



**Your on the
Street Reporter**



Uyless Black

Krafting a Food that has no Food

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The problem with cheap food is that it's cheaply made.

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There has been considerable news about the presence of *E. Coli* in the lettuce of tacos at several Taco Bells. The food experts also advised the public to forego buying suspect lettuce from grocery stores until the problem had been sorted-out and solved.

I like fast food, especially fast-Mexican food. So as an interim measure, I opted for a Mexican-associated guacamole dip, also available at grocery stores. The avocado fruit in this dip is tasty and healthful. According to the encyclopedia, it is rich in protein and oil.

The good news: As of this writing, grocery store guacamole dip does not contain *E. Coli*: The bad news: As of this writing, grocery store guacamole dip contains almost no avocado. The focus of attention is the venerated Kraft Foods Company. According to an article in *The Economist*, its guacamole product contains less than 2% avocado.¹

A good guacamole is made of mashed avocado, blended with small amounts of lemon juice, cilantro, olive oil, jalapeno peppers, onions, tomatoes, and salt. These mixes should reflect a ratio of 20% of these ingredients to 80% avocado. I speak from authority. I am a guacamole chef of the highest rating. Make it six stars.

Kraft's recipe is an example of The Disproportionate Ratio in action: The ratio of n to m, where the value of n is small and the value of m is large. In this example, the ratio is 2% avocado to 98% food starch, oil, dye, corn syrup, and other delights. I'd wager my last Taco Bell taco that this ratio is disproportionate.

About that dye. The guacamole dip we buy in the store is green, but the color does not come from just the lovely avocado fruit. It also comes from dye. That should be no surprise. Much of the food we buy from a supermarket has been colored in some fashion.

And of course, embellished with ubiquitous corn: "Hey, Bubba, hand me a corn chip for my starch, oil, dye, and corn syrup dip."

Corn is found in thousands of commercial food products. Thanks to the government's huge subsidies for growing it. Farmers look for something to do with all their corn, which is another example of the Law of the Instrument, exemplified by the child who picks up a hammer and looks for something to pound.

"Hey, Bubba, I've got 20 silos of excess corn. Can't sell any more to the cereal industry. I gotta' do something with it."

"No problem, Harold, corn fits real good into paint, paper products, cosmetics, tires, fuel, plastics, textiles, explosives, and wallboard."²

Which brings us to our popular limericks and ditties about an issue. A noted balladeer, identified in previous reports, has composed verse about this problem. He named it "The Saga of Kraft's Craft." Take it away, Bob!

¹ "Hold the Avocado," *The Economist*, December 16, 2006, 30.

² "Hold the Avocado," <http://www.csmonitor.com/2002/1031/p17s01-lihc.html>.

Strum, strum, strum...
*There is a food firm named Kraft,
who assumes its customers are daft.
It sells guacamole,
which is almost solely
sorcery from mad chemists' craft.*

Well done, Bob. Last year, Brenda Lifsey of Los Angeles bought guacamole made by Kraft Foods. She didn't like it.³ So what did she do? She read the label! She took the time to learn what she was putting into her mouth---after the fact of course, but better late than never. Go ahead Robert, fill us in.

Strum, strum, strum...
*We know avocado's a fruit,
which is leading to gigantic lawsuits.*

Thanks, Robert. Yep, Ms. Lifsey is considering suing Kraft Foods for...well what? From what I can determine from the article in *The Economist*: for truth in advertising. She discovered what she was eating because Kraft Food's so-informed her.

Strum, strum, strum...
*The Kraft folks say their recipe's a hoot!
While they continue to rake-in the loot.*

Bob, that's a protest song if I've ever heard one. But enough. I'm trying to do a report here. I don't need any more folk music. You can come back later and finish-off your song as well as Kraft Foods.

If the adage, "We are what we eat." is true, then we modern consumers are made up of a lot of artificial chemicals. Artificial, in the sense that Mother Nature did not concoct them in the noble forest of nature's laboratory. They were concocted inside a chemist's lab.

