

New Coke’s back: What other retro products do we need?

By Rex Crum
The (San Jose) Mercury News

If you hadn’t heard by now, New Coke is coming back. Yes, the version of Coke that the Coca-Cola Co. rolled out in 1985 that was intended to replace the flavor of the world’s most-favorite beverage — and which failed in spectacular, publicly humiliating fashion — returned last week.

Credit or blame Netflix if you want. New Coke’s re-birth is part of a promotion tied to the streaming giant’s series “Stranger Things.” The show’s upcoming third season takes place in 1985 and will show cans of New Coke in at least one episode. Don’t panic: Coke as you know it isn’t going away; New Coke is coming back for just a limited time.

Whether you liked it, hated it or if you were born any time in the past quarter-century and have never heard of it, New Coke is an example of nostalgia for times and things

gone by. And if New Coke — one of the biggest product flops of all time — can make a return, why can’t some other products or services come back?

These 10 things would make the world a better place if they returned:

Shag carpeting

We’re talking about the real deal — the stuff from the 1970s that covered the floor of your parents’ rec room and was deep enough for your foot to disappear into. You can probably feel your toes in it right now.

Swanson TV Dinners

Granted, these still exist today. But throwing a Hungry Man platter into the microwave for five minutes just isn’t the same. We’re talking the old-school TV dinner that came in an aluminum pan and took about 45 minutes to cook in an oven set at a tem-

perature just slightly below that of the surface of Venus. Bringing these back would make Salisbury steak night an event again.

McDonaldLand glasses

Back when the McDonald’s menu had about four items on it, you could get these glasses featuring characters such as Ronald McDonald, the Hamburger and Mayor McCheese for about a buck a piece. Forget those plastic Happy Meal toys that just end up rattling around your car’s floor — bring back Grimace in all his drinkware glory!

8-track tapes

If vinyl records can remain in vogue, why can’t the sandwich-size music-playing format that likely blasted Boston’s first album out the windows of your older brother’s Firebird back in the day? Speaking of your older brother’s car ...

Jim Rockford Firebird

“The Rockford Files” was one of the greatest TV shows of all time. (And if you think otherwise, I will fight you.) And nothing made that show so great like Jim Rockford’s gold Pontiac Firebird. And the Rockford U-Turn (pull up on the parking brake as you crank the steering wheel, then floor it in the opposite direction) remains a dream move for anyone who gets behind the wheel today.

Atari 2600 game console

Like the Swanson TV dinner, the Atari does exist today; you can buy retro consoles that are pre-loaded with 50 or so classic games like “Asteroids” and “Missile Command” and which plug into your TV. But it’s just not the same as the sound of plugging a “Space Invaders” cartridge into that classic console and blasting away from about a yard from the TV screen

while sitting on that shag carpet in your parents’ rec room.

Pro athlete candy bar

Reggie Jackson. Ken Griffey Jr. Kirby Puckett. These are all Baseball Hall of Famers who lent their names to candy bars at some time in the past. And each candy bar was a home run of fun and flavor! (Insert audible groan, if you must.) While you don’t see many — if any — pro athletes sponsoring candy these days, I’m pretty sure that a Steph Curry Three-Point Chocolate Bar would be a hit in the Bay Area.

Giant radios

We’re talking about the kind that were about 3 or 4 feet high, weighed what seemed like 800 pounds, and seemed to broadcast nothing except pure static as your grandparents or great-grandparents dialed in old radio

shows like “The Flash” and FDR’s Fireside Chats.

VCR

You might still even have one of these around your house because you have that one shelf full of VHS tapes that, for all you know, would still be racking up late fees if Blockbuster stores were still around.

Polyester leisure suits

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FOUL

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2. Put 1 tablespoon of the oil in large skillet over medium-high heat. When it begins to shimmer, add onion. Sauté until softened, about 3 minutes. Add garlic and cook 30 seconds. Stir in beans, cumin, tahini, the remaining 1 tablespoon of oil and water. Cover and simmer until beans are heated through, about 7 minutes. If pan starts to get dry, add a little more water.

