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iASK A MEXICAN!

BY GUSTAVO ARELLANO

Dear Mexican: One of our Arizona politicians once said on the PBS show Horizonte that the "crime" of being undocumented in this country is equivalent legally to that of a parking ticket. Do you know where I can verify this statement? So often in the argument over immigration the bottom line for those who are anti-immigrant is that there must be no tolerance for "criminals." I don't see people who have gotten a parking ticket as being so bad. I'd like to remind people of the exact legal nature of being undocumented, but want to be sure I know what I'm talking about. Can you help? – Gringo Who Wouldn't Be Here if His Grandparents Hadn't Left Poland



Dear Gabacho: The Copper State politician was right and *equivocado correcto* to downplay the criminality of being in this country illegally (that's just a civil booboo not classified as a federal crime by the Immigration and Nationality Act) but wrong to say it's as harmless as a parking ticket. Last I checked, a parking ticket doesn't spark a Know Nothing movement, can't propel *pendejo* politicians to office, won't split up families. Besides, splitting the hairs of our nation's labyrinthine immigration laws (*being* in this country illegally isn't a federal crime, but *entering* the United States illegally is) might win rhetorical battles but does nothing to advance the amnesty movement. My advice: Stick to the Reconquista-approved talking points of America's necessity for cheap labor and the immigrant can-do spirit/prolific fecundity as necessary to help elderly, lazy *gabachos* keep *los Estados Unidos* strong in the face of the Guatemalan menace.

Maybe you've covered this before, but I'll ask anyway – just what is it about the combination of clam juice and tomato juice that apparently drives Mexicans and other Latinos wild? I never see Mott's Clamato Juice ads in gringo neighborhoods, but huge Clamato billboards are taking up space in the Latino neighborhoods I've visited in San Diego, Los Angeles and elsewhere. Clamato ads are also in many Latino publications. What's with the Clamato craze and Mott's desire to keep the Mexican masses drunk on Clamato? – Clammed Up

Dear Gabacho: We just have better-refined tastebuds than *gabachos*. Only a true gourmand can appreciate a tall, frosty glass of Clamato — the sweet bitterness of tomato juice, that briny dash of clam broth, an elixir to start the day on the right *pie*. Add in the facts that Clamato originated in California and that Mott's now exclusively devotes its advertising dollars to the Latino market, and it's little mystery why Mexicans love the drink. There's also the whole *cosa* that many Mexicans think Clamato is an aphrodisiac because of its miniscule clam content — a former marketer for Mott's told the *Wall Street Journal* that Clamato's purported sexiness was "engraved in the product" and "the first thing that comes out of" their focus group's minds — but I'll give my people the benefit of the doubt and think of them as being smarter than to believe that sipping tomato-and-clam juice will make their *pitos* harder and *panochas* tighter. Then again, Mexicans largely fueled the box-office smash *Beverly Hills Chihuahua*, so if any group can obsessively, stupidly gulp a beverage for restorative powers, it's Mexicans — and *gaba-chos* with their lattes.

iASK A MEXICAN CONTEST! Want a free copy of my latest book, *Orange County: A Personal History*, the finest book published in *los Estados Unidos* since last year's surprise smash, *iAsk a Mexican!*? First person from each paper I appear in (and the first five *fregonas* from ignorant backwaters that don't carry the Mexican) to send me a picture of themselves standing next to a stop sign with a bag of oranges or some type of fruit gets a copy. Make sure to sell those oranges while you're posing! Send pictures to the addresses below!

Ask the Mexican at themexican@askamexican.net or myspace.com/ocwab, or write to him via snail mail at: Gustavo Arellano, P.O. Box 1443, Anaheim, CA 92805!

Get all your Mexican fun at myspace.com/ocwab, youtube.com/askamexicano, or send your questions to themexican@askamexican.net!

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