

Columns

Looking for good, salt-free soup recipes

I have just witnessed sure signs of spring. There are tulips and crocus peeping up from beneath the leaves in the front garden bed. I so wanted to remove the leaves but that would have caused the tender buds to freeze. I never know if I should leave leaf cover in the flower beds in late fall but I have read that leaves are better for the spring flowers than heavy mulch placed over the top.

I did rescue one tulip leaf; it had pierced a sycamore leaf as it pushed its way through the ground and it looked like it was being strangled so I gently removed the tree leaf and placed it over the top of the tulip. Silly me!

After this little bit of excitement I proceeded to the backyard and found a 2-inch piece of fresh basil with tiny leaves peeking from under the dead leaves. I could not resist and I picked it. For dinner that night I chopped the basil in tiny pieces and mixed it with sour cream and cream cheese and had a delicious sandwich with a bowl of freshly made potato soup.

I have mentioned that I have become proficient in soup making this winter. My mom is not cooking as much (she is 97) and on a salt-free diet and is having a hard time finding things to eat. I have made many pots of potato soup, carrot soup, pea soup, celery soup, chili, goulash, butter noodle soup, celery soup and green bean soup.

Memories and Musings

By Cheri Sims



I did not even know green bean soup existed until I found a recipe on "Allrecipes" at <https://www.allrecipes.com/recipe/13197/green-bean-soup/>. I am glad that I found this recipe because I was wondering how to make a fresh pot of cooked green beans with potatoes and bacon into a soup and this will do the trick.

So far she has liked the potato and carrot soup the best but since I feel like she needs a variety I have made all the others. None have gone to waste since she has become more used to eating without salt but I was pretty worried when she threw out the first \$25 pot of vegetable soup. (The chuck roast was ridiculously expensive.) Now that a couple months have passed she decided I should try the vegetable soup again. Wish me luck.

I lost a favorite possession this past winter. My 45-year-old philodendron began to show signs of deterioration last winter but perked up during the summer. I have only changed the potting soil in the plant pot a couple times in all those years so I gave it a good

cleaning with a fresh pot and soil but I guess it did not like the change because it began losing leaves and looking sickly this past Christmas.

I took cuttings and have them rooting I water but the main plant basically just turned brown and died last week. I purchased the plant in the 1970s when a friend opened up a plant shop just off the Charleston Square. Dan had worked for me at "Klines," the store I managed, and then opened up his shop in the old Laws Hotel building. I had purchased a couple plants from him and they all lived to a ripe old age but this philodendron was beautiful and provided many hours of beauty in all my homes. I will truly miss my old friend.

Having found the basil and crocus I looked at the two trees I planted last year, just to see if they have any buds, yet, but I believe it is a bit early for them. I am sure the aspen tree did not make it but I did enjoy looking at it all holiday season after stringing green lights on it. I just might leave the lights where they are and use it as a decoration. I find it difficult

to lose trees and bushes after having bought them and tried to save them from previous mistreatment. I guess you can tell that my fingers are itching to dig in the dirt.

A kitty cat update: we had a new stray here for dinner the other night. It is a beautiful orange cat and looks quite healthy. I sure hope he has just wandered from his home and will return soon.

All the outside cats seem to have made it through the winter thanks to the heat pads I hooked up for them. I spent a lot of time outside with them during the warmer weather last week and I think they enjoyed the company. Chessy is

still protecting Simey, the blind cat, and I am pretty sure I have gentled Simey enough to get him to the vet.

I have a pot of pea soup simmering on the stove and Mom has asked if I can find a recipe for squash soup. I have a couple recipes which I like but they call for ingredients Mom does not like and I am not sure what to substitute. If anyone has soup recipes they think would be good for a salt-free diet please send them to me at ccsims@consolidated.net. Thanks in advance.

Greenbean Soup

2 pounds fresh green beans
1 clove garlic, minced

1 sprig fresh parsley
1 pinch salt
2 slices bacon
3 tablespoons all-purpose flour
1 onion, chopped
1 cup sour cream
3 tablespoons vinegar

In a large pot over medium heat, combine green beans, garlic, parsley, salt and water to cover and cook until beans are tender.