3. Add lemon juice and cook uncovered 1 minute. Taste and season liberally with salt and pepper. Remove crushed garlic clove, if possible. Serve topped

with diced tomato and chopped parsley, with pita to scoop it all up.

PITA

Yield: 8 servings

2½ cups bread flour, approximately
2 teaspoons salt
1 tablespoon granulated sugar
2½ teaspoons (1 package) active dry yeast (not fast-rising)
2 tablespoons olive oil
1 cup hot water, 120 to 130 degrees

1. Measure 1 cup of the flour into the bowl of a stand mixer or

other large mixing bowl. Stir in the salt, sugar and yeast. Add the oil and hot water, and blend with a paddle attachment at low speed for 30 seconds before increasing to high for 3 minutes, or beat vigorously with a wooden spoon for 3½ minutes. Stir in the rest of the flour, ½ cup at a time. The dough should be a shaggy mass that will clear the sides of the bowl. If the dough is moist, add a small amount of additional flour.

2. Turn the dough onto a lightly floured work surface and knead for 6 minutes, or use a dough hook in the mixer for 6 minutes. The dough should be soft and slightly sticky; if it is too sticky, add a little more flour as you knead.

3. Preheat oven to 500 degrees. Divide the dough into 8 pieces. Roll into balls, cover with a towel or waxed paper, and let rest for 20 minutes.

4. With the palm of your hand, flatten each ball into a disk. Finish with a rolling pin, flattening the dough into a disk about 6 inches in diameter and 3/16 inches thick. Their thinness is more important than making them perfectly round; irregularity adds charm. Place each piece on a 7-inch square piece of aluminum foil; this will help them puff.

5. Place 2 or 3 of the breads with the foil directly on the oven rack. Bake for 7 to 8 minutes, or until they are puffed. Repeat with

the remaining disks.

6. Remove the breads from the oven and wrap in a large piece of foil. The tops will fall and there will be a pocket in the center. Serve warm, or let cool and freeze. Thaw before using. To reheat, stack several in a pile, wrap with foil and place in a 375-degree oven for 10 to 15 minutes.

ROSES

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A psittacina (A. pulchella) is 1-1/2 ft. tall, more or less evergreen, with dark red flowers tipped green and spotted deep purple. It can be invasive.

Best in cool, moist, deep, sandy to medium loam. Plant roots in fall; if you buy alstroemeria in gallon cans, you can plant it out an time in mild-winter climates. Set roots 6 to 8 inches deep, 1 foot apart; handle brittle roots gently. Leave clumps undisturbed for many years because they reestablish slowly after transplanting. Alstroemerias are

easily started from seed sown where plants are to grow or sown in individual pots for transplanting. Sow in fall, winter, or earliest spring. All are hardy in cold-winter climates if planted at proper depth and kept mulched in winter. Give them ample water in spring and summer; taper off in late summer, fall. Give partial shade in warm summer areas, sun along coast.

Definitely mulch in winter in this area.

GARDEN CHORES

- Mid to late May is the last opportunity to start pumpkins in time for Halloween.

- Prune spring-flowering shrubs like forsythia, viburnum, and lilac immediately after they bloom.
- Thin overloaded apple trees to prevent branches from breaking and to develop a higher quality harvest.
- Pinch back mums to promote bushy growth. Stop pinching them by July Fourth.
- Take house plants outdoors when nights remain above 50 degrees. Locate them where the only direct sunlight they receive is in the morning.

If you have garden comments or questions, please write: greengardencolumn@yahoo.com. Thanks for reading!

DORY

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Right there at that corner intersection is where the Whoopie Bump was located — but not for long until the city crews leveled it off. Over time it disappeared under the blade and now leaves no evidence of it ever being in existence.

