



# Confessions Of A College Graduate Einstein Bagel Slinger

by Jonathan Hoferle

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I hate the scoop.

I hate the way its yellow handle protrudes from the cream cheese. The handle resembles an overturned school bus in a hideous cream cheese accident. Thrown from the bus, every child either shrieks or, assessing the situation quickly, tries to lick their way out of the cream cheese tub. Some of these latter children may be smiling.

I hate the scoop.

I hate the way you have to click the little handle to make the cheese come out. The cheese comes out in a deflated ball that's flat on the bottom. It's ugly, and being ugly is worse than many things.

Manager Bill always tells me to use the scoop instead of the spreader. He says it saves time. Manager Bill needs to save time because he doesn't have a lot of it left. He is old and childish.

Manager Bill dismisses as useless any sensibilities not listed in the training manual. When I tell him that none of the customers want to see this ugly ball of cream cheese poking its ugly face through the hole in the bagel, he disregards it. I don't know if he uses the phrase "book larnin'" in his inner monologue. He doesn't say much.

I hate the pizza bagel. The pizza bagel is a pain in my ass. Every time someone orders one of them, I have to take the bagel out of the bagel basket, slice it, and spread pizza sauce on it. The primary logistical problem with this process is the hole in the bagel. Yes, the pizza sauce seeps through this hole and onto the counter.

At this point I think, "Who is the asshole that thought of putting a hole in the bagel? What is the function of the hole? The hole doesn't add anything. Indeed, it takes away."

Then another part of me might think, "The hole is fun. What would a bagel be without the hole? Think of the puns that would never exist."

"Fuck off," I tell this part of me.

I hate the pizza bagel. After the sauce is spread and spilt, I must get the pizza cheese. The pizza cheese rests in a plastic box with an open top. Pieces of lettuce and plastic jump into this cheese. These should be removed before I sprinkle the cheese on the bagel.

Once the cheese is on the bagel (and a healthy portion fallen off), I must take it to the giant toaster and place it on a pizza pan so it may travel down the conveyor and toast. The pan near the giant toaster is

hot, so it must be handled with a giant mitt. If it isn't handled with a giant mitt, it leaves blisters on the skin. The pizza bagel must go through the giant toaster twice, thus doubling the opportunity for disfigurement.

The pizza bagel takes forever to cook, and everyone waiting in line stares at me. I curse and curse the person who ordered it (usually a stupid child who should be in school anyway), but I cannot say anything. That is, I cannot say anything except to ask whether he would like chips, potato salad, or southwestern salad with his pizza bagel. I have forgotten to do this at the beginning of the order because of the cursing. Unfortunately, the child has usually wandered off to suck on Mommy's tit.

There is one instance when I do not mind making the pizza bagel. On Fridays, the two volleyball girls come in. The two volleyball girls are tall, tart, and blonde. They wear T-shirts reading "Fillies" and black Spandex shorts. The lighter of the blondes smiles at me and always orders a pizza bagel. I do not mind that it takes forever to cook because that gives her time to turn around. Yes, she is quite the filly.

When the pizza bagel is cooked, I like to bring it out to the girl. I usually take the trouble to inform her that it is "quite hot." As I say "quite hot," I try not to leer at her navel. I always fail.

I love the slicer. The slicer is a two-foot tall gleaming stainless steel machine. It is roughly rectangular in shape, save for a circular bulge in the center that houses the large spinning blade. The slicer tilts at a forty-five degree angle so that the bagels may be inserted in the top, and due to gravity's magic, move under their own power to their doom. Occasionally one of the bagels passes through the blade without being sliced. These bagels seem somehow destined for something greater. However, I always feed them through again out of respect for the slicer.

If there were anything here that primitive cultures would worship, it would be the slicer. It would be a cause for rejoicing when the slicer shoots the bagel out so fast that it skips out of the catching basket onto the floor. I love trying to catch the bagel when this happens because it reminds me of baseball.

The flying bagel happens frequently when Betty works. Betty is an old woman with a huge ass. She moves very slowly, and because of friction, her huge ass slows everyone down. Due to arthritis, Betty doesn't try to slow down the bagel when it speeds out of the slicer. When it bounces off the basket and hits the floor, she always shrugs and, smiling, says, "Oh well."

