



Unseen Edible

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STUDENT CREATES A RANGE OF LICHEN-BASED FOOD AND HARVESTING TOOLS

 SCIENCE

A design student has developed a range of food products and packaging showcasing the nutritional benefits of lichen.

Food has played a big role in affecting our climate. Changing food habits can also be part of the solution. For example, algorithms are being used to find [better meat alternatives](#), and yeast is being used to create a credible 'milk'.

Now design student Julia Schwarz has been researching another alternative for consumers. Her project, [Unseen Edible](#), is all about lichen. Schwarz has developed a range of edible products that use lichen as the main ingredient. The products she displays include 'corn' flakes, a lichen flour blend, mustard and butter, among others. All the products have their own packaging. Decorative stickers inform consumers about the species of lichen they are eating. Schwarz has also developed a range of lichen-harvesting tools.

To raise further awareness, Schwarz has made a short film to accompany the project. The film shows that lichen has been eaten throughout human history, usually in times of starvation. Lichen, already in abundance across the world, is nutritionally rich and can be harvested from many sources. It can be scraped off of logged trees, or from man-made structures such as statues. Lichen needs fewer resources than most plants to grow. It can also grow in a greater range of climates. Therefore, humans could cultivate it easily in harsh climates. This is because of the ability of lichen to grow in places and temperatures many plants cannot. Schwarz recently demonstrated her project at Vienna Design Week.

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Takeaway:

Climate change poses a significant challenge to humanity. Business, however, can provide a solution. Schwarz's project shows that by promoting alternative foods in attractive ways, businesses could convince consumers to change their habits. Users are already turning to products like oat milk and other alternatives to dairy. There are surely many other alternatives out there just waiting for the right advertising campaign. What else could help consumers change their approach to food?