles, I always buy them right out of burlap bag.

Jim Hills: 24:22 You like hot stuff though? Am I going to like this?

Ken Harvey: 24:24 I do. I like spicy. Yeah, but it's not-

Jessica Russell: 24:28 I didn't think it was spicy.

Ken Harvey: 24:29 ... hot, it's not super hot. It's nice, salty.

David George Gordon: 24:36 And these are foods that people have been eating, since before the days of Columbus.

Ken Harvey: 24:43 It's a full bodied fullness and I'm going to-

Jim Hills: 24:46 Actually, I like those.

Jessica Russell: 24:48 Yeah.

Jim Hills: 24:48 Yeah. What did you call it again?

David George Gordon: 24:51 Those are called chapulines.

Jim Hills: 24:51 Chapulines. I like that.

Jessica Russell: 24:54 It tastes like the smell of freshly harvest hay, when you're, a couple of times in my childhood, we filled the barn with hay and it's just hay everywhere. Hay in your face, Hay in your hair or Hay up your nose. And that's very much what that tastes like.

Ken Harvey: 25:10 Right.

Jim Hills: 25:11 That was tasty.

David George Gordon: 25:12 A little Tang of spice.

Ken Harvey: 25:13 Yes.

Jessica Russell: 25:14 Yeah.

David George Gordon: 25:14 I could actually sit around and eat those.

Jim Hills: 25:16 Am not eating those.

Jessica Russell: 25:16 You're going to leave this?

Jim Hills: 25:16 Yeah.

Jessica Russell: 25:16 Okay. So, I'm willing to try this.

Ken Harvey: 25:21 So, Jessica is going to go for the next dish up, and while she does that, I'm going to go ahead and actually take us into break. When we come back from break, Jessica is going to talk about the experience she just had. And we have been talking with David George Gordon about who is the bug chef, and we've been talking about his Eat-A-Bug Cookbook and Heaven on the Half Shell, another book of his. We'll be right back in a minute.

Speaker 5: 25:54 Hey parents, your two to six year old is sure to enjoy the High Five magazine. Available online from Sno-Isle Libraries, treat your favorite preschooler to age appropriate stories, poems, puzzles and activities. Every issue, free to download with your library card from Sno-Isle Libraries.

Ken Harvey: 26:14 If you have a great library experience you'd like to share with us, we would love to know about it. Drop us a line at checkitoutpodcast@sno-isle.org. Again, that's [@checkitoutpodcast](https://www.instagram.com/checkitoutpodcast), all one word, [@sno-isle.org](https://www.instagram.com/sno-isle.org). Who knows, we

might even invite you to share your story on a future podcast. Well, we're back from our break.

Jim Hills: 26:46 And Jessica, how were the caterpillars?

Jessica Russell: 26:50 It was really an interesting flavor. They were crispy and salty first blast on the tongue and then, very perfumeey, which David had let me know beforehand, that was what to expect. And the flavor lingers on your palette, but in a really pleasant way.

Jim Hills: 27:14 Wow.

Jessica Russell: 27:14 Yeah.

Ken Harvey: 27:15 I have to validate what you just said, because I tried one as well, and my family will be shocked when they hear, that this picky eater did that.

Jim Hills: 27:28 Yeah, I couldn't do that one, because they looked like the big version of the grubs that you find in your lawn, that it's making your lawn not grow.

David George Gordon: 27:37 I have to interject here, because I love the etymology of entomology and the word vermin and worm are basically the same root. So, when we look at something that's shaped like a worm, and now, anything that wiggles in our culture is a worm, Whether it's a caterpillar, it's a worm. There's a subconscious, I might be getting sick from eating that, vermis.

Jessica Russell: 28:07 We're not super into wiggly food.

Jim Hills: 28:09 No. Only on Star Trek and [crosstalk 00:28:14].

Jessica Russell: 28:16 Where there's a little wriggle of a tail as it disappears into your lips.

David George Gordon: 28:20 I once read an article by the man who creates that food.

Jessica Russell: 28:23 Oh, wow.

David George Gordon: 28:23 I mean that's a career somewhere, cooking weird things. Yeah. I salute your adventurossome natures, by the way.

Ken Harvey: 28:32 Well, thank you.

Jessica Russell: 28:32 Oh, thank you.

