

**Your on the
Street Reporter**



Uyless Black

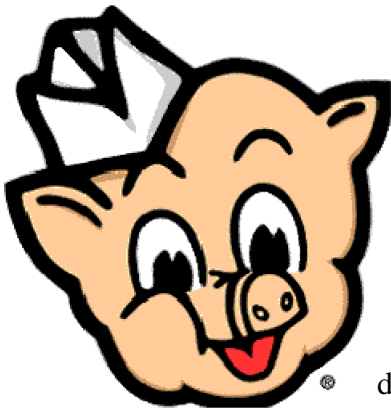
Un-American Markets

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November 14, 2013

Most of us in today's mobile, modern world have traveled to other countries. During these adventures, we have experienced the sights, sounds, and fragrances of foreign things. Foreign to us, but common-place to the natives. With filtered nostrils---courtesy of America's culture of cleanliness---we are often surprised at the smells and odors that are taken for granted in these lands.

I am ready to sally forth into the streets of Mazatlan, Mexico, to take-in and savor these foreign essences. Come with me. We will begin at the market in Mazatlan's old town district. To set the stage for our shopping:



During my youth, in my hometown, *the* market to buy groceries was the Piggly Wiggly grocery store. When it first came to town, it was a huge event. It made the headlines of the local paper, much to the consternation of Miss Hill's market, which had only a modest inventory of food.

On top of the sign outside the store was a picture of a happy pig, as seen to the left. And throughout the store, Piggly Wiggly's smiling face was on containers filling shelves and posters lining walls. The cherry images encouraged customers to buy what was inside the store's wrappers. The food may not have been pork, but it did not matter. It was happy food to make the customers happy.

To back up a bit: Pork? How can we eat the loin of that happy little pig shown above?

- Piggly Wiggly butcher, "Can I help you?"
- Potential customer of pork, "I'd like a dozen strips of Piggly Wiggly bacon."
- "Lean or fat?"
- If Piggly Wiggly knew what was transpiring regarding the future of his loins, sides, legs, tongue, hoofs, etc., he would no longer be smiling.

Nonetheless, how could we Americans look at  and buy it to cook and eat?

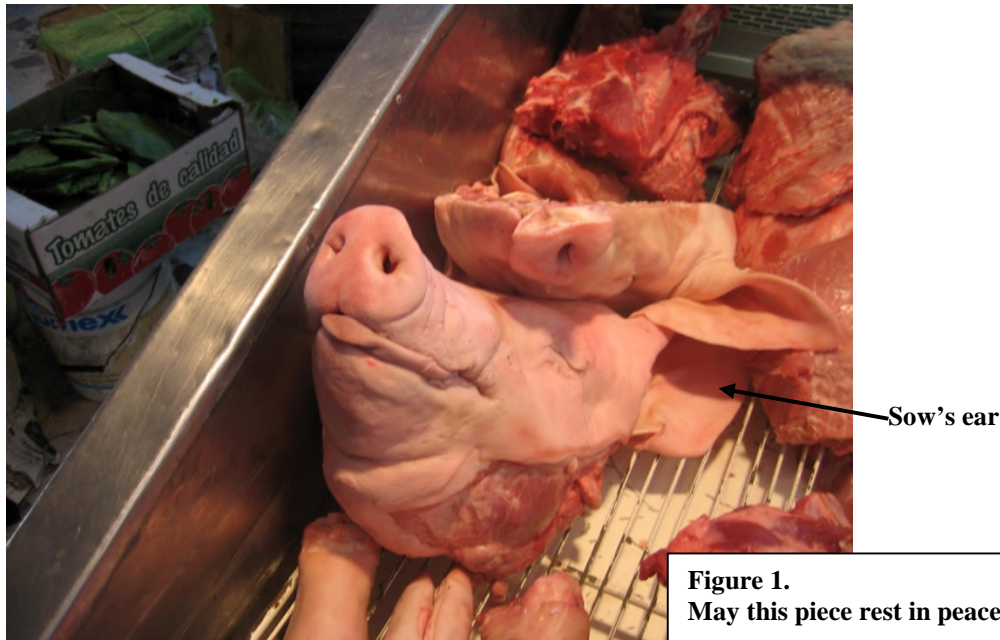
Maybe it is effective because such an icon is symbolic of fine things that await us in the store. It is part of the American way: We create symbols to justify our cravings for later carvings.

Back to the Mazatlan market. Here are some examples of what non-symbolic shoppers encounter on most parts of the earth.

The "icon" in Figure 1 is just the right touch for a real piggly wiggly. Eyes closed, apparently, a peaceful death. The tongue is slightly sticking out, making sure the pig's head purchaser will know the tongue has not been removed to be sold as a separate delicacy. No pickled pig's tongue here: fresh meat. No smiling, bright-eyed piggly wiggly either.

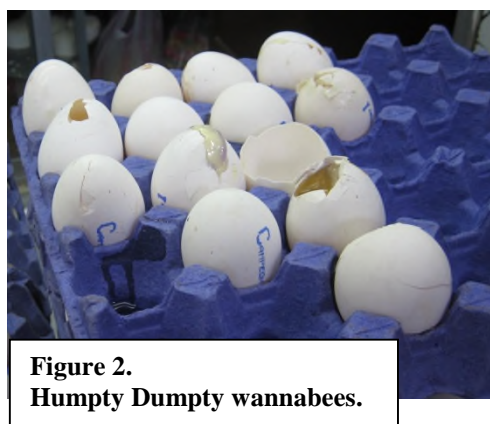
To gain more appreciation about piggly wiggly products in foreign food stores, try this: Go to your local Safeway and order a sow's ear. After having taken scornful second glances from your butcher, you will be turned away. He does not deal in the ears of pigs. Pig ears are

“removed” from the pig’s head during the operation when the pig’s head is “removed” from the rest of the pig.



Too bad. That silk purse we would like to make from a sow’s ear is out of reach. In the sparkling stores in the “western world,” customers can’t even buy the ears of a pig to eat, much less to make a silk purse. But as seen in Figure 1, the Mazatlan market offers the whole head, ears and all.

Each to their own, but I love the markets in these countries. In my younger days, I lived in the east Asia for awhile and became accustomed to the sights and smells of the market. I learned the citizens in most countries did not have the luxury of rejecting slightly faulty food. For example, they didn’t think a broken egg in an egg carton was a food travesty. The egg was still an egg. If it was not yet rotten, it was still edible, full of protein---and with some salt, pleasant to eat. Figure 2 shows several eggs that were for sale in the Mazatlan market, proudly displayed, perhaps at a discount.



I tried my Spanish with the egg vendor

- Reporter, “Hola, Eh, que es el precio para las pelotas?” (What is the price of these balls?)
- Vendor, “Pelotas? Donde?” (Balls? Where?)
- Reporter, “Lo siento. Huevos.” (Sorry. Eggs.)

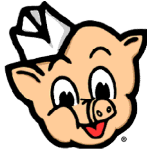
The vendor assumed this gringo could speak at least a smattering of Spanish. He launched into Spanish, beyond my vocabulary. I bid him, “Gracias,” and a goodbye with the traditional, “Vaya con huevos.”

Can we imagine the wares shown in these two figures making it to Safeway? I leave it to you to make a decision of which market you would prefer to shop. For me, I like variety, but I'm a bit leery of broken eggs.

That said, I feel more comfortable, with a side of bacon from:



than from:



I cannot bring myself to cook smiling pork.