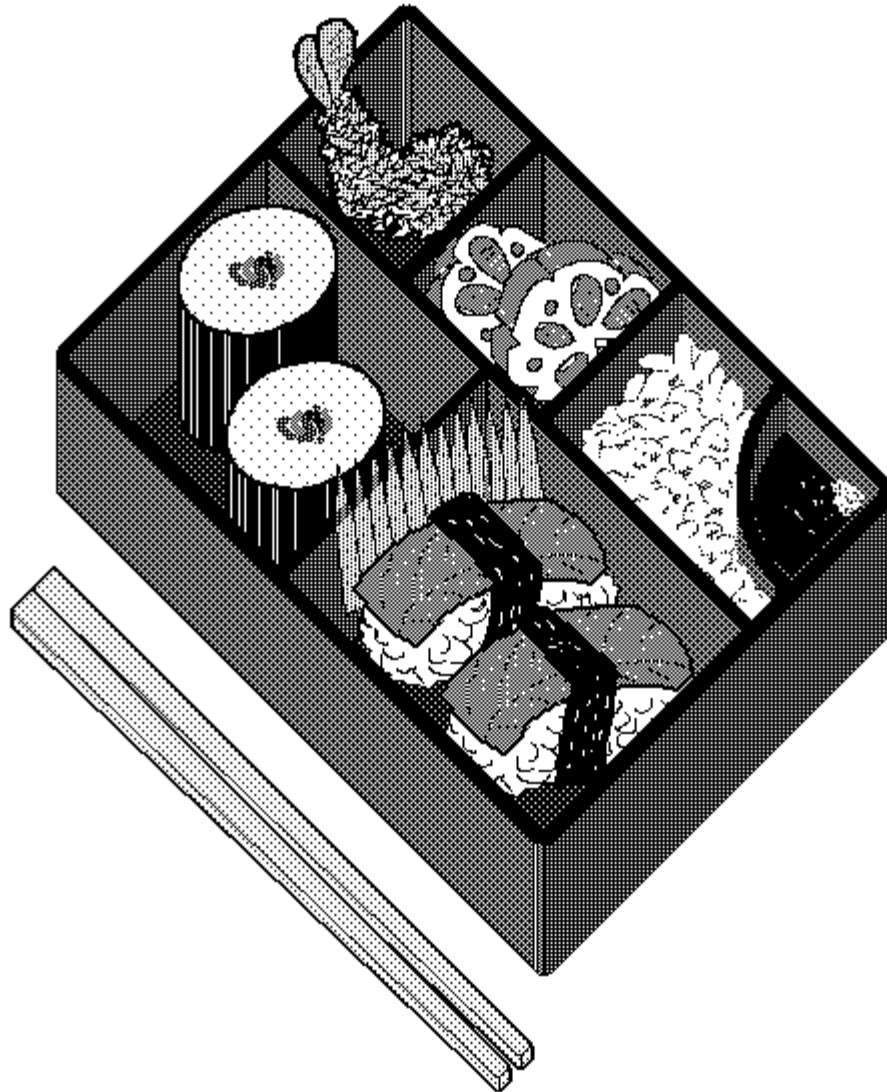


BENTŌ

A zine for Noreascon 3 by David Levine & Kate Yule



Why Such a Tiny Zine?

A week before the Worldcon, David said "It would be great if we had a zine we could trade to people." Wampum, as it were.

And here it is. Pocket-sized, so that we can hand it out at the convention like the Fanzine Fairy. Sure, it may get lost by the end of the con, but in the meantime you can stick it in your pocket and have something to read in line.

It's a one-shot; like it says on the cover, a Worldcon special. But we'll be back... hope you like it. Write and let us know!



Memorable Moments in Convention Dining

#1: Ralph the Chartreuse Heptopus

We first learned of bento, Japanese box lunches, at an incestuous little Darkover convention in Oakland. It was a *very* small convention; David amused himself by pointing people out at random and challenging me to identify their relationship to the Greyhaven household. "That's MZB's niece's babysitter," I would reply, partly smug, partly appalled that this kind of trivia was taking up houseroom in my brain.