Ken Harvey: 28:34 I've never really been given that compliment before. So, I really want to own that.

David George Gordon: 28:41 Bring that home with the wings to show your kids.

Ken Harvey: 28:43 So, I do want us to just mention that our technical director, producer shook her head in negativity over the offer so, and she's still shaking it.

David George Gordon: 28:56 And I really want to key off on that, and say that, it's really funny to me, that in so many ways, this is the food of the future, without a judgment put on it. It's just really good for you. It's easy to raise. It does not require the amounts of the gallons of water-

Jessica Russell: 29:11 Resources. Yeah.

David George Gordon: 29:12 ... to go into a steak and so on. But our dislike of insects and our culture is so strong that even at insect festivals, it's hard to get people to eat this stuff.

Jessica Russell: 29:24 Well, and I think, from our reactions, we each had some very individual like, I didn't want to eat the locust. I feel like they're looking at me and I'm just not quite okay with that. And yet I was sharing, I grew up in Louisiana and we eat some really interesting, quirky things and that are not eaten in other places, that have become really normal to me. So-

David George Gordon: 29:45 That's right.

Jessica Russell: 29:45 Yeah.

Ken Harvey: 29:46 So, David, you mentioned that, there have been 20 books that you've written.

David George Gordon: 29:52 That's right.

Ken Harvey: 29:53 Which is, I think that qualifies him as prolific. Does it? Or doesn't?

Jessica Russell: 29:57 I would say yes.

Ken Harvey: 29:57 Yeah. That's pretty incredible to me. So, the question I'd asked you early on, and I apologize for asking you two questions at the same time, but was, what got you started?

- David George Gordon: 30:09 Yeah, I got overwhelmed answering one question. It's funny, when I was a youngster, I wanted to be a scientist. And did I want to go out digging up dinosaurs or, who knows. I just loved all of the sciences. By the time I got to high school, I went to the world's worst high school in Chicago, Illinois. I liked the place, Lane Technical High School. It was a technical school. It was a public school. It was for boys only, because women wouldn't understand.
- Ken Harvey: 30:39 It's already boring to me.
- David George Gordon: 30:40 5,000 boys.
- Ken Harvey: 30:42 Wow.
- Jim Hills: 30:43 Oh, my God.
- Jessica Russell: 30:43 That's a lot of boys.
- David George Gordon: 30:43 So, you'd think they would have good science classes there, but no, they had terrible science classes and I found solace in the fact that they produce their own daily newspaper. Like a line type service. And every day there was this little paper, and I started writing for it. So, I went in thinking I was going to be a scientist. I left trying to get a degree in journalism, in college. And then, eventually I dropped out of college and figured out, I know I really like the sciences, started to suck, got back out a degree in aquatic biology, of all things, but then started writing again. So, I've always had this love of science that weaves through everything. I'm not writing a lot about cars or stuff like that, but I love biology and all 20 books are some facet. Really, when I look at it in retrospect of our relationship with nature.
- Jim Hills: 31:38 Well, I think it's important to have folks like you, who share, who straddle that fence between the communication piece and the love of the underlying science, because translating that science to those who are not enthralled with the science but are interested in and find the uses of that, being able to translate that into everyday language is really, really important. And congratulations for being able to do that.
- Ken Harvey: 32:09 Making it understandable for the rest of us. Right?
- David George Gordon: 32:10 I want to say though, it's interesting, because I've been writing for so long. If I go back in the day, there were not shows like Animal Planet channels. They're just pretty much broadcast the Wonders of Nature 24/7. And there were shows, Marlin Perkins.

Jim Hills: 32:29 Marlin Perkins.

Jessica Russell: 32:30 Is it wild kingdom?

David George Gordon: 32:31 Yeah. But I've watched the interest in narrative non-fiction, particularly about nature, has just grown and grown and grown. And my own grandkids, know which kind of praying mantises are the coolest and all that stuff, that they've picked up from the world, that they would not be exposed to 20, 30 years ago.

Jessica Russell: 32:54 And 20, 30 years ago, because that was actually my childhood, is even a little bit further back than that. But it was, you had to get adult non-fiction, and it was like big chunky pages and pages of text. And I read some of those, because I was so in love with animals and nature and wanted that information. But as there was that transition to the really wonderful science writing and that narrative, non-fiction format, I just really fell in love and read a lot of that growing up.

