



**Your on the
Street Reporter**



Uyless Black

Nacho Cheese Dip Quips

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Hello. It's been a while since I wrote about the dangers of eating. I have a sound excuse: I've been too busy eating to write about eating.

Last night, I rewarded myself for not eating nacho cheese dip and chips last week when Holly and I were attending a movie. As I passed by the concession stand at the movie theater, I was drawn to the smells wafting from a huge vat of hot, bubbling cheese. But I resisted the melted delicacy. Instead, I compensated by buying a bag of popcorn---as I watched the fast-food attendant pour several ounces of melted butter onto my purchase.

While eating the popcorn and watching the movie, I could not escape the fact that I had escaped one sure-fire recipe for a heart-attack but succumbed to another. I said to myself, "If you're going to eat heart attack food, for god's sake, don't do it with a second string player. Go for the cheese and chips!"

Oh yes, about that reward. Last night, I gorged-down on nacho dip and Fritos while watching the Golden State Warriors disassemble the injury-ridden San Antonio Spurs. Being of Texas roots, I drowned my sorrow in liquid cheese.

Some of my friends are health nuts, but even they admit they succumb on occasion to the savoring of nacho cheese dip and chips. One day, a buddy and I were talking about our favorite forbidden food. He said he was a closet nacho cheese dip eater. He came out in the open when his wife was out of the house. I asked him where he hid his nacho cheese. He said in the broom closet, where it was safe from his wife's prying eyes. He also said he did the dishes and laundry. Such is the life of modern husbands.

I asked him if his nacho cheese dip might be safer hidden in his workshop. "Naw," he responded, "My wife does all the home repairs." He also said she changed the oil and tires on her Dodge Ram pickup. Such is the life of modern wives.



Aside from modern domestic protocols, who can resist hot, liquid cheddar cheese, poured onto chips, perhaps sprinkled with hamburger meat? Consider the example on the left.¹ Send in your yeas or nays to my question, addressed to www.Botulism_Nacho_Cheese.com. Botulism? Read on:

Life and nacho cheese dip have their ups and downs. Recently, a person died from eating nacho cheese dip that was fortified with a bacteria that causes *botulism*. Others who shared the same vat of the stuff were hospitalized. One person was in intensive care for three weeks. Talk about indigestion.

Research Findings

As these essays are serious research articles---and I have a bridge in Brooklyn I would like to sell you---I am obligated to provide the results of my findings on the origins of nacho cheese dip. According to Google, a company that knows everything about everybody, here is a brief historical sketch, with my research-laden additions:

¹ Thanks to Google, who is said to have snapped this shot as they went through a neighborhood capturing the eating habits of every citizen in America.

In the 1970s, San Antonio-based Ricos Products marketed a liquid cheddar cheese sauce for chips, which became a popular American method for inducing heart attacks and brain strokes. Prior to this event, Latinos came up with the idea of melting cheddar or Monterey Jack cheese onto Jalapeno peppers, gulped down with the aid of baked tortillas and washed down with Dos Equis beer.

The dish is popular among America's yuppie set because its origins are traced to a country besides America. These folks do not buy anything made in the USA. They think such purchases would be un-American in that "buying America's products" would not help the low-waged proletariats in Mexico, and especially in China. Meanwhile, China is eating America's lunch.



Anyway, for this specific calamity, lucky I was not on the road with my Traveling America series and had not stopped at a gas station near Sacramento, California---a frequent area of my visits. The Valley Oak service station, its sign seen on the left, was discovered to be selling the contaminated food. The sign states the store sells food & fuel. Who knows? Maybe some of its fuel got mixed-up with its food.

As my friend would say: "Naw." The fuel would likely kill, not only the diners, but the culprit of this report: botulism toxin. Further research for this report reveals:

Botulism is a rare illness caused by nerve toxins released by a bacteria called *Clostridium botulinum*, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Symptoms can include blurred vision, drooping eyelids, slurred speech and paralysis, among others. Some cases can be fatal.²

However, the Valley Oak Food with Fuel store:

...was allowed to reopen and sell prepackaged food items...after a California Department of Public Health officer seized four bags of the cheese sauce, according to a Sacramento County inspection report. ... The CDPH said it doesn't believe there is any continued threat to the public because the contaminated sauce was removed from sale on May 5.³

All is well at the store, but not at nearby hospitals and a cemetery.

Suggested Recipe for Nacho Cheese Dip

I surfed the Web to find a recipe for nacho cheese dip. Again, Google came to the rescue. It's a simple task, as I paraphrase the recipe:

² <http://www.cnn.com/2017/05/23/health/one-dead-california-gas-station-botulism-outbreak-nacho-cheese/>


³ Ibid.

The best melters are cheddar, Monterey Jack, and American cheese, to name a few. If you do choose to make a cheese sauce, which is the best method to make nachos, you'll want to melt your freshly grated cheese on *low heat* (my italics). Don't forget to mix in the bacteria *Clostridium botulinum*, shown here, and available at the local Center of Disease Control:



There's no rushing this process. You are making nachos which requires attention to detail while blending the two ingredients of cheese and bacteria. Keep in mind that *Clostridium botulinum* takes a while to ferment, so keep that heat low enough not to kill the bacteria.

- "Hello Bob. (My virtual reality sidekick, and the winner of the Nobel Prize for poetry). Been listening in?"
- "Yeah dude, that's why I'm virtual. You think I'm here, but I'm not. Looks like you could use some of my poetry, put to song, of course."
- "Wax poetically for me, Bob!"
- "Right. I'm borrowing the tune from the song, "Diarrhea," sung by those kids in the movie "Parenthood." Here goes:"

Strum, strum, strum...

Nacho cheese's been very safe.
Like gulping down a piece of cake!
Botulism, Botulism.

But there is now a bit of doubt,
as death tolls have broken out.
Botulism, Botulism.

Service stations' fast-food fare,
if not cooked, can be a scare.
Botulism, Botulism.



- "Thanks, Bob. But there's been only one death. 'Death tolls' sounds like an epidemic."
- "Just looking into the future, dude. If it's not cheese that contains the bacteria, it will be something else. Just look back at past years. Botulism has been around since 1735, and the bacterium finds its way into canned goods and home food processors."
- "Bob, I'm impressed. You've done your homework. No wonder you won the Nobel Prize."
- "Just looked up some stuff in the New York library archives and temporarily forgot about it, that's all."