In those days Jon DeCles (MZB's brother, married to...oh, never mind) could be found at various conventions reading from his work-in-progress, *The Piswyck Papers*. He'd developed quite a following, selling copies a chapter at a time to his loyal listeners on the grounds that if we didn't buy he might starve before finishing the next one. (Jon further explained that subscribing to an unpublished book was once a common custom in publishing. When the work was printed it was sent to the subscriber unbound, so that the subscriber could have it bound to match his or her library. Do you think I could have it done in DAW yellow?)

This reading was something special, perhaps to celebrate the fact that the book had just been bought by Ace. (It came out as *The Particolored Unicorn*.) He took a straw poll of likely attendees on Saturday, passed the hat, and sent someone over to "the City" Sunday morning for a dozen or two boxes of bento. They were stacked in a neat plastic pile at the back of the function room.

Each box was a complete little lunch with a neatness, a self-sufficiency, a unity-in-variety that seems typically Japanese. The foundation was rice. Scattered artfully on the rice: a bit of chicken, a bit of fish, some of that fluorescent yellow pickled radish, some of the pink stuff, some of the green stuff... A pair of chopsticks, a packet of soy sauce and a napkin were tucked into each box.

Jon read Chapter Four that day: "With the Black Elves on the High Seas in the Middle Days of Latter Earth". We heard the tale of Ralph, the giant chartreuse heptopus, and his attack on the elves' ocean-going orgy, as we sat picking with chopsticks at unidentifiable bits of vegetable matter and seafood. Ironic? Appropriate? Distracting? Of course. And lots of fun.

—KY

A Personal History of Breakfast Cereals

In their earliest days, cereal (the name comes from Ceres, goddess of the harvest) was a simple thing. There were only a few choices: oats or wheat, cooked or uncooked, whole-grain or selected portions. The first "modern" cereal was probably popcorn: a primitive form of Sugar Pops invented by the native Americans. They introduced it to the Pilgrims, who ate it with milk and sugar. I'm sure there were plenty of other significant events in the history of cereal before 1961, but that's where this story picks up again (after all, as they say, you should write about what you know).

In my early days, my preferred cereals tended to be heavily sugared: Frosted Flakes, Honeycomb, Trix, Sugar Pops, and Lucky Charms. Sugar Smacks. Froot Loops... I *loved* Froot Loops. Apple Jacks. Quisp and Quake. (Remember Quisp and Quake? Two "competitive" cereals from the same manufacturer, they were represented by a UFO spacenoid (Quisp) and a virile miner-type (Quake). Nascent SF fan that I was, I preferred the cerebral Quisp to the brawny Quake. Apparently I wasn't alone; despite a trip through the "new-and-improver" in the 1970s, Quake was eventually retired. Quisp followed him into oblivion a few years later. I wouldn't be surprised if these two supposedly-competitive cereals were really the same thing in two different boxes.)

My mother, of course, was appalled at my tastes (I'm appalled at them myself, today) and usually bought me unsugared cereals such as Cheerios and Rice Krispies. I retaliated by ladling about three spoonfuls of sugar on the top; this would invariably silt up on the bottom of the bowl, creating a sticky sludge that not even the cat would touch. Occasionally, as a special treat (or when I whined without surcease) she would give in and buy something with marshmallows.

But there was one line my mother absolutely would not cross: no chocolate at the breakfast table. No Cocoa Puffs; no Cocoa Krispies; no Count Chocula (this abomination was not only chocolate-flavored, it had chocolate-flavored marshmallows). I whined and begged; schemed and plotted; lied, cheated, and stole; but only rarely would I have the opportunity to taste this forbidden treat (usually out of those ridiculous little Kel-Bowl-Pacs in restaurants or at camp).

You know, even then I thought they tasted vile. Artificial chocolate flavor with a cloying aftertaste, and too sweet even for me. But it was the *principle* of the thing!