David George Gordon: 33:29 And I have to tell you, because things like, Eye Witness books or DK books, it was really heavily photo illustrated and information rich books. They're great platforms. I mean any age group could be reading it with their folks, for example. And so, it crosses all these different generations and all that love, basically. Biophilia, is a fancy word for that. It's just passed on through those books. I just love it.

Ken Harvey: 33:59 So, I just want to remind the audience, we're talking with David George Gordon, who's known as the bug chef, but he is also the writer of a lot of scientific non-fiction and I want to actually, just swing over and face Jessica, who's sitting to my right, and just ask you a question about something that David mentioned, about narrative non-fiction and scientific base nonfiction. There are things about that, that are found in our collection. Right?

Jessica Russell: 34:36 Oh, absolutely. We have a really rich collection of that kind of narrative non-fiction. And there's some really wonderful science non-fiction that you can sit and read. I personally really love essays, because they really, they let you dive in a little bit. But we were, just the DK and I witnessed books are also really rich. And I love that, you can now, find that content across all age groups. So, we have non-fiction early readers for the budding non-fiction lovers, who are just learning how to read.

Ken Harvey: 35:17 That's cool. So, we want to invite everyone who's listening to take advantage of what we have available in our collection, which also includes a number of works from David George

Gordon. So, David, you mentioned some other work that you've done. Do you want to just go through some of the titles or some of the subject matter?

David George Gordon: 35:40 When I was looking at these big picture books, somewhere along the line I found this book called The Atlas of Unexplained Mysteries. And it was a big DK, like book, but it was all about things like, oh, the Nazca lines in Peru, that are only visible from outer space, and experiences with the UFOs. And of course, Bigfoot was in there, and chupacabra and all of these stuff. Really, opened my mind, to all the mysteries in the world. And a large part of what I write about now, is focused on that. I've written two books about Sasquatch, most recently, one for mountaineers books. I applaud them for even [crosstalk 00:36:22]

Jim Hills: 36:23 How did you get that done?

David George Gordon: 36:25 It's even funnier, after that book came out, it was featured in Rexall, no, I'm sorry. What's the local chain? Bartell drugs, as a father's day gift.

Jessica Russell: 36:36 Amazing.

David George Gordon: 36:36 My book Sasquatch Seekers Field Manual. So, it's through them, it's gotten to a whole other audience. But I love writing about that stuff. I'm currently writing. The reason I thought of narrative non-fiction, I'm writing a book now, in narrative format. It travels with Charlie.

Jessica Russell: 36:55 Oh, well.

David George Gordon: 36:55 As I travel around with, in this case, the Charlie in this scenario is now, the poodle, but my wife. And the two of us are traveling around looking for sea monsters.

Ken Harvey: 37:04 Oh, neat.

David George Gordon: 37:05 And there's a real legacy of sea monsters throughout the Northwest.

Ken Harvey: 37:08 There is, in the open Argos.

David George Gordon: 37:10 Saurus is one that was created, because of sightings off of Victoria, BC. So, facing us basically. And it's just amazing. Yeah. Ogopogo is probably, right up there with Sasquatch, for one of those funny names as everybody knows.

Ken Harvey: 37:27 Wasn't there one, that was rumored to be in Lake Washington?

David George Gordon: 37:31 There's a really funny essay written by of all people, Ivar Haglund, in response to [crosstalk 00:37:39]. There's a big article that was in 1940s. There was in, what's that called? The Saturday Evening Post?

Jessica Russell: 37:49 Yeah.

David George Gordon: 37:50 Magazine, about, yes, sea monsters really exists and it was written by a man named Ivan T Sanderson, who's written a lot of books about the unexplained. And then Ivar Haglund, wrote a book that said, does Ivan T Sanderson exist? And it was all about the sea monsters in Lake Washington, and whether a weird scene that was.

Ken Harvey: 38:21 Fascinating. I'm jumping in, because we're going to run out of time.

David George Gordon: 38:24 Oh, yeah. [crosstalk 00:38:25]

Ken Harvey: 38:26 No, no, no. No problem there. I'm enjoying this, but getting back to your book on Sasquatch Seekers, the Field Manual, there were two things in there that I noticed and I just wanted to ask you about. One was, is Chewbacca the Wookiee a big foot? Is he a big, big foot in the star Wars?

