

# The Style Invitational

## THIS WEEK'S CONTEST

### Week 693: Everything Being Sequel

Incredibly, we've never done this contest before — or so swears Ultimate Obsessive Loser Russell Beland, who suggested it — except for one week long ago in which all the entries had to suggest sequels to "Casablanca." This week: **Give a brief scenario for the sequel to a well-known movie.** If there are already actual sequels, yours must be significantly different from the real thing, duhuh.

Winner gets the Inker, the official Style Invitational trophy. First runner-up receives a nose-shaped and approximately nose-size pencil sharpener — you stick your pencil into the left nostril — donated by Post staffer Jim Stimson. And we'll toss in a key chain with a nose that pushes out whitish blobs when you squeeze it (and retracts them when you let go, pictured, right); the Empress bought this item expressly so she could list "Snot Key Chain" on her expense form.



BY BOB STAAKE FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

**National Velvet II: After winning the Grand National steeplechase, the Pie is sent to compete in France, where he unfortunately breaks a leg and ends up befitting his name.**

**Other runners-up** win a coveted Style Invitational Loser T-shirt. Honorable Mentions (or whatever they're called that week) get one of the lusted-after Style Invitational Magnets. One prize per entrant per week. Send your entries by e-mail to [losers@washpost.com](mailto:losers@washpost.com) or by fax to 202-334-4312. Deadline is Tuesday, Dec. 26; even the Empress lets you have Christmas off. Put "Week 693" in the subject line of your e-mail, or it risks being ignored as spam. Include your name, postal address and phone number with your entry. Contests are judged on the basis of humor and originality. All entries become the property of The Washington Post. Entries may be edited for taste or content. Results will be published Jan. 14. No purchase required for entry. Employees of The Washington Post, and their immediate relatives, are not eligible for prizes. Pseudonym entries will be disqualified. This week's Honorable Mentions name is by Kevin Dopart. The revised title for next week's contest is by Dave Prevar.

### REPORT FROM WEEK 689

In which we sought bad ideas for toys: Almost everyone offered a nice variation on Barbie, including Pole Dancer Barbie, Burqa Barbie, Fat Middle-Aged Barbie and Klaus Barbie. Also under a lot of imaginary trees this year: the E-Z Bake Crystal Meth Lab and Baby's First Blowtorch.

**4 Junior Engineer's Waste Water Treatment Plant: Kids, process your Numbers 1 and 2 into fresh, clean water you can drink!** (Horace LaBadie, Dunnellon, Fla.)

**2 The winner of the crummy Mistletoe Belt: Mr. Tomato Head.** (Tom Witte, Montgomery Village)

**3 Hug-a-Pet Testing Kits: Choose from the Food Additives, Cosmetics and Household Products editions. The perfect accompaniment to the Christmas puppy.** (David Franks, Wichita)

**AND THE WINNER OF THE INKER: The Little Telemarketer Reverse Directory.** (Chuck Smith, Woodbridge)



Hey kids! It's the nose-shaped pencil sharpener and interactive key chain.

BY JULIA EWAN — THE WASHINGTON POST

### SECONDS OF FUN

**Catty Cathy: She keeps your little girl's ego in check with phrases like "Nobody wants to play with you" and "Freckles are ugly."** (Kirk Zurell, Waterloo, Ontario)

**Global Warming Ant Farm with Deluxe Magnifying Glass.** (Art Grinath, Takoma Park)

**In the New Family Set: Betsy Wetsy and Grandpa Wetsy.** (Jay Shuck, Minneapolis)

**Ascending Virgin Action Figure: Spring-loaded base sends Mary soaring up to 20 feet on her way to Heaven!** (Jeff Brechlin, Eagan, Minn.)

**Trace Your Own Family Wreath: Lots of genealogy fun for you and your rural cousins.** (Kevin Dopart, Washington)

**Serious Putty.** (Walt Devore, Gaithersburg)

**Christmas in Gettysburg: Turn your mother's Christmas village into re-creations of famous battles from history. Holiday revelers become collateral damage and columns of refugees when you add these colorfully detailed figures and accessories. Also available: Christmas in Cannae (with elephants), Yorktown, the Somme and My Lai.** (Elden Carnahan, Laurel)

**Reindeer Antlers Yarmulke.** (Jay Shuck)

**Lack of Chemistry Set: Kids can play grown-up by simulating the failed dates of adults. Includes scripts for dull, stilted conversations with long periods of silence.** (David Kleinbard, Jersey City)

**He Knows Your Name doll: Program Mr. Sleazy with Susie's name and he'll awaken her at random times during the night by whispering, "Susie, I'm watching you."** (Dennis Lindsay, Seabrook)

