

On Blue Strawberries and Bikini Airways

Written by Alex Baer

Sunday, 16 December 2012 18:00

Sounds like a cool music venue for jazz, but it's actually real: The Blue Strawberry. Stems from research into helping berries resist freezing temps. These are research berries only, so don't get excited about blue shortcakes and such, at least not yet.

Such is life in the GMO world, where one researcher has made a transfer of genes from the Arctic Flounder Fish -- it produces a sort of anti-freeze that allows it to protect itself in freezing waters. Once the anti-freeze-making gene was isolated, it was introduced to berries. The result was a blue berry that doesn't turn to mush in the freezer.

What else has 2012 managed to bring us? A shopping mall Santa in the UK got his beard hung up in the ropes, suspending him 15 feet off the floor for half an hour. He had been rappelling down a ceiling into a throng of people waiting for Santa to land, then throw the switch on a lighted tree.

He could have removed the fake beard, but the man apparently wanted to stay in character for the sake of the children. Reactions in the crowd reportedly ranged from hilarity to mortification regarding the dangling Santa.

Here are some other strange feats to ponder while ushering in the new year:

A budget airlines based in Vietnam, VietJetAir, was fined \$956 by officials for unauthorized dancing aboard an aircraft. It may be helpful to mention that the airline had five beauty contestants on board dressed in bikini tops. The thinking here was that this would help passengers catch a festive air for their flight to a popular holiday destination.

The reception for dancers on a subway platform in New York was equally poor, with a romantic pair arrested for doing the Charleston. Things got out of hand when the couple tried filming their experience, the police called in backup, and the 'cuffs were slapped on both. As one might anticipate, a lawsuit's been filed.

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Think you live in a neighborhood filled with summertime lawn nazis -- neighbors who subtly and un-subtly convey the urgent message for you to do more landscaping upkeep? You haven't heard anything yet.

In Georgia, a woman awoke this summer to a strange man in her bedroom, yelling at her because her grass was too long. Turned out it was a county code compliance officer who had entered her home without permission in order to serve a violation notice for an overgrown lawn.

He wanted her to go back outside with him to sign the notice. The whole thing was caught on tape. The woman pressed charges against the compliance officer and the county. It appeared the man would not face criminal charges, for some reason not mentioned in the story. So, there you go -- yet another case where you hope the victim gets a million or so, and violators learn their lessons... And some manners.

Back to Asia now, where we go from Vietnam's delirious bikini flight to China and a potential *facekini* fright. The facial coverings are apparently lightweight, a bit like ski masks, and help people avoid the terrors of tanning.

It's a cultural thing. The thinking is that a tanned appearance indicates toil outdoors -- too much like the peasantry. However, having pale skin indicates one is pampered and successful. *Ah, the miracles of advertising, suggestion, and buy-in, all around the world.*

Speaking of which: There's the tale of the continuing Chinese fad of dyeing pets to look like other animals. Pandas or tigers, say. This has apparently been quite a hit for some time, even though it wasn't that long ago dogs would have been menu items all dressed up in restaurants, and not fashion plates strutting their stuff on sidewalks, catwalks and such.

A couple more odd tales from China while we're in the neighborhood: One is about a neighborhood that vanished to make way for a new road -- except for one couple who didn't move out. Solution? Authorities paved all around their house, turning their home into the center of a traffic circle. The man says their house cost more than the authorities offered to relocate him.

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The satirical website, *The Onion*, has struck again, this time in the Chinese Communist Party's official newspaper. The *People's Daily* ran a 55-page photo spread of North Korean leader Kim Jong-un after he was named The Onion's Sexiest Man Alive for 2012.

Some of the descriptions used by *The Onion* included *the boyish, cuddly charm* exuded by the leader, making *The Onion*'s *editorial board swoon*, also calling him *a heart-throb* who is *every woman's dream come true*.

Iran's Fars news agency was similarly afflicted earlier in the year by *The Onion*, having run their spoof story that rural Americans preferred Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad to President Barack Obama. (At least, it was *assumed* to have been a spoof story.)