Well, why not? If a 2% solution guacamole is tasty and not harmful to our innards, so what?

I've a problem with a 2% solution: If the label on a Kraft's product states it is guacamole, then I expect to buy and consume mashed or pureed avocado. I don't expect to ingest corn syrup and other chemical concoctions.

Dream-on Uyless. You're living in La La Land. Over the last few decades, you and other consumers have let the fox into the kitchen and that fox is not leaving. You wanted cheap food, you got it. Cheap food needs a long shelf life. It must be easily transported from the food factory to the food store. To be sold, it must look attractive. It must be made in gigantic batches to achieve economies of scale.

Miss Hill's Corner Grocery---the one selling natural, non-chemist stuff, including guacamole with more than a bacterial trace of avocado in it---is history. Sure, affluent consumers can find and purchase so-called natural products, and of course, guacamole dip with more

³ Ibid.

avocados is available. But Joe and Josephine Citizen cannot afford to buy these foods. They're stuck with chemical goos containing more corn and other tidbits than the supposed major ingredient. Thousands of food products follow this model, taking on names designed to fool the consumer into buying. Euphemisms are used to disguise the contents of the product.

Let's return to the question: Are we what we eat? To pursue this subject, I logged onto KraftFood.com, where I found an advertisement for their guacamole dip product. The container is shown in Figure 1. The label states the package contains 8 oz. of guacamole.



Figure 1. Kraft Foods Guacamole Dip.

Eight ounces? Let's see. Kraft Foods' Web page provides a list of the ingredients in Dips Guacamole⁴:

Ingredients: WATER, PARTIALLY HYDROGENATED COCONUT AND SOYBEAN OIL, CORN SYRUP, WHEY PROTEIN CONCENTRATE (FROM MILK), FOOD STARCH MODIFIED, **CONTAINS LESS THAN 2%** OF POTATOES, SALT, **AVOCADO**, DEFATTED SOY FLOUR, MONOSODIUM GLUTAMATE, TOMATOES, SODIUM CASEINATE, VINEGAR, LACTIC ACID, ONIONS, PARTIALLY HYDROGENATED SOYBEAN OIL, GELATIN, XANTHAN GUM, CAROB BEAN GUM, MONO- AND DIGLYCERIDES, SPICE, WITH SODIUM BENZOATE AND POTASSIUM SORBATE AS PRESERVATIVES, GARLIC, SODIUM PHOSPHATE, CITRIC ACID, YELLOW 6, YELLOW 5, ARTIFICIAL FLAVOR, BLUE 1, ARTIFICIAL COLOR.

There it is, in plain English, "**Contains less than 2% of...**" Wait one moment. The label does not state the product contains 2% of avocado, it states *less than 2%*. Wait another moment. The label actually states (I will enlarge the relevant text to help you read it): "...CONTAINS LESS THAN 2% OF POTATOES, SALT, AVOCADO, DEFATTED SOY FLOUR, MONOSODIUM GLUTAMATE, TOMATOES, SODIUM CASEINATE, VINEGAR, LACTIC ACID, ONIONS, PARTIALLY HYDROGENATED SOYBEAN OIL, GELATIN, XANTHAN GUM, CAROB BEAN GUM, MONO- AND DIGLYCERIDES, SPICE, WITH SODIUM BENZOATE AND POTASSIUM SORBATE AS PRESERVATIVES, GARLIC, SODIUM PHOSPHATE, CITRIC ACID, YELLOW 6, YELLOW 5, ARTIFICIAL FLAVOR, BLUE 1, ARTIFICIAL COLOR."

Ms. Lifsey, you may have been taken to the cleaners even more than you thought. You read the label, but you did not read the label. The label states the product contains less than 2% of avocado and the other ingredients that follow the clause, "contains less than 2% ". Read this way, the 2% might be spread across *all* these ingredients, all added-up to equal less than 2%.