**Handlebar-mounted video game.** (Art Grinath)

**Mr. Potato Head "Prophets of Islam" set.** (Kevin Dopart)

**Stack the Iraqis game: Who'll make the biggest pyramid? Pocket camera included so you can remember your best creations.** (Ken Gallant, Little Rock; Arthur C. Adams, Laurel)

**E-Z Bake Cover: Reenact the Salem Trials with this educational toy. Complete with witch figures of all ages!** (Tom Witte)

**My Little Defibrillator.** (Roy Ashley, Washington)

**Saddam Night Light: Put him out with a good yank on the cord.** (Kevin Dopart)

**Fido-bro: The sibling-size leash and collar. Teach your eldest about the responsibility required for pet ownership, and scam some free babysitting hours to boot.** (Beth Baniszewski, Somerset, Mass.)

**Lego September 11 Play Set — get all three!** (Bob Dalton, Arlington)

**Tsunami Bath Set: Everyone likes to make waves in the tub. Just set up the little villages and let the fun begin!** (Kevin Dopart)

**L'il Critter Spay/Neuter Lab: Everything your future veterinarians need to help Bob Barker keep the pet population in check. (Not recommended for children with younger siblings.)** (Jeff Brechlin)

**My First Humidifier.** (Valerie Matthews, Ashton)

**Home paleontology kit: Dig for your own fossils in eight tons of compacted earth and rock delivered right to your door! Not available in Kansas.** (Andrew Hoenig, Rockville)

**"CSI: Who's Your Daddy?" Play Set: Kids, with our home DNA test kit, you can finally figure out which of your overnight uncles is going to pay**

**your college tuition.** (Lawrence McGuire, Waldorf; Brad Alexander, Wanneroo, Australia; Kevin Dopart)

**Iraq 3-D Puzzle: You may not have wanted it, but it's yours now.** (Kevin Dopart)

**The Superman "I Can Fly!" Cape.** (Beverly Sharp, Washington)

**Pretend chocolates shaped like moose poop: Not pretend moose poop. Pretend chocolates. Real moose poop.** (John O'Byrne, Dublin)

**Of course, a boy would rather have something to play with than something to wear — but with these pants with a special hole in the pocket, he can have both!** (Rob Kloak, Springfield)

**Milton Friedman's Money Supply & Interest Rate Play Set.** (David Dalton, Arlington)

**Homework Outsourcer Gift Card: Give your kid the gift of quality homework aid, done by a smart kid from another part of the globe. Choose from India, Japan and northern Europe.** (Peter Metrinko, Chantilly)

**CrackSlacks: When it's too cold to wear your jeans really, really low. Across the rear of these jeans is painted a full vertical crack and matching cheeks in lifelike flesh color — choose from six shades!** (Bob Wallace, Reston)

**Cabbage Patch Kids Guillotine.** (Jeff Brechlin)

**A doll family: anatomically correct and functional figures of father, mother, son, daughter, grandma, grandpa, family dog, and a pony. What do you call it? The Aristocrats!** (Wilson Varga, Alexandria)

**Next Week: Funnies: How Time Flies, or Changing Our Toon**

## N.Y.'s Trans Fat Ban: You Call That Fried? Fuhgeddaboutit

TRANS FAT, From D1

— basically, partially hydrogenated oils, margarines and shortening — announced last week by the city's Board of Health. It bars anything with more than half a gram of trans fat by July and eradicates all trans fat a year later.

So the giant sighing sound you hear coming from the five boroughs is the sound of chefs and bakers bracing to rejigger their recipes. Most people in the food biz know the city government is just trying to fight heart disease. But how this rather obscure cooking staple — basically fat that has been chemically altered with hydrogen gas — became public health enemy No. 1 has caused a lot of head-scratching here.

And the bafflement goes beyond health science to a philosophical question: When did New York transform itself from all-purpose Gomorrah to that annoying friend from Los Angeles who says things like "Dude, you shouldn't eat that"?

It's one thing to reduce crime, shutter porn shops and spiffy up the joint. It's another thing to legislate cholesterol levels. And here, of all places, home of the Maalox moment, the implied setting for every antic commercial ever filmed. That guy in the raincoat, wincing in front of the hot-dog stand, popping Tum-te-Tum-Tum-Tums to "Dragnet" theme music in those old TV commercials — that guy was in New York City and it was his inalienable right to a cardiac infarction. You knew he'd return the next day, waving his money, demanding the mustard.

