

Don't Cry Over Spilled Juice

By Reg P. Wydeven
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One of my favorite foods is pizza. There's nothing better than a hot pie with bubbly cheese, tons of tomato sauce, savory meats and yummy veggies. My favorite toppings are sausage, pepperoni and onions, while my wife likes mushrooms, olives and pineapple. One of the things I like about pizza is that everyone can get what they want.

Something that drives me crazy, however, is when people call things pizza that clearly aren't pizza. Things like veggie pizza, fruit pizza or dessert pizza. These are all fine dishes, but they aren't pizza. My definition of pizza is a crust topped with a tomato-based sauce (but I would include barbeque sauce or enchilada sauce for Mexican pizza), cheese and toppings. I know I'm in the minority, but my outlook is that those other concoctions aren't pizza.

I wonder if our Senator Tammy Baldwin would agree with me, because she certainly has strong feelings about the definition of 'milk.'

Earlier this year, Baldwin introduced the Defending Against Imitations and Replacements of Yogurt, Milk, and Cheese To Promote Regular Intake of Dairy Everyday Act, or the Dairy Pride Act, to fight back "against non-dairy products that are mislabeled as milk, yogurt and cheese." Baldwin claims the legislation is needed to "protect the integrity of milk" because this practice "hurts our dairy farmers."

If passed, the Dairy Pride Act would require that all nondairy items now labeled as some form of dairy product to be renamed. While the U.S. Food and Drug Administration does define dairy products as those that come from dairy animals, grocery store aisles are flooded with nondairy products that use dairy names.

If the Dairy Pride Act is adopted, beverages made from soy, almonds, cashews, coconuts, bananas or any other substance could no longer be called 'milk,' which would be defined as being "obtained by the complete milking of one or more hooved mammals," such as cows or goats. The same rules would apply to cheese or yogurt. According to the text of the Act, "imitation products have gotten away with using dairy's good name for their own benefit."

Baldwin believes the bill will behoove consumers because it promotes the health benefits of dairy and claims that identifying plant-based products as "milk," "cheese" or "yogurt" may be confusing for consumers and might convey "a nutritional equivalency that is not accurate." The FDA stresses that calcium is an important part of a balanced diet, and current federal dietary guidelines recommend that adult women and men consume three cups of dairy each day. However, experts disagree on the best source of calcium.

According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Americans have consumed almost 40% less dairy milk than they did forty years ago. Meanwhile, over the last five years, a Nielsen report showed that sales of almond milk have increased by 250%. It's no coincidence that Baldwin's bill was introduced during this massive market shift.

Manufacturers of the plant-based products in question believe the proposed law is udder-ly ridiculous. Their products have been on the market for years, so they feel relabeling them now will make it harder for their customers to find them. Besides, almond juice or soy juice don't seem to roll off the tongue as nicely. They are hoping that the bill is voted down and put out to pasteur.

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