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Betty's two favorite things to say are: "The bagels all look the same" and "I always forget which dressings are which." I never tell her that the red one is raspberry vinaigrette (red like raspberries), the orange one is honey chipotle (orange like honey), the one with seeds is the Asian sesame (seeds like sesame), and the one that looks like thousand island is fucking thousand island!

I hate the harvest chicken salad (salad). The overhead menu calls it "harvest chicken salad." This is wrong on two levels. The "harvest chicken salad" is composed of lettuce, tomatoes, and chicken salad (with mayonnaise, walnuts, and cranberries). The term "harvest chicken salad" refers to the chicken salad itself. You can't just drop the lettuce and tomatoes (salad) from the name. It doesn't add up.

When a customer orders the harvest chicken salad, I must ask if they want a chicken salad sandwich or the lettuce and chicken salad salad. The reply is usually condescending. After all, doesn't it say "harvest chicken salad" right on the menu? Yes, of course, asshole. Go change your polo shirt and play some golf, asshole. Go check your stock portfolio, you fucking sissy salad-eating asshole.

After calming down a bit, I ask myself, "Why is it called harvest chicken?" You don't harvest chickens, you slaughter them. It should be called the "slaughtered chicken salad (salad)." Or maybe "Farmer Hicks' decapitated, convulsing salad (salad)." I hate the suits who think of this shit, and it doesn't even taste good.

I love the Asiago cheese bagel when it comes out of the oven. It is the largest and softest of the bagels. This bagel, looking warm and vulnerable, begs to be eaten savagely. It begs to be stuffed in the mouth and gnashed at. Inspiring both pity and brutality, it implores me to ravage it.

Doug always chides me about stealing these bagels. Doug is the assistant manager, and he has exclusive rights to all porn traffic through the shop. It is illegal to distribute porn DVDs on company time, and it is illegal to steal bagels. These peccadilloes cancel out, so Doug and I get along well.

Doug, age thirty-six, is married to a woman with four children. His wife, to hear him tell it, explodes in sparkling anger when she discovers pornography in the house. She is six feet tall and thick. To avoid confrontation, Doug buys multiple copies of the same DVD and stashes his porn in the duplicates. He laughs when he tells me this. He will not laugh when I tell him that there is no discernible reason to have three copies of the same DVD other than to hide porn in them.

I feel neutral toward the new guy. The new guy is named Joel. I have known three Joels in the past. The first one was fat and disheveled. During classes in high school he would pick his nose and occasionally eat what he pulled out. He seemed to enjoy the notoriety he gained from this and also from making farm animal noises in the middle of class.

The second Joel had one brown eye, one blue eye, a massive shock of frizzy hair shooting out his head, and a compulsion to fart around girls. My hypothesis is that he was electrocuted in the womb in a terrible plug-in-dildo bathtub accident. The third Joel was arrested for selling meth. Things do not bode well for the new guy.

The new guy seems to be missing a personality. I think that this is the cause of—or effect from—his popularity with girls. The way the blonde jailbait look at him gives me a feeling in my stomach, a raging desire to annihilate. The new guy doesn't say anything except to ask how to make something or to clarify exactly how much he does not want to be at work. I take back what I said earlier. The new guy sucks.

I like Jose. Jose is Mexican and seventeen years old. He stands about five feet tall and talks in a series of squeaks. He calls everyone "crazy faggots" in Spanish. From five to eleven in the morning, Jose listens to the radio station for Mexicans from rural areas. After that, he listens to popular dance music.

Once I tried, by Doug's request, to tell Jose that the vice president was coming so he had to take out the garbage. He laughed at my "so-so" Spanish and corrected me. In order to redeem myself, I had to tell him later (in perfect Spanish) that Doug wanted me "to suck the vice president's dick and put a finger in his ass." Jose laughed and laughed.

I like Alejandro more than Jose because Alejandro is not a diabolical Mayan elf. Alejandro is also from Mexico, and I have not yet asked him whether he possesses proper documents. He believes, through some misunderstanding, that I keep marijuana in the walk-in cooler. He thinks I am stoned all the time. I cannot make him understand that I find this misunderstanding intolerably funny.

Because I am stoned all the time.