

## Why we should all get worms – October 2022.

Round worm, Hook worm, Whip worm, Tape worm. Yuk! Yet at least one amongst the 1800 creatures in this genus, the burrowing red wriggler, the earthworm *Lumbricus terrestris*, you should invite to your table. Here's why.

Vegetables, experts tell us, should be an ever-increasing part of our diet. Yet the soil they are grown in must be ploughed, fertilised, aerated and de-compacted yearly. A big job but one that need not be daunting, with *Lumbricus* at hand. Let him loose in your soil and he'll wriggle through it like a tiny plough, making tunnels that bring air and water to the roots of your plants.

Feed him any moist organic matter; dead leaves, grass clippings, or just the kitchen waste each of us produces a ton of every year, and he's set. Carrot tops, banana peels, eggshells, coffee grounds; *Lumbricus* gobbles them all up, digests them with a satisfied burp, and you know what he does next, don't you? We all do it. But *Lumbricus* does it *better*. Because his castings (his name for poo; he's shy that way), come through a hole that's *mic-ro-sco-pic*, so it's finely, finely sifted! And packed with the nutrients you just fed him; Phosphorous, Calcium, Magnesium, Nitrogen.

Not only that; *Lumbricus*'s microbiome, or gut, takes bad bacteria and turns them into good ones. What a host! The best hotel on Earth. These bacteria fill your soil with important life, making your garden lush and healthy, your vegetables tasty and long-lasting. No more plastic supermarket produce, packed in... plastic that tastes like... plastic.

I don't have the equipment you might say. Nothing much is required! An opaque bucket (no-one likes to poo in front of others) with a few holes in the bottom for drainage, covered with netting to stop *Lumbricus* scarpering for greener pastures, and a soft bed of shredded paper is all he needs. Put a tap at the bottom of the bucket and water it regularly and you can collect worm tea. Dilute it, spray it on your plants, and watch the magic happen!

For a few euro more you can buy a ready-made compost bin; they're cheap, and palatial for the deserving *Lumbricus*. You can even just dig a trench, and line it with plastic; he's happy. Keep it moist, not soggy, out of the sun, and don't let a hungry cockerel at it; *Lumbricus* doesn't move fast. It's his only downfall. Then feed him; not meat, dairy products or dog poo, (he has standards, like all of us), and check on him, to see what he's cooking.

Before long *Lumbricus* will have turned his surroundings into dark, crumbly "black gold". Dress your veggies with it, and put *Lumbricus* back, to do what he does best. Mnn-hmn! *Lumbricus* knows how to have fun! Luckily, he's a good parent and soon your bin will be over-flowing; the wormlets will want to fly the nest, or crawl the bed should I say? Start another worm bin, give them to a friend, or sell them; *Lumbricus* doesn't even mind if you traffick the kids!

But I don't have a garden you say. People today grow vegetables on balconies, in pots, on rooftops, even vertically up buildings. And where there are veggies, there should be *Lumbricus*. But where do I get him? From a farmer, a friend, or even online! In a tiny apartment or on a farm, grown by an agronomist or a child, *Lumbricus* will thrive. He's an eco-warrior, ingesting and discarding his own weight into the soil every day. What a treasure! The highest yield fertilizer on earth! So join us Toastmasters, *Lumbricus* and me, on an eco-crusade today. It's easy, fun and rewarding. And you'd be saving the world, and yourself, one tiny plop of gold-dust at a time.