⁴ My grocery store does not stock this product, so I don't know if all this information is on this small tub. But it is on the Kraft website.

"Less than 2%." This phrase means the presence of avocado in the Kraft Foods product could range from 1.99% of the overall ingredients all the way down to 0.01%. After all, "less than" means just that, "less than."

Readers, what do you think? Do you believe Kraft Foods' label writers don't understand the use of *periods and commas* in sentences, or the meaning of "less than"?⁵ That this label was written on the fly? That the company does not understand the nuances of grammar? If you do, I've got an 8 oz. tub of guacamole dip I'd like to sell you.

It's smoke and mirrors. Not to mention chemicals and compounds.⁶ Culinary snake oil at its highest.

Avocado, Mother Nature's Protein and Oil

This investigation becomes even more of a downer when we examine the sustenance values of the product. It is baffling how the Kraft alchemists manage to remove the nutritional ingredients from the avocado, yet preserve, so to speak, the fat and calories. Consider Kraft Food's guacamole 8 oz. wonder:

Calories: 350
Total fat: 4.5 g
Saturate fat: 2.5 g
Fiber none
Vitamin A none
Vitamin C none
Calcium none
Iron none

What's the answer to this problem? Let's take a poll, shown in the table below. Send-in your answers, and I'll publish them (without your names, unless you are trying to become famous).

Given my libertarian bent, one who likes government out of my life, you might think I would have answered no to questions 1 and 2. But I answered yes. And therein lies my (and our) problem. If we answer yes to these questions, we find ourselves on the slippery slope to yet more big government, as suggested in questions 3 - 6. Think of the overhead to manage the relationships of thousands of products' contents and their names---in relation to the truth. More taxes for sure.

Question	Type of response requested
1. Should companies be required to tell people what they are eating?	Yes/no.
2. Should the name of the product reflect its contents?	Yes/no.
3. If your answered yes to question 2, by what ratio? (note 1)	A number between 1 - 100.
4. If your answered yes to question 3, how many laws must be written?	A number between 1 - infinity.
5. How many new government agencies will be needed to enforce the laws?	A number between 1 - infinity.
6. How many new government employees will be needed to misinterpret the laws?	A number between 1 - infinity.

Note 1: For those having difficulty coming up with a number, think along these lines: At what point does guacamole stop being guacamole and become a dyed mucilage of exotic lab-made chemicals?

⁵ The convoluted sentence may claim the product contains less than 2% of avocado, less than 2% potatoes, less than 2% tomatoes, and so on. From my reading, the ingredients clause can have more than one meaning.

⁶See the sidebar at the end of this report for a fine example of modern day commercial cooking.

I am paid to come up with solutions in these reports, which is the reason I have never received a check. Anyway, I have a proposal: Pass a law requiring the food manufacturer to place a warning label on the product, "**Eating this food provides no nourishment.**" Then, as more research reveals some of the ingredients are toxic, "**Eating this food is hazardous to your health.**" Followed by a list of possible side effects, (*E. Coli*, hives, sores, diarrhea, loss of hair, etc.). Similar to the labels on medicine bottles.

You're welcome. It's my job. (Send taxable contributions to "Crusade for Consumables that Are Actually Consumable," in care of me.)

We are what we eat? Let's hope not. If we are, we are in trouble. And we *are* in trouble. Look around you at your fellow citizens. Walking repositories of adipose tissue. Ambulatory fat factories. A fantastic boom in the oversize clothing industry. Courtesy of cornstarch, corn syrup, and corn subsidies.

I promised Bob D another shot at the subject with his protest song. OK, Robert, finish it off.

Strum, strum, strum... ♪♪♪♪

The Kraft chemists will ply their witchcraft.

While their customers are left with the shaft.

Two percent? It is fruit.

And the rest? It is moot!

to the fine food factory called Kraft.

