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Elucidations & Elaborations

No child left behind when we fire up the grills on July 4. But wait. What are we celebrating? A recent Newsweek poll shows that 6% of Americans couldn't circle Independence Day on a calendar. Could it be they just don't understand calendars? In the same poll 20% were not sure who we declared independence from and another 6% named a different country.

I know the context was different, but the words of Sam Cooke in the lyrics of Wonderful World, 1958, still apply. "Don't know much about history. Don't know much biology. Don't know much about a science book Don't know much about the French I took." It's really sad but in this country we don't know much about many things. No, don't blame the teachers. It's more than that. Our education system itself is in trouble.

Brain Teaser

What do the following words have in common?

MELLOW SLACK CLUE GROWN BOLD

See page 2 for the answer.

Can't We All Just Get Along?

I was intrigued recently by an article in the Los Angeles Times by Gregory Rodriguez called The War Between the Whites. The gist of the article was that we have a fixation on how people treat the "other" — the stranger, those we perceive as different and dangerous. The truth, he writes, "is more unsettling. It is not so much the unknown that threatens us but the known. We disdain and attack our brothers — our kin, our acquaintances, our neighbors — whom we know well, perhaps too well."

In his book, "Bloodlust: On the Roots of Violence from Cain and Abel to the Present," UCLA historian Russell Jacoby argues: "From assault to genocide, from assassination to massacre, violence usually emerges from inside the fold rather than outside."

Here are some amazing statistics from the U.S. Department of Justice:

- Most murders are intraracial. From 1976 to 2005, 86% of white victims were killed by whites; 94% of black victims were killed by blacks.
- Similarly, despite all the fear of strangers that adults instill in children, 90% of child abuse is perpetrated by family or friends of family. Almost three-quarters of rape victims know or have met their assailant.

According to Prof. Jacoby, racism may indeed be this nation's "original sin," but sameness, not diversity, is what poses the single biggest threat to social cohesion. Can't we just all get along?

From the Kitchen

Do you have a set of individual au gratin dishes? If not, you should add them to your next shopping list. They are so versatile. They are not only great for individual main courses but are fantastic for serving sautéed mushrooms or hot appetizers. You can preheat them in the oven to keep the servings warm.

For an elegant presentation, serve the [Quickie Scampi](#) from this newsletter in them. Some of our other favorite things to serve in them are the [German Pancakes](#) and the [Mexican Oven Omelette](#) from [Glen's Place](#). They are also wonderful for a variety of scrambled egg dishes.

Once you have your individual au gratin dishes, you will find many uses for them. They come in different shapes and sizes but we love the round ones (about 5 inches in diameter) with a handle from Crate & Barrel. They are \$5.95 each and perfect for individual servings. This is not an ad but you can [take a look here](#).

Au Gratin French: au, *with the + gratin, scraping from the pan.*

Au gratin dishes are usually covered with bread crumbs and sometimes butter and grated cheese, and then browned in an oven: potatoes au gratin.

Featured Recipe: Quickie Scampi

1 pound shrimp, shelled and deveined
1 stick butter
6 cloves garlic, minced
Worcestershire sauce, dash
Tabasco sauce, dash
1 tablespoon finely chopped flat-leaf parsley
Dill weed, a pinch
1 tablespoon capers (optional)
Parmesan cheese, grated

Preheat oven to 400 degrees.

Squeeze out excess moisture from shrimp with paper towels.

Melt butter in skillet and sauté garlic lightly, about 1 minute. Add Worcestershire and Tabasco sauces to taste.

Add shrimp to skillet. Cook over medium low heat until shrimp turn pink. Remove from heat and stir in parsley and dill. Turn shrimp mixture into a baking dish, or individual au gratin dishes. Sprinkle on capers if using. Top with lots of grated parmesan cheese.

Bake until heated through, about 10 minutes. Serve with crusty French bread.

Shrimp Trivia

Over 1 billion pounds of shrimp are consumed each year in the U.S. Almost 90% of it comes from Asia and Central America.

About 80% of shrimp consumed in the United States each year is eaten in restaurants.

Some 40% of the shrimp eaten in the U.S. is farm raised shrimp from Asia and South America.

World shrimp production is over 5 billion pounds a year, about 20% of which is farmed.

Words about Wine



It's not often around here that there is wine left in the bottle after dinner but what do you do with it if there is some left? The most common practice is to put a wine stopper in the bottle and place it in the refrigerator. That works fine for a day or two since oxidation is slowed by refrigeration. Don't forget to write the date on the label so you will know how long it has been there.

Another neat trick that I read about and tried recently is to pour the remainder of the wine in a beer bottle, add a wine stopper, then place it in the refrigerator. The idea is that the beer bottle will be fuller than the wine bottle, therefore it will have less oxygen in it. The less oxygen, the less oxidation of the wine. It works for me and I think it will work for you too. Give it a try.

Wine Trivia

It takes 3 years for a newly planted grape vine to produce useful grapes.

It takes 5 years for full production.

The productive lifetime of a vine is 30-35 years. Although the quality can remain good, the yield begins to decrease after that.

It takes 4 to 5 grape clusters to make 1 bottle of wine.

Health Myths: Fact or Fiction

There are some things regarding our health that we have heard over and over as we grew up. Are these beliefs true or just fairy tales? Here are some of them.

Cold weather can make you sick. Fiction. Viruses, not weather, cause colds or flu. These illnesses are more common in fall and winter because people spend more time inside in close quarters. There's no proof that getting a chill or even going outside with wet hair can cause you to get sick.

Alcohol can lessen arthritis symptoms. True. A recent study found that people with arthritis who drank moderately had less severe symptoms. Doctors think alcohol may ease the inflammation and pain.

Bottled water is the best. Fiction. Even though water is healthier for you than sugary soft drinks, Americans spend billions of dollars on it and it's not always better for you. It's true that some bottled water comes from mountain springs or artesian wells, but some of it is only treated tap water.

Reverse osmosis, distilled water, or water filtered with an absolute 1-micron filter are options.

A Final Word

Thanks again for reading the July edition of the newsletter. Pass the newsletter along if you know someone who might enjoy it. Send ideas, comments, and questions to Glen@Glen's Place.

Until next time remember: Never go to a doctor whose office plants have died. ~ Erma Bombeck

Answer to brain teaser: Changing the first letter of each gives a color; yellow, black, blue, brown, gold

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