David George Gordon: 38:45 I had to look into that in great length, because a lot of people could bring that up to me while I was writing. And the answer is no, he's a Wookiee and he lives on another planet. He's evolved from a whole other system.

Jim Hills: 38:56 So, is Sasquatch an alien from the planet Wookiee?

David George Gordon: 38:59 I've had a lot of conversations with people who say, "Well, that's why they don't find the..." it's like what's the prime operative, don't leave any traces. Prime directive, there we go. Don't leave behind any traces and don't meddle. So yeah, maybe they're from another planet or another dimension or another time period. Both, either before or after us. Yeah.

Ken Harvey: 39:24 Yeah, there is that thinking out there. So, there was one other thing out of that book that I just thought would be interesting, especially for mountaineers out there and hikers that you mentioned. If you're hunting for Sasquatch, there're three Ps, that you have to follow, and I can throw them out, planning, persistence and patience.

- David George Gordon: 39:43 That's right.
- Ken Harvey: 39:43 So, why are those important?
- David George Gordon: 39:46 Well, first of all, I was just recently talking to someone else about the sea monster thing, and they said finding a sea monster is like finding 60 needles in 70 haystacks. It's a real long haul to actually get lucky enough, to bump into a Sasquatch, particularly up in British Columbia or somewhere like that. So yeah, patience is definitely a large part of it. Also, the longer you stand, along as you sit in nature, the more nature comes to you. So, you can't be in a rush, obviously, and you can't get the answers that we're looking for just on the computer. So, it's not a race here. But we need to get really good persistent recollected high quality information. As it is right now, we have a lot of, I like to laugh at, when I call them, I seen them's. Out there, "Yeah, I've seen them." But they can't really tell you anything that's usable by a scientist.
- Jessica Russell: 40:47 Looking for data.
- David George Gordon: 40:49 A lot of my book is about citizen science, the whole thing of getting people trained to actually, collect data that can be used by someone else. They don't have to be the experts, but they have to be the experts at gathering the data. And as a result, a lot of them know what they're talking about. But that's what the real crux of my book is. Let's get some good information. And for Pete's sake, let's lay this to rest.
- Ken Harvey: 41:13 Well, it also seems to me, that an underlying premise or foundation to many of your books is also, that you should express wonder, awe and appreciation of what's physically around us.
- David George Gordon: 41:35 Yeah. Someone told me once, they actually were reciting the wisdom they had gotten from Ainu elders, and I knew where the people that originally settled Japan, before the mainland people came in and drove them off. So, like our own Native American populations. But Ainu elder said, the reason we are here, is to sing the praises of nature, but it's the one thing that nature doesn't do by itself. We're there to go, "Wow, aren't you beautiful?" And when I heard that, I realized I had been doing that my entire life, even as a little kid freaking out over, what was the goldfish they released in the public park lagoon. Oh, that's my thing. So, it totally rung true.
- Ken Harvey: 42:20 Well, David, can you leave us with a memory of a library?

- David George Gordon: 42:26 Yeah. I love to, because, you know what, I was one of those bookworms, bookish children and still I'm to some degree. I used to go to the public library, but I also spent a lot of time at the elementary school library. And then, Chicago, my school love, this was Alessandro Volta, named after the man who invented the Volt, elementary school. So, I get books out of there and that for some reason, I got a series of books written by an author named Rita Ritchie. These are like young people's fiction from the forties about King Kublai Khan's court, and being a hawk meister. It was sort of Harry Potter level excitement about that period of time.
- David George Gordon: 43:11 So, I wrote her a fan letter and I sent it to Simon and Schuster and then, I waited for a reply and I waited and waited. And I swear, for probably a year and a half went by, before the part of me in my little eight year old me went, "Yeah, I don't think I'm going to hear back from her." So, recognizing, that if anybody ever writes me a letter, they'll hear back from me. I just knew, how much hope I had, that I was going to have an engaging dialogue with Rita Ritchie, and it never happened. Yeah.
- Ken Harvey: 43:50 That's wonderful. Well, we want to invite all of our audience members to take a look at the show notes for this podcast episode. And please, you are invited to come to our catalog, our online catalog, or walk into a library and check out the catalog there and look for some of the published works by David George Gordon. Thank you so much, for being part of this podcast.
- David George Gordon: 44:18 Hey, thank you so much for having me.
- Speaker 5: 44:22 Curl up with your preschooler, reading fun books like, Goodnight Moon or Chicka Chicka Boom, Boom. You'll find 100 enjoyable picture book titles, which were hand selected by Sno-Isle librarians, guaranteed to create delightful and meaningful afternoon and bedtime experiences, all while helping your children learn to read. Find the countdown to kindergarten list and many more online, at Sno-Isle Libraries.
- Ken Harvey: 44:57 Well, I'll tell you, that collection of bugs that David brought with him was extraordinarily,
- Jim Hills: 45:04 Well, we didn't exactly finish them off. There are some left on the little dishes here. But I thought they were tasty.
- Ken Harvey: 45:12 They were surprising. And we have to say, I should let the audience know, that the one who consumed the most bugs,