Sidebar: Explanation of What We Are⁷

Ingredients of Kraft's Craft:

WATER: No surprise here. Most things have water in them.

PARTIALLY HYDROGENATED COCONUT AND SOYBEAN OIL: Addition of hydrogen to these oils to make them more flammable.

CORN SYRUP: Used to replace sugar as a sweetener. Made from cornstarch (read on).

CORNSTARCH: Starchy flour made from corn. An essential component to an unhealthy diet.

WHEY PROTEIN CONCENTRATE: Watery part of curdled milk

FOOD STARCH MODIFIED: Composed of chains of glucose units. More sweeteners; just what we need.

POTATOES: Potatoes? In guacamole? Sacrilege! What happened to the avocados?

SALT: To counter the corn syrup.

AVOCADO: Ah, there it is, and the proper description should be, "Contains less than 2% of one free electron from an avocado atom."

DEFATTED SOY FLOUR: Defatted is good.

MONOSODIUM GLUTAMATE: A sodium salt of glutamic acid (read on).

GLUTAMIC ACID: An amino acid that triggers nerve impulses in cells. Used in this product to simulate Mexican-like spiciness by triggering chemical firings on the tongue.

TOMATOES: Good, but are they home-grown?

SODIUM CASEINATE: Compound of casein and calcium or sodium (read on).

CASEIN: One of a group of proteins used in plastics, adhesives, paints, and guacamole dip.

VINEGAR: To counter the corn syrup.

LACTIC ACID: A colorless organic acid produced by muscles. Used in dyeing, adhesives, pharmaceuticals, and guacamole.

ONIONS: Sorely needed.

PARTIALLY HYDROGENATED SOYBEAN OIL: Like the coconut and soybean oil above, this oil has a smattering of hydrogen in it. Thus, it is only partially flammable. Partnering with Glutamic Acid, this is how the Mexican dish gets its heat.

GELATIN: A transparent protein material made from boiling animal hides, bone, and cartilage that forms a firm gel when mixed with water. Used in medicine, glue, photography, and guacamole dip.

XANTHAN GUM: A natural gum with a high molecular weight. Derived from the bacterial fermentation of glucose. Helps to adhere the guacamole onto the corn chip as it is lifted into your mouth.

CAROB BEAN GUM: Made from the seeds and pods of an evergreen tree. Cool!

MONO- AND DIGLYCERIDES: An ester formed by the combination of glycerol with an acid. Source: animal and vegetable fats and oils (read on).

ESTER: An organic, often fragrant compound formed in a reaction between an acid and an alcohol with the elimination of water. Its fragrancy is important to guacamole's smell.

SPICE: What kind? Pepper? Ginger? Nutmeg? Spice is important to Mexican food, yet Kraft Foods chooses to be generic. What's going on? Why be specific in this list and then so general?

SODIUM BENZOATE: A white crystalline powder. **AND POTASSIUM SORBATE:** A potassium sorbet...Eh sorry, that's sorbate, to which I am ignorant, as is the encyclopedia, thus making these ingredients even more mysterious.

GARLIC: Thank God. Along with the smattering of onion, something to repress the odors and tastes of these chemicals.

SODIUM PHOSPHATE: A sodium salt of phosphoric acid. Used for medical preparations, cleaning agents and guacamole.

CITRIC ACID: From citrus fruits. This is a good idea, especially if the acid is from a lemon, which can enhance the taste of a paste containing...oh say, gelatin, Sodium Benzoate, and Potassium Sorbate.

YELLOW 6, YELLOW 5, ARTIFICIAL FLAVOR, BLUE 1, ARTIFICIAL COLOR: For more information, go to the RIT dye counter in your store.

⁷ The make- up and functions of these ingredients are sourced from Microsoft's Dictionary and Microsoft's Encarta Encyclopedia (all rights reserved), with some embellishments in bold text from your Reporter