

UNLIKELY MENUS

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Ever since I heard the joke "What do honeymooners eat?" (Lettuce alone), I've been making up unlikely menus to fit every taste, mood and culture. Here are a few:

YO MAMA'S RESTAURANT (home cookin' like no other)

Pig in a Poke, Steamed Cow Hip, Baked Chin Chuck,
Boiled Hog Jaw, Hog Hash, Hog Wash, Gizzard Dumplings, Possum Pot Pie,
Kneaded Stomach, Fried Tongue (Tied), Hashed Ham Strings, Poke Week
Fricassee, Corn Rows, Chicken Little (Children's Portion)

GOURMET SURVIVAL CAFE (you are nowhere!)

Animal Flesh: Gopher Guts Goulash, Poached Game a la Wildlife and
Fisheries, Porcupine Steak aux Spikes, Deer Mousse, Bled and Hung Dead
Cooked Cow, Foul Breast, Fowl Breath, Pressed Fish Lips on Toast,
Smoked Bear, Smoked Cigarettes, Wild Boar a la Trichinosis, Stuff
Boar
Miscellaneous: Fungus Salad, Berry Beri, Candied Roots and Stalks,
Minced Maggots, Jellied Dandruff, Fruit Compost, Sourdough
Sweetbreads, Goose Bumps, Illegal Torte, Shin Splints, Cocktail
Armadillo

JALAPENA CANTINA (en caliente! - piping hot, on the spot)

Tortilla Flats, Fajitas al Burro, Mexican Cornballs, Tico Tacos,
Cheese Cerveza, Tamale Upchuck, Mas o Menos Chimichangas, Chili con
Weenies, Retried Beans, Flower Tortillas, Mexican Heather, Spanish
Fly, Bubbly Soapapillas

CORDON BLUR (French cuisine)

Entrees: Glazed Eye of Blowfish, Creamed Escargots, Turtle Toes
Flambe, Epicurean Epiglotti
Vegetables: Whirled Peas, Drum Beets, Curried Favor, Steamed E
Coliflower
Salads: Amino Aspic Salad, Blanched DuBois, Grated Ganglia
Desserts: Petits Fives, Upper Crust, Chocolate Bombe a la Arafat, Torte
E colis, Sour Grapes
Special: Currant Jelly with Events

CAJUN BONS TEMPS RESTAURANT

Mock Botulism Etouffee, Pet Duck with Wild Rice, Jam Balaya, Rodent

Ratatouille, Poached Game, Clams (Up), Burnt Redfish, Quarantine Creole, Guinea Gumbo, Fried Gater 'n' Tater, Risk Bisque, Oysters on the Whole Half or Quarter Shell

*C*H*E*A*P* BAR RESTAURANT

Beef Cake, Strip Sirloin, Strip Tea(s), Bare Minimum, Cherry Stinger, Cheap Tarts, Trifles Orgiastique

The Oxford Desk Dictionary

The mass-market dictionary field is a crowded one; there are many paperbacks on bookstore shelves containing 60,000 to 100,000 entries. Of these, perhaps the most distinguished is the Merriam-Webster one, now (1994) in its fifth edition, often cited as a word-source in **Word Ways** articles. Under the editorship of Laurence Urdang of Verbatim, Oxford University Press has issued (1995) a hardcover dictionary to compete in this field. Oxford is quite similar in coverage to Merriam-Webster. For example, in a sample of 25 words from bisect to bizarre, only Merriam-Webster had biweekly and bizarre, and only Oxford had bitching, bit part, bitumen and biz. Apparently reflecting Urdang's preference (see the Random House Unabridged Dictionary which he also edited), geographical and personal names, foreign phrases and abbreviations are intercalated with dictionary words. Unlike most other dictionaries of its size, it contains about 200 illustrations; it also includes the occasional etymology or usage note. Definitions are simple and straightforward (moonshine 1 foolish talk or ideas 2 illicitly distilled or smuggled alcohol 3 moonlight). The dictionary is a bit weak on new entries, including dweeb but not gonzo, cash cow but not diss, Jaws of Life but not chunnel, infotainment but not fractal. At \$12.95 this 691-page volume is a bargain.