In the early '70s, my mother teamed up with the cereal scientists at Quaker Oats and General Mills in an attempt to sneak some vitamins into my morning. The first of these deceptive cereals was called Kaboom. This amazing oxymoron packed 100% of the MDR of 10 essential vitamins into brightly-colored smiley faces with star-shaped marshmallows. (MDR—Minimum Daily Requirement—was the unit of measurement for vitamins in those days. They keep changing the initials, but I've never seen an adequate explanation of where those numbers come from. Do they deprive people of all but a few carefully-measured milligrams of, say, Vitamin B, and see whether or not they die?) Despite the vitamins, Kaboom still was packed with sugar—all those colors ran together into a greyish sugar sludge at the bottom of the bowl. Still, I ate it, and my mother bought it so that I would at least get some vitamins with my morning sugar rush. (As Calvin said, "No brothers or sisters *so far!*") Apparently, though, it was a marketing failure; you don't see Kaboom on the shelves any more.

Another 100%-vitamin cereal (and eventual marketing casualty) was King Vitaman. This vitamin-fortified derivative of Captain Crunch shared with its brand-mate an aggressive crunch that could destroy gum tissue at fifty yards. (I still don't know how they make Captain Crunch stay so crunchy in milk; I suspect it is plastic-coated.) Still, King Vitaman holds a special place in my heart for the King Vitaman Hologram Ring I got for \$2.00 and three box tops. It has a *real* hologram on top; it's still one of my most treasured cereal premiums... but that's a subject for another essay.



You don't see those heavily-sugared cereals as much any more. Current theories of what's healthy to eat (and they do change over time... read *Perfection Salad*, the story of the Domestic Science movement, for some fascinating history on this) state that Sugar Is Bad For You, and not even 100% vitamins can overcome that. Naturally, the manufacturers have taken the sugar out... of the cereals' *names*. Sugar Smacks have become Honey Smacks. Sugar Crisp (which became Super Sugar Crisp in the late '70s) has become Super Golden Crisp; Sugar Bear, who represented Sugar Crisp for years, has vanished completely. Sugar Pops became Sugar Corn Pops and then just Corn Pops. As far as I can tell, the formulas have not changed one iota; most of these cereals still list sugar as the first ingredient, and in some of them it's also the second, third, and fourth (in various forms such as dextrose, corn syrup solids, and brown sugar). I've been appalled by what I've found since I learned to read the labels on what I eat.

Lucky Charms is still there. Amazingly, now it has even *more* marshmallows. When I was a kid, Lucky Charms had yellow moons, green clovers, pink hearts, and orange stars (Mogen Davids, no less. I wonder why?). They've been adding marshmallows at regular intervals since then; now it also has blue diamonds, purple horseshoes, and red balloons (which look to me like bloated little fish). How this cereal survives in the yuppie, health-conscious '80s is beyond me.

I still eat cereal for breakfast most mornings. Of course, it's not Lucky Charms; it's Grape-Nuts, Cheerios, Wheaties, Bran Flakes. 2% milk; no sugar on top. One of my favorites is Grape-Nuts in yogurt (active cultures, of course). Still, down in my heart of hearts, something cries for the Froot Loops in the cereal aisle.

I read the label and tell it to be quiet.

—DDL

Memorable Moments in Convention Dining

#2: In the Lobby of the Hotel Metropole

Have you ever met Jon Singer? There's a good chance you know him without being able to remember when you first met. That's his secret, I think: he greets everyone, even total strangers, like long-lost friends—and he's so sincere he makes them believe it.

We saw this in action while we were trying to gather critical mass for dinner at Brighton one night. Jon was interested but had to find someone for some reason...so we planted ourselves in the middle of the Metropole lobby and watched the world flow by. It seemed Jon knew every one of them by name! "Julie! How are you! Good to see you!"—and if Julie hadn't known Jon before (occasionally someone looked a little puzzled), she would next time. If Isaac Asimov had gone through that lobby, it would have been "Isaac! Great to see you! How was the flight?"