Actually, Cuchifritos 116 probably won't have to change its recipes, as Coto fears, because pork fat is one of those natural fats currently touted as an alternative to trans fat. That's right, lard is the good guy, all of a sudden. But Coto, like a lot of restaurant owners, is a little hazy on this whole subject, so in recent weeks he's begun experimenting with trans fat-free soybean oils. He's been unimpressed by the taste and appalled at what happens when the product sits in those tins for more than 10 minutes.

"When it comes out of the fryer, it looks fine. But then it dries out and gets this waxy look, which is no good," he says. "What we want is something that is dry on the inside and greasy on the outside. That is the way it done in all Latin American countries."

The trans fat-free oil he's used in initial trials produced chicken that reminded him of the birds served by arch rival Kentucky Fried Chicken.

"They make chicken that is juicy on the inside and its much less greasy."

Uh, that sounds sort of tasty.



Much of the food at 116 Cuchifritos is made with pork fat, an alternative to trans fat.

"But to us, KFC food is barely fried. My customers want food that is moist and shiny on the outside."

Which is what they get. One recent afternoon, a lunch crowd moved in and out of 116 Cuchifritos, most of them packing up orders to go, a few of them eating quickly atop one of the handful of stools at a counter. Nobody here seems under any illusion about the chow, or their own health, for that matter.

"I'm fat," says Carmen Vega, with a chuckle, paying for a large brown bag of food that, one hopes, is for a large family. "I really shouldn't be eating this."

That's the New York spirit! What a half-hour at 116 Cuchifritos proves is that even if you believe the busy bodies at the Health Board are fighting the good fight, they are fighting a battle that can't be won — not in a place where "bad cholesterol" plays with a home-field advantage.

"My grandmother was eating this stuff her whole life and she's 89 years old," says Tricia Mattingly, a medical assistant, picking up a to-go order with her son. "How bad can it be?"

Pretty bad, if the scientists are to be believed. Trans fat was invented by a German scientist early in the 20th century, but it didn't catch on until the snack-food industry glommed on in the 1960s and '70s and baked the stuff into cookies and cakes. It was quickly hailed as the "magic fat" because you could use it for just about anything, and it increased the shelf life of everything. Plus, it's



PHOTOS BY HELAYNE SEIDMAN FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

Quick-stop diners like 116 Cuchifritos, a restaurant in Spanish Harlem, are trying to figure out how to comply with New York's new ban.



Louis Nuñez, president of the Latino Restaurant Association, samples a trans fat-free alcapurria. Trans fat is partially hydrogenated oils, margarines and shortening.

cheaper than butter, and for a long time, because it lacked saturated fats, it was considered healthier than butter, too. "Healthy for your heart" was the margarine makers' slogan for years.

But now it's all "Harvard research" this, and "Dutch scientists" that. A major study or two found a link between trans fat consumption and elevated levels of the aforementioned bad cholesterol and the lowering of good cholesterol. In 2004, in Denmark, the

government instituted a nationwide trans fat ban.

"We concluded that there was nothing good to say about trans fat," says Steen Stender, the Danish professor who spearheaded the ban. "All we had was suspicion that it caused cardiovascular disease."

Let's be clear on this: New York City is now following the lead of Denmark. And all Denmark has is "suspicion"? Look, if New York started bum-rushing everything here

that warrants "suspicion" the place would be empty. Not to mention the what's-next questions this ban inspires. Compulsory yoga? Manners tutoring?

Okay, okay, not every slope is slippery, but trust us on this one: Any slope involving trans fat is slippery. Heck, a flat surface with trans fat is like a skating rink, only messier. That was clear during a visit on Tuesday to the cake and cookie factory of Strauss Bakery in Brooklyn, an 8,000-square-foot facility on a street lined with warehouses. Co-owner Tzvi Goldstein offered a tour of the premises and made a special stop near a stack of brown cardboard boxes, all of them containing cubes of MasterChef shortening. He opened one up, stood back and gaped.

"There it is," he said. The stuff looks like Vaseline spiked with cream. A label on the box says 3.5 grams of trans fat per serving, and a serving? A serving is a mere tablespoon.

The heartburn that this stuff is causing Goldstein and his partner, Oy. They have to find a shortening that passes muster with the kosher-certifying rabbis, who are a tough crowd. Then they have to retool the recipes for the 800 different items that Strauss sells, both locally and to retail stores all over. That's right. Eight hundred.

"I'll tell you this," he says. "I'm not looking forward to it."

But he'll submit to this chore, just as everyone in New York must submit to the city's ongoing battle against danger, even the danger that is hiding in dessert. Not long ago, there were a couple dozen ways to risk your life in New York City. Death by rugelach, unfortunately, will no longer be one of them.