

Leon Is Nuts

By Leon Scott Baxter

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I love nuts: filberts, peanuts, almonds, cashews. Everyday I eat two Brazil nuts to help ensure that my prostate doesn't grow to the size of a small cantaloupe by the time of age to be an AARP member. Nuts are nutritious, delicious and even preventative.

When I was a kid, for Christmas I'd ask for nuts: cans, jars, and bags. God's honest truth I wanted nuts. Friends would go to Hawaii and knew to horde those little packages of airline Macadamia nuts, each enough to house a maximum of two and a half of the white, marble-sized nuggets. They'd leave the airplane with an airsickness bag or two full of the "Oahu peanut".

The only nut I stay away from is the Corn Nut. Who do they think they're fooling? I may be dumb, but I'm no idiot. I know the difference between a meaty nut borne of two half shells and a dried up vegetable kernel hard enough to chip a molar.

But, my favorite is the pistachio. The pistachio is the George Hamilton of the nuts: east to open, perfect mouth-popping size, and so much flavor packed into such a small package. I was such a fan of the pistachio as a young teen, that, instead of locking the liquor in the cabinet above the stove, my mom hid the pistachios there. And, she knew I'd still get to them. So, she always bought the red kind.

"Did you get into the pistachios again, Leon?"

"No."

"Let me see your hands."

No amount of scrubbing would remove the scarlet evidence from my fingers. Nail polish remover, turpentine, battery acid, nothing. My mom would punish me by making me eat all of the pistachio shells, which, by the way, were pretty tasty, too.

So, I'm at the grocery store last Sunday and I spot my favorite item just outside the deli/bakery: a woman wearing loose-fitting plastic gloves at a folding table. That's music to my eyes, because that means surprise snacks to break up my Sunday morning grocery shopping. This woman had a basketful of Halloween-size Nerd boxes of pistachios.

"Take as many as you want," she tells me (guess she's having a slow morning).

"Well, I guess my wife and daughters would appreciate a box or two."

If you know me, you know I don't turn down free stuff. I packed my pockets, stuck some in my socks, then asked her if she had any airsickness bags.

The box said, "Everybody's Nuts! – California Pistachios". The woman in the plastic gloves only had the Salt and Pepper variety available to give away. I opened a box. I tried a nut. Not red, but very tasty. It had a little something extra that previous pistachios lacked. The woman offered me a coupon to purchase a full-grown, seven-ounce, adult-size box of the nuts.

What the heck! They were on sale. Vons was doubling coupons again. And these damn nuggets were tasty. Couldn't pass them up. I grabbed another coupon and bought two boxes. I stayed with the Salt and Pepper and also bought the Roasted Salt. I passed on the Roasted No Salt as well as the European Roast (but will try them next time).

Boy, it was like the end of prohibition when I got home. Seventeen mini boxes for the kids and two seven-ouncers for me and my wife (I'm quite the romantic guy, y'know).

My only qualm: the limited and numbered, individually-wrapped comic strip that comes in every box, starring a clam-looking pistachio named "Stach". Sample comic: "Hey, Stach, whatcha doin'?"

"Nuttin'."

Lose Stach and the strip, and on a scale of one to ten, I give Everybody's Nuts two thumbs up.