

Meanwhile, back at the ranch ...

Europe appears to be a vast untapped market for the finest of salad dressings

Ketchup, mustard and mayonaise are very popular condiments. They can be found at virtually any restaurant and in the kitchens of all sorts of people. These three condiments are very good, there is no denying it, but an often overlooked staple condiment is ranch dressing.

Ranch dressing can be used to improve any food item that is not sweet. It improves the taste of pizza, breadsticks, chicken, croutons, rice and (obviously) salad. It does wonders for any food made from potatoes: french fries, potato skins, baked potatoes and potato chips. It is truly a wonderful thing.

Without ranch, on most days, school lunch would be hopelessly sub-par all the time. Ranch can be used to disguise the staleness of the breadsticks. It's also a good topic for lunchtime conversation.

It's a rather controversial conversation, really. I brought up the subject at lunch one day. People either love it or they hate it, and they will defend their preference with a raised voice and lots of hand ges-

tures. It was one of the more interesting lunch topics of the year. I didn't participate much after bringing up the subject. I did a lot of glaring at the anti-ranch people, and after questioning their sanity, I realized that they were people, too, and started talking to them again.

I brought up ranch another time at lunch and discovered to my horror that it could not be obtained in the Cayman Islands. Ashley Snyder, a close friend of mine who visited the Islands on spring break, said, "I asked for ranch dressing and they (the waiter) didn't know: what I was talking about."

I almost choked on my water, I just couldn't believe it. Ranch dressing should be a staple for restaurants and resorts everywhere.

During this same conversation, someone brought up the fact that in Europe they don't have ranch dressing. That being truly unbelievable, plus the fact that the person who told me wasn't really sure, I decided to research.

The only thing you get when you enter "ranch dressing" in a search engine is about 500 different recipes for various kinds of ranch dressing. Nowhere, that I saw, does anyone devote a Web site to the history and usage of ranch dressing throughout the world. It's quite sad.

I didn't give up. I went to a chat room. I'm not really a chat room person, this was probably my second or third time. I asked if there was anyone in the room from Europe. There was someone from England

and someone from Scotland. I asked them if they ever used ranch dressing. It took a while for them to realize that I was talking about salad dressing, which is called salad cream according to my English source.

Once they realized what I was talking about, they thought I was a crazy nut. Apparently salad dressing isn't a hot topic in chat rooms. I explained what I was doing, and eventually they said they had never heard of ranch dressing before. They asked me what it was, and I didn't really know how to put into words just how good ranch dressing is. So I simply shut off my computer.

I brought back my new knowledge to the lunch table. Several people were a bit creeped out by the intensity of my research, due to the fact that it's commonly known I have an attention span of about 7 seconds.

A fellow ranch lover decided that Europe was an untapped market for ranch dressing, and that we should move to Europe following graduation and sell ranch dressing packets on street corners.

It's an intriguing idea, but one I'll put off seriously thinking about until after college.

So, in 600 some odd words, I have dazzled you with my wit, or I have bored you to tears. Either way, long live ranch dressing!

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