I’m wondering if Fourth Street was paved at the point I remember or if it was still a dirt road, the Market Road coming off of C Avenue and Gekeler Lane and connecting with the New Town of La Grande to the north.

Back then we seldom rode

in cars, so it was rather an experience to be in one in the first place, so to hit the Whoopie Bump was frightening to the unexpectedness of the car occupant of which I was one.

I must have been around 10 years old, which places it in the 1930s, when an occasional adult driver gave a few of us Old Towners a ride home from school or New Town as the best way to describe it. On this day it was a young driver, high school or college age perhaps, who gave my older sister and I a ride home. Where he got the car I have no idea unless he needed one to go to work since most of us

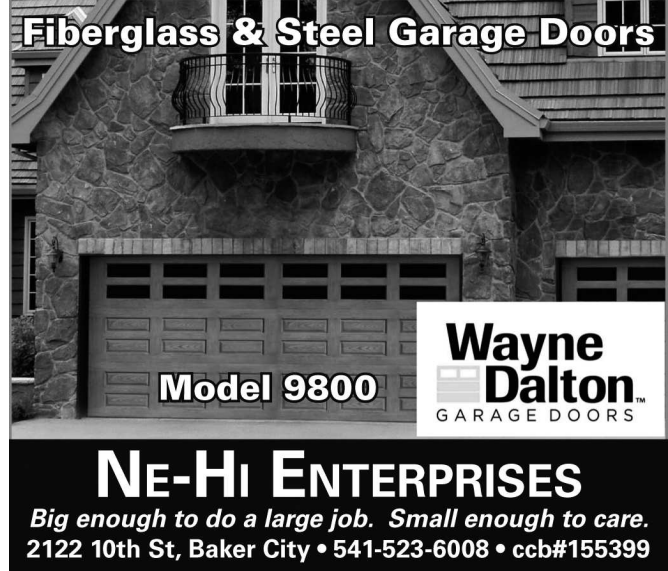
got around by walking. There was no parking lot at the high school for students. He drove up the Fourth Street hill and at the crest hit that bump a little fast, maybe 15 or 20 miles an hour, and jostled us into the air as he laughed and we shrieked in fear. He obviously had discovered the pleasure bump before.

Someone must have reported the fact discovered by other thrill seekers or was just in the line of duty, for it wasn’t

long until the bump was gone, smoothed over into oblivion by the city road crew.

It was enough of a frightening experience to me as a youngster to sear it into my memory.

Today I wonder if anyone else remembers the Whoopie Bump located at the intersection of Fourth Street and K Avenue between the St. Joseph Hospital and the graveled playground corner of the old Central School.



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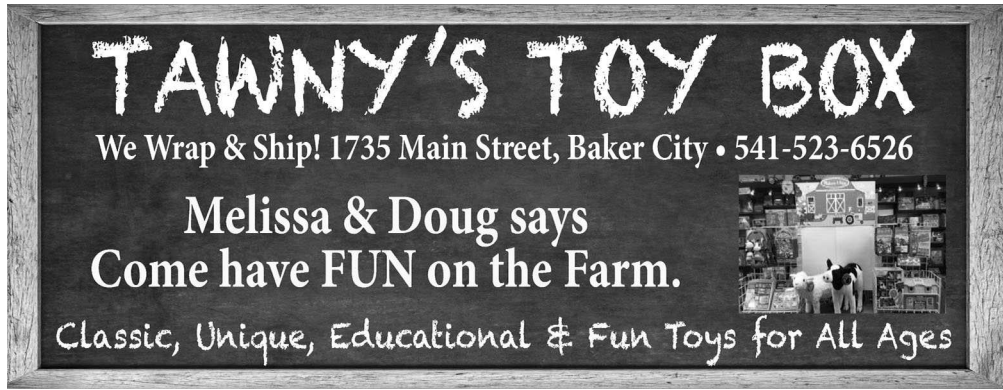
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