Fry bacon until crisp, set aside. Add onion and flour to bacon grease, stirring until smooth and brown. Add some water from the beans, stirring slowly and constantly to prevent lumps.

Cook to thicken a bit, then add it to the bean soup and bring to a boil. Stir crisp bacon, sour cream and vinegar.

Stars to watch for this week

Spring is coming but we still have a great look at the stars of winter this week. As the Sun sets, the three belt stars of Orion are about halfway up in our southern sky. Two stars above the three mark Orion's shoulders and two below the three mark his knees.

Compare the upper left shoulder star to the lower right knee star. Can you see a difference in color? The red star is Betelgeuse and the blue star is Rigel. The difference in color is a difference in surface temperature with the red star being "cooler" than the blue star. "Cool" is relative here as the surface

In the night sky

By David Leake



temperature of Betelgeuse is still 3600 Kelvins – that would toast your bread!

There's another red star in our sky, too. The eye of our bull, Aldebaran, is also reddish in color. You can find it by tracing the belt stars to the upper right of Orion. Don't confuse Aldebaran

with the planet Mars, which sits between the two horn stars of our bull.

David Leake is retired Planetarium Director of Staer- kel Planetarium at Parkland College and co-founder of the Champaign-Urbana Astronomical Society, Inc.

Spelling is what separates us from monkeys

Somebody sent me an email: "You should write a column about atrocious spelling." OK, let's start with the spelling of "atrocious."

But the problem with writing about failed spelling is that I kinda live in a glass house in that regard. I misspell words all the time; sometimes on purpose, sometimes not. I tend leave words out sometimes. (That one was on purpose.) I treat punctuation as if I am the maker of the rules.

Another thing about pointing out some of the boneheaded spelling mistakes people make is that there is a Murphy's Law that states: Any article about mistakes will contain mistakes.

Still, one can't help but wonder if our civilization is devolving and how low it will go. When baristas can't spell the word "coffee" correctly on their marquee, is there any hope for mankind?

Ramblin' Man

By David Porter



We interrupt this dissertation for an announcement. I've just been informed that my copy editor, disenchanted by my chastising others about spelling in light of my own typographical missteps, will be going on strike in three, two, one ...

Weigh too leaf me hanging, dood. Whose goin fixate all my spelling errs now? Your gitting a rare glimpse now of the Ramblin' Man unmasked. The raw version. This is a [what's the word I'm looking four?] event in the history of newspapers. A

behind-the-scenes look at how writing really takes place. Their have never been a event like this beefour.

We all make mistakes, and I reckon we ought to be a bit more tolerant. But c'mon. "Loose" when you mean "lose?" "Then" when you mean "than?" I can forgive "to" versus "too" because that's just a slip-up. Even "it's" versus "its." Sometimes, there's a blip between the brain and the fingers; you know what is correct and you intend to write it but your fingers go on autopilot

and write whatever they want. But really, everyone should learn the difference between "their," "they're" and "there."

I know "affect" versus "effect" is difficult for a lot of people. But "weather" versus "whether" should be a no-brainer.

A big culprit in our spelling degradation is the autocorrect function on smart phones and tablets. We type the right word, but our device thinks it knows better. About 90 percent of the time, when I type "want" on my phone, the phone changes it to "wasn't." It changes "you" to "thou" for biblical effect. Oddly, it sometimes changes "you" to "me," Freudian, perhaps?

Then there's the influx of British English in our American culture. Have you noticed how many people on TV speak with a British accent? Did we run out of homegrown personalities?

So, we see words like "jolly" and "loo" circulating when they

otherwise wouldn't. But we also see more British spellings as in "colour" and "theatre." I think a lot of people don't realize that when they use the word "towards," they really should be using "toward" with no S. The S is preferred in England.

On the upside, there is no correlation between spelling and intelligence. True, dumb people may also be poor spellers, but a lot of smart people are poor spellers, too. Being a good speller can make a person seem smarter than he is. It sure helps with Scrabble, too.

