

Study about the use of Edible Flowers in Costa Rica

Sofia G. Florença¹; Keylor Villalobos Moya², Raquel Guiné³

¹ Faculty of Food and Nutrition Sciences, University of Oporto, Portugal.

² School of Agrarian Sciences, National University of Costa Rica, Costa Rica.

³ CI&DETS/CERNAS Research Centres, Polytechnic Institute of Viseu, Portugal.

Introduction: Edible flowers (EF) constitute a source of some bioactive compounds and are very useful to step up the appeal of food. The use of EF for gastronomic purposes has a long history in some cultures but more recently it has expanded in most countries being particularly appreciated by some chefs who use them both for flavour intensification and decorative purposes.

Objective: The objective of this study was to characterize the use of EF in gastronomy.

Methods: A cross-sectional descriptive investigation was undertaken using a questionnaire developed for the study, which included some questions about consumption habits and others about the knowledge relatively to EF. The sample included 123 individual residing in Costa Rica, aged between 18 and 66 years old.

Results: The results revealed that 74% of the participants already heard about EF and 45.5% have already eaten them. EF are appreciated particularly for salads and decoration of dishes due to their taste, aroma and decorative ability. The frequency of use, however is low, since they are eaten sporadically by 89.3% of the participants and only 26.8% admit they use EF in their culinary practices. It is important to consider the possible risks associated to their consumption, such as pesticides or toxicity, and 96.7% consider that there is not enough information about EF. Only 25.2% of the participants state that there are risks associated with the consumption of EF, and these recognize both types of risks, pesticides and toxicity.

Conclusions: The marketing of EF is expanding in modern gastronomic trends, with restaurants playing important roles on the chain of EF consumption. Still, the home preparation of recipes including EF is scarce and sporadic.

Funding: The authors thank Instituto Politécnico de Viseu/CI&DETS and FCT - Fundação para a Ciência e Tecnologia, I.P., for funding under project UID/Multi/04016/2016.

