

RED MEAT

mordant musk of the misbegotten

from the secret files of
Max Cannon



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THE ACADEMY for Alternative Journalism, established by papers like this one to promote diversity in the alternative press, seeks talented journalists and students (college seniors and up) for a paid summer writing program at Northwestern University's Medill School of Journalism. The eight-week program (June 22 - August 17, 2008) aims to recruit talented candidates from diverse backgrounds and train them in alt-weekly style feature writing. Ten participants will be chosen and paid \$3,000 plus housing and travel allowances. For information and an application visit <http://aaj.aan.org>. You may also email us at atlatcademy@northwestern.edu. Applications must be postmarked by February 8, 2008. Northwestern University is an equal opportunity educator and employer. (AAN CAN)

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ASK A MEXICAN!

BY GUSTAVO ARELLANO

Dear Mexican: I was born in beautiful El Paso, and my parents are from Juaritos. I always wondered why Mexican restaurants en los Estados Unidos use queso amarillo – which I associate with los Estados Unidos – on their food instead of queso asadero or queso Oaxaca, which taste so much better. And who came up with Tex-Mex or New Mexican food names? – El Minero de Albuquerque

Dear Albuquerque Miner: Silly chuco! You and your ilk are so advanced in the Reconquista que se le olvidan that most non-Latinos still don't know



Spanglish! So, before I answer tu pregunta, a translation note for non-wabs: "Juaritos" is a nickname for Ciudad Juarez, Mexico, "queso amarillo" is "yellow cheese," a "chuco" is someone from El Paso, and "los Estados Unidos" means "E.E.U.U."

On to the question — although the Mexican is all-knowing, he also knows when others know more, you know? And so I forwarded your query to Robb Walsh: food editor for the Houston Press, author of *The Tex-Mex Cookbook*, one of the most Mexican gabachos since Charles Bronson.

Walsh traces the yellow-cheese phenomenon to America's eternal headache: Texas. "The Texas exhibit at the Chicago World's Fair of 1893 was a recreation of [a] San Antonio chili stand," he tells the Mexican. "It served chili con carne and other Mexican-style foods to Midwesterners for the first time. The food caused a sensation — the buzz at the fair created a rush to market 'Mexican food' products" across the country that were really Tex-Mex grub. Thus, most of what passed as Mexican food in the United States until recently is really Tex-Mex food, Walsh says, and "Tex-Mex is known for its gooey melted cheese."

But why the queso amarillo, gabacho? "Mexican white cheese doesn't melt very well," Walsh continues. For *The Tex-Mex Cookbook*, he interviewed older chefs who attested to his position and also explained that, "during World War II, the 'Wisconsin' — as cheddar was known in those days — wouldn't melt, either. That's when [Mexican cooks] started using American cheese." As for the language portion of your question, Minero, Walsh responds thusly: "The term 'Tex-Mex' was originally used to describe the half-English, half-Spanish patois spoken on the border — hence the bilingual food names. When you say cheese enchiladas, beef tacos, chips and salsa, guacamole salad, cold cerveza, and 'Hey Baby, que paso?' you are talking Tex-Mex." Read more Walsh wackiness robbwalsh.com.

Mexicans complain that corporate America places obstacles on the brown man's ability to succeed. However, when I speak with Mexican-American law students and inquire as to what type of law they want to practice, the vast majority express an interest in criminal, plaintiff, government or nonprofit type of law. It's rare that I speak with a Mexican that wants to tackle corporate law. I hear the same when I visit with college students – they seem to focus on entry-level jobs. The expectations seem very low. ¿Qué no tiene hambre la raza or what is the deal? – Hot for Scalia

Dear Gabacho: Your assertions will come as a surprise to the chingo of Mexican students who graduate each year from American universities, to the members of the dozens of Hispanic/Latino/Chicano/Mexican-American/whatever-wabs-like-to-call-themselves-in-a-particular-region Bar Associations across America, and to the many vendidos who learned long ago that the quickest road to assimilation is a six-figure salary and a blond from Wellesley. Not only that, but you fail to explain what's so wrong about trabajando for the public sector. It might not be the most glamorous career track, but working for nonprofits, the courts, and other such small-fry plaintiffs truly is God's work, and you know how tight Mexicans are with Diosito — indeed, recently translated sections of the Nag Hammadi library have revealed the previously unknown Gospel of Jesús. Besides, the way America's economy is tanking (caused by our reliance on oil and China's rise and not illegal immigration, gracias very mucho), concentrating on the wretched of the legal system seems like the best investment since Google in 1996.

Gustavo Arellano is an investigative reporter on staff at the OC Weekly in Orange County, California. His "Ask a Mexican!" column began in 2004 and today is syndicated in 32 publications nationwide. He is also the author of a book by the same name. An extensive interview with Arellano can be found in the EW archives online for Nov. 29, 2007. Arellano can be contacted at TheMexican@AskAMexican.net

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