You might also remember 2012 as the year a Google Image search for the phrase "completely wrong" would bring up almost a full page of photos of Mitt Romney. Google's search parameters picked up on Mitt apologizing for being "completely wrong" about his forceful 47% speech, and tied it to pictures of Romney.

And, of 2012's golden moments, scientists in the UK found they could change the color of gold into any color in the rainbow, using surface texture to change how the gold absorbs or reflects light. The process might be commercially used in the making of jewelry.

However, all that glitters is not gold. Take the New Economics Foundation's Happy Planet Index, for example. They named Costa Rica the happiest country in the world. Vietnam and Colombia came in second and third.

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Proving money is not everything, the United States finished in 105th place, way behind Libya, Bangladesh, and Turkmenistan. However, the unhappiest places on the planet were Qatar, Chad, and Botswana.

One reason for the poor showing by the U.S. might have been caused by judges taking a look at a new shoe from Adidas. The "JS Roundhouse Mids" are trainers that feature -- *wait for it* -- plastic orange "shackles" with plastic orange "chains" attached to the ankles. Thus was a small firestorm created, with many online calling the shoes "slavewear."

Not to be outdone, Nike also released some shoes many consider outrageous: a Black and Tan line of trainers, made available just in time for St. Patrick's Day. To many, the line was a bitter reminder of a British unit sent to Ireland in the 1920s to suppress revolt. Black and Tan had been the nickname given to the force. Nike apologized for their obliviousness to such regional and historical things.

And, of history: How long have people been making cheese? Best guess so far is 7,500 years or so, recently confirmed by scientists testing pottery uncovered in Poland.

From the opposite direction of time, sort of, comes a tale of bread that could last up to 60 days and help cut waste. No, it's not *Twinkie* bread, with an endless shelf life. An American company called MicroZap has figured out a way to microwave bread -- one that kills the spores that cause mold.

And, as we wind down, time to consider how the shredded-but-legible police documents wound up in some confetti at the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade in New York. Sensitive data like Social Security numbers and banking data for police employees were still legible, the documents having been shredded horizontally and not vertically.

The documents were tracked back to the Nassau County Police Department, with some department detectives shown by name in the confetti. Macy's says they had nothing to do with this batch, and that their confetti is made up of punched-out pieces, rather than shredded material.

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As you might imagine, Nassau County police are conducting an investigation.

And, finally, the upright piano played by Sam in the film *Casablanca* has been sold at auction: \$600,000.

It's been a heck of a year. *Here's looking at you, kid.*

Blue strawberry: <http://buzz.naturalnews.com/000061-food-science-GMO.html>

and: <http://strawberryblu.com/2012/03/17/be-skeptical-interview-with-dr-kevin-m-folta-on-the-blue-strawberry-incidence/>

Santa on a rope: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-berkshire-20386903>

Bikini air: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-19195690>

No Charlestons here:

http://www.yourjewishnews.com/Pages/21360.aspx#.T_mepOWrJZY.facebook

Talk about violations!

<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2171130/Enforcement-officer-enters-womans-home-yells-wake-grass-long.html#ixzz20BOkpVJq>

Tanning terror: <http://www.npr.org/blogs/thetwo-way/2012/08/20/159366234/on-chinese-beach>

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[es-the-face-kini-is-in-fashion](#)

Pet dyeing: <http://www.thedogfiles.com/2011/06/27/chinas-latest-craze-dyeing-pets-to-look-like-wild-animals/>

China road: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-20463192>

Kim Jong spoof: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-20518929>

Completely wrong: <http://www.cnn.com/2012/10/10/tech/web/google-romney-completely-wrong/index.html>

All that glitters: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-hampshire-20067736>

Happiest country: http://articles.nydailynews.com/2012-06-14/news/32239893_1_happiest-place-life-expectancy-countries

Bad shoes: <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2160977/Adidas-unveiling-new-trainer-orange-shackles-like-worn-black-slaves.html>

Say cheese: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/food/0/20695015>

60-day bread: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/science-environment-20540758>

Confetti: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-us-canada-20487235>

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Play it again: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-us-canada-20734605>