Can we grow chickpeas on the moon? It’s possible — and here’s why we just might want to do it

Lots of people get ideas, but when you’re a Stanford biophysics Ph.D. candidate who has already sent a lander to the moon, your ideas get a little more traction. So when the 34-year-old Israeli [Yontan Winetraub] started talking about hummus in space, people listened.

“When I heard NASA will be sending astronauts to the moon,” he tells people, “the Jewish mother in me had to ask, ‘What are they going to eat?’”

Winetraub’s project will send chickpea plants to the International Space Station inside a small device that he calls “a miniaturized greenhouse.”

…

Winetraub said perfecting techniques for control (part of a field called synthetic biology) could be essential to growing crops in a space station — or on the moon or other planets — because it could allow for plants to sprout or fruit on command, making them a more reliable food source for astronauts, compared with the higgledy-piggledy growth of nature.

The space hummus experiment will blast off for the International Space Station in early 2022, traveling on one of Elon Musk’s SpaceX rockets as part of a private expedition via Axiom Space, the first mission to the space station that will have a fully private crew.

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