Jessica has stepped away from the studio, so she doesn't get to be part of this takeaway segment, unfortunately.

Jim Hills: 45:26 She had other-

Ken Harvey: 45:28 Other commitments.

Jim Hills: 45:29 ... commitments.

Ken Harvey: 45:29 Yes. And frankly, I really appreciated David joining us and it was really fascinating to talk with him about the books that he's written and especially about his Eat-A-Bug Cookbook. I wasn't expecting him to bring bugs with him.

Jim Hills: 45:53 No. Me neither. The thing I thought was interesting is, so how does a guy, how does anyone go and decide to write a bug cookbook. And it was interesting, his background, he came at it from a scientific interest and a journalistic perspective. So, he's a storyteller about science. And he didn't just write a bug cookbook. He wrote the Sasquatch book and what was it called? The Sasquatch Seekers Field Manual. And he's got, what? 18 other books, all in that same vein, trying to marry the scientific curiosity in a storyteller's voice and that's cool.

Ken Harvey: 46:39 Yeah, I think really fascinating to hear about what got him started down this path of writing. And I really respected that he was coming at it with a scientific fascination and curiosity, and really wanted to talk about things without essentially, creating... He's sharing a narrative in some ways, a story, but it's not fictional. It's everything he's writing is based upon his scientific perspective.

Jim Hills: 47:09 So, we have to have him back.

Ken Harvey: 47:11 Absolutely.

Jim Hills: 47:12 Things he's written about, that we didn't touch on, and slugs was one of them. I'm very interested in slugs. I grew up here, I'm very familiar, well, I'm not very familiar with slugs, but I seen a bunch of them. And I'm really interested to know what wine goes with which bug, because he presented at the Robert Mondavi Institute for Food and Wine. So, he should know, wine pairing.

Ken Harvey: 47:34 I'm really glad you didn't say, which wine goes with which slug, because that does not sound appetizing. But yes, to what you were saying. And I do want to just say to the audience, that in

fact, if you were hearing some crunching during the podcast, it was in fact, sampling some of that, some of what he brought and are different.

- Jim Hills: 48:00 I was totally adamant, that I was not going to do that, as I walked in.
- Ken Harvey: 48:06 So was I.
- Jim Hills: 48:06 And ended up doing it, and it was okay.
- Ken Harvey: 48:09 It was okay. I don't know, that I'll make it a permanent ongoing, part of my culinary experience. But there was no spitting out, of what we put into our mouths.
- Jim Hills: 48:23 Just the wings.
- Ken Harvey: 48:23 And we were swallowing. Yes. And so, just to repeat what he had said to us, with the locusts, the way that you manage that, is you grasp it by its wings and then, you chomp into its body and either, one bite or two bites and-
- Jim Hills: 48:39 Yeah.
- Ken Harvey: 48:42 So, he did talk, just a smidgen, about essentially bugs insects being a tomorrow's food crop for humanity. And I wish, that we had been able to spend a little bit more time, really pursuing that, but I think, that it's a very interesting approach, a belief, that his own forecast of how we're going to be feeding ourselves in the future. And that by itself, may be something, that we want to bring him on and talk about and then, we just throw a few slugs in that conversation.
- Jim Hills: 49:24 Right. That sounds good.
- Ken Harvey: 49:25 Yeah. Our thanks again to David George Gordon, the bug chef, for being part of this episode. That's this week's episode of the Check It Out podcast. Don't forget to join us next week for another episode. Thanks for listening.