So, what's the point? Why should we care about spelling at all? If it's not an intelligence indicator and everyone makes mistakes, why should we spend any time at all worrying about it?

Clear communication is essential. Lawsuits are won and lost over the interpretation of words. I don't know that any

wars have been fought over a misspelled word, but certainly, troop deployment and activity relies on clear communication.

Besides, we're not cavemen. We don't have to sit around and grunt at each other. But we like to. In fact, that's one of my favorite things to do – sit around a campfire and grunt. It's a guy thing. It usually involves adult beverages and Dominican exports. Spelling isn't foremost on our minds during these rituals.

But I digress. Spelling is important. Yes, it is. It's what separates us from monkeys and gorillas. Or is it gorillas? Gorillas? Gorillas? Monkeys. It separates us from monkeys.

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Spring means baseball; a look at the pro lineup

Don't you like when the winter's gone

And all of a sudden it starts gettin' warm

The trees and the grass start lookin' fresh

And the sun and sky be lookin' their best

Birds be singin', flowers be bloomin'

A lot of brand new cars be zoomin' — Biz Markie

It's spring again, or at least it's spring training again, and it seems like a good time to take a look at how the NL Central is going to shake out for 2023.

5. The Cincinnati Reds have two of the best young pitchers in baseball in Hunter Green and Nick Lodolo... and not much else. Joey Votto enters into his final season under contract at first base,

and the all-time Reds great is surrounded by promising yet green players at nearly every position. (fangraphs.com predicted record 67-95)

4. The Pittsburgh Pirates added Rich Hill to their roster in the offseason, but that doesn't seem like a needle mover for a team who doesn't have a starting pitcher on the roster with an ERA of under 4 last season. They buckos also don't have a .300 hitter in their starting lineup, although Oneill Cruise and Bryan Reynolds smacked 23 homers each last season. (predicted record 72-90)

3. The Cubs were active in the off season, adding Dansby Swanson and Cody Bellinger to a lineup that features young up and comers like Nico Horn-

Hook, Line and Sinker

By Tony Hooker



er, Patrick Wisdom and Trey Mancini. The Cubs pitching staff, will feature Patrick Stroman, Kyle Hendrix, and newcomer Jameson Taillon, fresh off a career year for the Yankees in 2022. Keegan Thompson won 10 games for the baby bears in 2022. (predicted record 75-87)

2. The Milwaukee Brewers offense has a chance to be sneaky good this year, as

six of their projected starters hit at least 17 homers, led by first baseman Rowdy Tellez, who smacked 30. Off season acquisitions William Contreras (20) and Jesse Winker (17) bring some thump with them. The Brewers, however, will be led by their pitching staff. Corbin Burnes (3.12) Brandon Woodruff (3.35) and Freddy Peralta each sported ERA's under 4 last season to lead the

way. Devin Williams, who took over after the Brewers traded Josh Hader to San Diego last season, looks to be the closer. (predicted record 84-78)

1. The St Louis Cardinals, the 2022 division champions, are again seen as the team to beat in 2023. The Cardinals have loads of talented outfielders including golden Glover Tyler O'Neill, Dylan Carlson and last year's break out player Lars Nootbarr, but it's safe to say that production hasn't matched potential over the last couple of years. O'Neill hit 26 homers last year, but he also struck out 157 times in just under 500 at bats. The infield stacks up defensively as one of the best in the big leagues, with Tommy Edman and Brendan Donovan flanked by Nolan

Arenado at third and reigning NL MVP Paul Goldschmidt at 1st. The team's fortunes, like they seemingly always do, will depend on the pitching. They are counting heavily on Jack Flaherty returning from injury to be the ace, and Miles Mikolas is a solid second starter. From there, Jordan Montgomery looks to eat up innings and they're hoping to coax one more decent season out of Adam Wainwright. Ryan Helsley, who recently lost his arbitration case against the club, will serve as closer after finishing with a 9-1 record and 19 saves a season ago. (predicted record 86-76)

As always, the division seems too tight to really predict, and it should be a fun summer.