We'd been hoping for dinner, of course, but the floor show was fascinating. When we mentioned hunger, Jon pulled out a bunch of dwarf bananas that looked like nothing so much as a midget's fist. A pudgy, jaundiced midget. He'd bought them in a Chinatown produce market in London that morning.

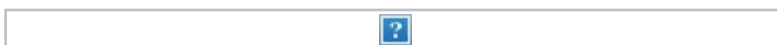
He invited Anne McCaffrey to dinner...she had plans, as did Bertie MacAvoy...Amy Thompson had just had high tea and was off in search of a comfy chair to collapse into. We offered a dwarf thumb to a restive baby Bear, and chatted with his mother Astrid.

I know, there's names dropped all over the floor here. That's just how it was!

After a while, Donya White came up to Jon. She rubbed up against him seductively and murmured, "*We're* having Indian tonight...." I immediately tugged on her sleeve and said "Oh, can we, can we, huh, can we puleeeze!!" She looked at me, and just said "Enthusiasm...I like that in a person."

That was how we met Donya, and went on to have a marvelous Indian meal, complete with nagging about which hand to eat it with. But the meal itself pales in memory next to the time spent in the lobby of the Hotel Metropole with Jon Singer and his midget bananas.

—KY



"What's this stuff in my soup, Charlie Brown?"

—Peanuts in world cuisine

I understand that North America and Australia (home of vegemite: it figures) are the only two places in the world where peanut butter is eaten "straight". And that's almost the *only* way we eat it. Despite the many uses discovered by George Washington Carver at Tuskegee (some edible, some not), peanut butter occupies a very limited niche in American cuisine. It's a fun food, a children's food, a snack. Peanut butter comes straight out of the jar onto celery sticks, apple slices, spoons, fingers. Its natural habitat is the school lunchbox. When we do bake with it, we make cookies.

Whole peanuts are also recreational food in this country. Think about it: where do they belong? At baseball games; in bars, alcoholic and candy; in backpacker's gorp; and in vending machines at the zoo, where we feed them to elephants.

"Was GWC remembering something passed on to him in stories from fellow blacks?" I wondered. For the Africans do use peanuts as real food, adult food. Peanut butter is a tasty, nutritious thickener for many African soups and stews.

Ah, but this is a tricky hypothesis. Food can fool you. Think of classic Italian cuisine....Now remember that the tomato is a new world vegetable. Columbus would not have known what to make of spaghetti bolognese.

A moment's research in Powell's Cookbook Store reveals that the peanut originated in South America. It only came to Africa with Portuguese slavers, who planted peanuts there to feed their cargo before embarkation. Africa had similar plant(s)—we get the word "goober" from an African word "nguba"—but not peanuts, not *originally*.

So now I wonder if the Indonesians had another native product that they used in thick tasty sate sauces before the peanut came along, or did that dish have to wait? The Portuguese and Spanish were responsible for the peanut's introduction into that part of the world as well.

The Chinese picked it up from there: in stir-frys like Kung Pao Chicken (and David's variant, Nerve Gas Chicken—fling wide the windows!!). Peanuts are scattered on top of Phad Thai, the national noodle dish of Thailand.

Other cultures wouldn't touch peanut butter with a ten-foot spoon. Germany, for example. Sweetened hazelnut paste with chocolate, yes (David's mother would ban it from the breakfast table), but peanut butter they considered barbaric. When I lived in Munich, we had to import it from Holland whenever someone went up there. (Holland—as in the Dutch East Indies. Rijstafel restaurants in Amsterdam are the last lingering evidence of empire.)

All in all, this tale of the wandering peanut reminds me of nothing so much as what is now happening with baseball. I read in the paper the other day that baseball is being introduced into Russia...*by the Japanese*. What will it be like, I wonder, if it ever comes back to us across the Atlantic, and where will it have been?

—KY

P.S. Our favorite peanut dish—perhaps our favorite dish of all—is Broccoli and Tofu in Spicy Peanut Sauce, adapted from the Broccoli Forest Cookbook. There isn't room to plagiarize it here, but I'd be glad to send a copy to anyone who asks.

