

# Precious

**Ant eggs, known as escamoles, have been a delicacy in Mexico for centuries. A kilo can fetch up to \$100! The larvae of the ants are difficult to collect, but highly sought after in the best restaurants in Mexico City. This attracts poachers who exterminate the ants. We join one of the last indigenous escamoleros for an honourable harvest**

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# Crawlies









# The Story

**Escamoles taste better in the honour system. We follow a traditional harvest worker, an escamolero, from collecting the ant eggs between March and April to selling them at markets and the finished dish at one of the world's best restaurants in Mexico City, Quintonil.**

To find the escamoles, the collectors have to search for the nests and reach their hands into the nests of thousands of ants. Extreme caution is required to avoid destroying the fragile eggs!

Vital: When harvesting, about 30 per cent of the colony must be left behind so that individual nests can be harvested for decades to come. The escamoleros in Mexico call this 'honourable harvesting'. If all the eggs are destroyed or exploited, entire populations of ants are threatened with extinction. The number of poachers in Mexico has increased in recent years. This is because ant caviar is in demand. A kilo can fetch up to \$100!

Ant caviar ends up on the plates of Mexico City's top restaurants, such as Quintonil, one of the world's best restaurants, which is committed to preserving Mexico's heritage.

A fascinating report on the sustainable harvesting of escamoles, a culturally important delicacy in Mexico.



# Impressions

Food-Reportage / *Ant Caviar in Mexico*



THE  
WORLD'S  
**50**  
BEST  
RESTAURANTS

