

# THIS IS THE FOOD YOU'LL EAT ON MARS

BY MATT MELTZER

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MIAMI

SHUTTERSTOCK

In perhaps the greatest stroke of Hollywood timing ever, right when Matt Damon's new blockbuster about being stranded on Mars comes out... BOOM! We find water on the Red Planet. And now everybody who thought North Dakota was just *aliiiittle* too densely populated is all, "F-this noise. I'm moving to MARS!"

But not so fast, anti-social recluses! There's that little issue of what you're going to eat to sustain yourself once you get there. Biologist/artist Heidi Neilson and her crew of food specialists think they have an answer.

On November 11th the [Cannonball Art Residency](#) is hosting a special dinner made up

exclusively of dishes a person could prepare on Mars. Taking her cue from NASA's HI-SEAS program -- where stand-in astronauts were put in a Mars simulator in Hawaii -- she took their list of approved foods and, with help from her Mars Supper Club, created a full, three-course meal -- and breakfast! -- for future food-savvy Martians.

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## **First off: how's the food cooked?**

Open flames are a big no-no on the Red Planet, not only because of the threat of explosion, but also because fire eats up tons of oxygen that you'll need for, ya know, breathing and stuff. So, on Mars they'll be using an induction cooker: a special type of stove that is powered by magnets and operates much like a hot plate. You can also create a convection oven on the cooker using pots, much like you would on a traditional stovetop.

## **Ok, let's get to the menu: appetizers**

### **Burmese tea leaf salad**

The fermented Burmese tea leaves are a sort of paste and are used here as the base for the salad. Added to it are dried beans, cabbage, and dried shrimp. It's kind of like a

shrimp Cup O' Noodles, except replace the noodles with fermented leaves. So... shrimp Cup O' Leaves?



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## Main course

### Olive shelf-stable pizza

Start with a shelf-stable cracker. Add water to a dried tomato base to make the sauce, and then top with dried olives and powdered Swiss and cheddar. Cook in the convection oven to get that cheese to melt a little. OR... you could just have some fun with Domino's and REALLY test that 30min guarantee.

### Garbanzo bean tofu stir fry

While soybean tofu is created by a fermentation process (which ain't happening in the arid conditions on Mars), garbanzo tofu requires just garbanzo powder, water, and a little gelatin; it's not unlike making Jell-o. Add to it some dried veggies -- and rice made on the induction cooker -- and you've got that go-to dinner for busy single Martians who only have \$4 to make it 'til Friday.

## Side dish

### Jiminy mac and cheese

Before you immediately reject the idea of mac and cheese made with crickets, go into a food-forward Mexican restaurant in your hometown and see if they don't have a chapulín

mac and cheese on the menu. Perhaps the only trendy, foodie dish you can get on Mars, this dehydrated cheese over pasta features crickets, an alternative protein source that could conceivably be farmed on the planet.

COURTESY OF HEIDI NELSON

## **Dessert**

### **Little green men**

With no open flames and only 38% gravity on Mars, cakes just aren't going to rise like they do on Earth. But that's not a reason you can't still celebrate your birthday 154 million miles from home! This cake made with egg powder, dry milk, dry rose petals, and matcha -- green tea powder -- can make even a pressurized Martian Quonset hut seem festive. The flavor's not unlike green tea ice cream, and while it's not as light and fluffy as a cake you get from the corner bakery, it'll still remind you that you'll be, like, three years older before you get back to Earth.

COURTESY OF HEIDI NEILSEN

## Condiments

### Space jam

Unfortunately we're not talking about old copies of that Michael Jordan-Bugs Bunny movie. Because you can only eat so much lime green and cherry Jell-o before stepping outside without a space suit seems like a good idea, Neilson and her crew created a more festive, international gelatin made with a purple sweet potato (called ube) that acts as both a sweetener and coloring agent. Spread on a shelf-stable cracker and enjoy.

### Vulcan hot sauce

Mars, according to astrophysicist Arlin Crotts (who wrote a book about living on the moon and has consulted with Neilson and her team), may well smell like gun smoke and taste like peroxide. And astronauts up there are gonna have some serious sinus problems thanks to the microgravity. So, wanna make you food *not* taste like the pistol range AND unclog your nose at the same time? HOT SAUCE!!! Yep, this space condiment is made of Chinese chili paste, chipotle powder, cayenne peppers, paprika, chili pepper, and ancho. By the end of your Martian visit you'll be like, "Vulcan sauce? Hells ya! I put that shit on *EVERYTHING!*"

## What about breakfast for the next day...

### An omelet

Egg powder, liquefied and cooked with powdered cheese. Not all that imaginative, but

think about it: you're eating an omelet... ON FREAKING MARS.

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*[Matt Meltzer](#) agrees with Ernie and totally does not want to live on the moon. Or Mars. He's a staff writer for Thrillist and you can follow him [@mmeltrez](#)*

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