Apple Maggot Quarantine Song

If you've ever driven in Western Washington, you've seen the highway signs. Now sing along!

We learned this round from Jon Singer and Amy Thomson over venison Hunan style one night. It's an ideal example of a meme: an idea that, once transmitted to you, insists on being transmitted further. (Here: catch!) I've heard at least one differing melody—the filk process in action. We don't remember who originated this one; it's transcribed from memory and used entirely without permission.

—KY

1. 2.

Ap-ple Mag-got Quar-an-tine A-re-a

3. 4.

Do not trans-port home-grown fruit

Memorable Moments in Convention Dining

#3: Waiting for the Fried Bananas

It was the week before the Brighton Worldcon. Four Portland fans (Paul Wrigley, Debbie Cross, Kate, and myself), hungry and footsore after a day shopping the bookstores of Charing Cross Road in the pouring rain, squelched into a restaurant in London's Chinatown. We had plenty of time before the theatre, and looked forward to a relaxed meal. We

didn't realize we'd just squelched into the Twilight Zone.

The meal was quite nice and passed in pleasantries and travel stories, but things started to get interesting when the well-dressed young man at the table next to us (who had single-handedly finished off a staggering amount of food) tried to pay his bill with a check. Unfortunately, he had no check ID card. This caused our hostess, a tiny Chinese lady with a distinctive clipped Chinese-English accent, to become somewhat irate.

"Where you get this check!?" she shouted. "You no have ID card, you no use check! Where you get this check? This a stolen check! A stooo-len check!!" She became shriller and shriller, demanding ID or cash. Displaying an amazing amount of cool, the young man just said "I've got 12p" (about 25 cents) and continued to present his check. The hostess threatened to call the police.

None of us knew quite how to react. Understand, this was taking place in a restaurant about the size of our living room; the young man with the stooo-len check was about five feet from me, and this tiny Chinese woman (who had been a most polite host up to this moment) was screaming at him at top volume. She was amazingly intimidating for someone so diminutive.

Eventually, the young man produced his British passport, and that was enough to convince our hostess to accept his check, although she continued to glare at him until he was out of sight. We all heaved a sigh of relief and asked for the dessert menu.

It was your typical Chinese dessert menu: lychee nuts, ice cream, or fried bananas. We still had plenty of time before curtain, so we decided on the fried bananas. This decision was to prove our undoing.

We waited patiently for the bananas to arrive. After a while, the wait started to seem a little long, but nobody wanted to perturb our hostess after seeing her in action. After a while she came by and asked how everything was, and we volunteered timidly that our fried bananas had not yet arrived. She smiled graciously and told us that she would check on them, then turned around and stepped into the kitchen (a journey of about two feet). Moments later, we heard a torrent of high-pitched rapid-fire Chinese curses from the kitchen, accompanied by a clattering of woks. Our smiling hostess then returned and told us that the fried bananas would be forthcoming shortly.

Ten more minutes went by. Still no fried bananas. Again our hostess called on our table, and this time joked that "Oh, they must be growing the bananas for you" before turning around and unleashing a beam of Chinese invective into the kitchen that would surely have been fatal to any hearer unprotected by ignorance of Chinese.

By this time, we were tempted to cancel our order. If the bananas were delayed much further, we would miss our play... but nobody was willing to risk offending our hostess. We had visions of her chasing us into the street, waving a cleaver and shouting "You order bananas, you pay for bananas!!"

Eventually, after several more Jekyll-Hyde performances, the bananas arrived. We ate them quickly (they were delicious, actually), paid promptly, and left. We just made the curtain for *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead*; a proper culmination for an evening of absurdist spectacle.

—DDL

David Versus The Glob

The other day Kate and I defrosted the refrigerator. Yes, I said "refrigerator," not "freezer." Our refrigerator frosts up even faster than the freezer; this time we'd let it go to the point that there was a glob of solid ice the size of Rhode Island threatening to envelop the ketchup completely. So we had to empty out the fridge and freezer into boxes lined with towels (Kate's discovered that this is a perfectly adequate substitute for an ice chest) and let them thaw out.

