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Giant pandas receive welcome in Indonesia

Page 3



Shattering stereotypes with Muslim superhero

Page 7



"Ring of Fire" reminds Asia of seismic peril

Page 16

Bugs are in the food by design at fine-dining bistro



CRUNCHY & CRAWLY. A giant water beetle is prepared by chef Thitiwat Tantragarn at *Insects in the Backyard* restaurant, in Bangkok, Thailand. Bugs are now fine dining at the Bangkok bistro, which aims to revolutionize views of nature's least-loved creatures and what you can do with them. (AP Photo/Sakchai Lalit)

By **Jerry Harmer**
The Associated Press

BANGKOK — Ants and beetles in the kitchen? Normally that'd close down a restaurant immediately, but for a unique eatery in Bangkok, bugs in the beef ragu and pests in the pesto are the business plan.

Tucking into insects is nothing new in Thailand, where street vendors pushing carts of fried crickets and buttery silk-

worms have long fed locals and adventurous tourists alike.

But bugs are now fine dining at *Insects in the Backyard*, a Bangkok bistro aiming to revolutionize views of nature's least-loved creatures and what you can do with them.

"In Thailand, there is a long history of local populations, of people consuming insects, and they continue to do, in large amounts. But it's essentially as a snack, not a part of dishes, not a part of cuisine,"

said Regan Suzuki Pairojmahakij, a Canadian partner at the eatery. "We are interested in moving people away from seeing insects from purely as a snack to be a part of a gourmet and a delicious cuisine."

That's the responsibility of executive chef Thitiwat Tantragarn, a veteran of some of Thailand's top restaurants. Together with his team he's designed a menu that features seven different insects, including ants, crickets, bamboo cater-

Continued on page 3

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