

Flying Spark joins IKEA startup camp

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Flying SpArk is a new food-tech company focused on all-natural protein extracted from the Mediterranean fruit fly for human consumption. This safe, sustainable ingredient is high in protein, calcium, iron and potassium and, unlike meat, it is odorless and virtually cholesterol-free.

“We are excited to join the IKEA accelerator and to have the opportunity to learn how to work with a giant retailer like IKEA,” says Eran Gronich, co-founder & CEO of Flying SpArk. “This will completely enhance our product development and how we progress. IKEA will mentor and work with our team toward eventually collaboration between the companies to develop a product and hopefully to launch it at IKEA’s restaurants.”

In just one more generation, the world population will surpass 9 billion, with about half suffering from inadequate nutrition. One of the primary reasons IKEA chose Flying SpArk is because of the mission of co-founders Eran Gronich and Yoram Yerushalmi: to create a high-quality protein ingredient packed with essential minerals, raised and harvested according to sustainable principles. Fruit fly farming requires minimal water and almost no land. The flies harvest themselves with no human intervention, which allows for clean farming. "This constitutes a forward-thinking and innovative way to help the world redress hunger and malnutrition," states Gronich.

The idea behind IKEA's collaborative boot camp effort is what the company calls, "Co-creating a better, everyday life." The mission is to encourage start-ups that are working to solve some of the world's most pressing problems. IKEA owns and operates 389 stores in 48 countries. Its income from foods last year was an estimated €2 billion.

From a small base of product launches tracked, the use (by CAGR) of edible insects grew more than 58% from 2011 to 2015, according to global research group Innova Market Insights. Overall, most products are in the cereal/energy bars category (32%) but 12% are in meat-substitute products. Cricket is the most commonly used insect, found in 56% of products tracked, typically in whole form or as a flour. 54% of products tracked feature the claim "high/source of protein."

"Millennials want to create a more sustainable world, to make it a better place for all of us, and they are willing to add insect flour to their food to help achieve this goal, notes Gronich."

The high demand for sustainable protein, combined with innovative technology, has driven strong support for Flying SpArk. The company has raised \$1 million with the help of the Israel Innovation Authority and The Kitchen, a food-tech incubator sponsored by the Strauss Group (one of the largest food conglomerates in Israel). Over the last 12 months, Flying SpArk has made significant inroads toward building the infrastructure and technologies integral to developing its products.