Sounds pretty simple, right? Well, as we were emptying the fridge, we noticed that some of the contents were trying to crawl away. Upon closer inspection (but not too close), we discovered that exotic species of low-temperature fungus,

never before encountered by Science, had mysteriously replaced last month's leftover lasagne. (You may laugh, but I'll bet you don't know what lurks at the back of *your* vegetable bin.)

OK, so our refrigerator had been invaded by alien life forms. We launched an immediate search-and-destroy mission and wound up with several Nancy's Yogurt Containers full of prisoners of war. Fortunately, mold is not signatory to the Geneva Convention, so we resolved to dispose of the prisoners immediately. I decided to play Man Of The House and assigned myself the onerous task of said disposal.

Unfortunately, the prisoners rebelled. After a tremendous struggle, I did get every single disgusting glob down the toilet, but something (I suspect the former fried rice) decided that if it was going to go, it would take the entire apartment building with it. And, had it not been for Kate's quick action with the paper towels, it might well have succeeded. The rush of water across the bathroom floor from the blocked commode was stanching mere inches from the hall carpet.

So, taking rags, sponges, and plunger in hand, I dove ever deeper (ick) into the role of Man Of The House. I'll omit the gory details, but eventually I did unblock the Bathroom Bowl, clean the floor, and dispose of a huge bag of extremely damp paper towels. Having spent the most time in the closest proximity to the Unnamable Convenience that I care to recall, I could not fail to notice that it was in need of cleaning. So I did. Finally, I congratulated myself on a Job Well Done and mentally awarded myself the Gratuitous Service Cross with Bay-Leaf Cluster.

During this time, Kate had been cleaning the refrigerator shelves of years of accumulated grunge. And yet, in all this time, the refrigerator had not cleared itself of its burden of ice. (Although The Glob *had* reduced to the point that I was prepared to declare that the vague shape within was not, as I had first surmised, a woolly mammoth. Perhaps it was the bottle of hoisin sauce that we had been unable to locate since last February.) We tried warming The Glob with hairdryers, but the work soon revealed itself to be both unproductive and possibly dangerous. "WARNING", it said on the hairdryer, "DO NOT USE ANYWHERE NEAR WATER." And The Glob, possibly out of a sense of murderous self-preservation, kept threatening to drip on us.

Then I noticed how very quickly the ice from the freezer (which had quite cooperatively defrosted itself early in the process) melted when placed in the sink and doused with hot water. We sat around for a while muttering "Gee, if only we had some sort of hose." Suddenly, we remembered a useless item we had lying around: a sort of miniature indoor garden hose with a pistol grip on the business end (originally intended for watering houseplants). Quickly, we grabbed the device and attacked The Glob with a thin stream of warm water. The results were most satisfying; I felt like I was cutting through the hull of an unidentified alien artifact with a laser. Soon we were able to carry off The Glob, in pieces, for proper disposal (as I recall, the U.S. Army dropped it by parachute over the Arctic).

After that, we made dinner from The Zucchini That Time Forgot. But that's another story.

—DDL

Why You Got This Zine

- we ran into you in the Concourse
- we ran into you in Programming
- we ran into you in the Huckster Room
- we were lost when we ran into you
- we want your zine
- you are mentioned within
- we owed you one
- we met you at Corflu last year
- large conventions attract pickpockets
- nepotism
- other _____

Two SNF's, experienced in AP Ae and concons, seek fanzine fans for fun, broader horizons, mutual egoboo. We enjoy cooking, MacHacking, languages, trivia, language trivia, Japanimation, women's issues, and Dave Barry. We look forward to your humor, travelzines, fan history, and tales of hobbies/jobs/relatives/what real people do all day. Looking for meaningful long-term subscriptions but irregular/one-shots welcome. Correct use of apostrophes a must. Send loc or tradezine to: [KATE YULE](#) AND [DAVID LEVINE](#).