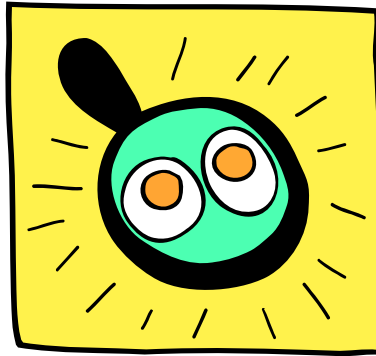


Frying Pan



By Mort Laitner

Pulling the frying pan off the shelf, I glance at its interior surface, a Jackson Pollack in black and silver. Holding the handle I notice for the first time that there is an egg-shaped hole in its base.

I question, "How many years have I used you?"

"Too many to count."

"Did I own you when I started at the health department?"

"We were both young and fully-coated in Teflon innocence."

I continue to study my partially covered friend as I flick a teaspoon of butter into her middle. It melts as quickly as a snowflake hitting the hood of a running car. As the butter liquefies, I inhale the cooking oils soft scent.

I examine the wounds of a thousand scrapes.

Those were the days before anthrax, bioterrorism attacks and white powder.
Scrape, Scrape, Scrape!

Two yellow pupils surrounded by clear albumin stare back at me on my whole-wheat toast.

"Look at deep cuts scaring my face."

Those were the days of rabies infected raccoons, psittacosis carrying parrots, and equine encephalitis!

Abrasion, Abrasion, Abrasion!

This stressed-out-stainless-piece-of-steel has fried thousands of eggs, bacon strips and sausage patties.

Those were the days of syphilitic babies, AIDS demented heroin addicts, and persons with tubercular-filled chest cavities.

Scratch, Scratch, Scratch!

My skillet has seen better days; most of its non-stick coating erased.

Those were the days of freezes, cut backs, and dismissals.

Rub, Rub, Rub!

But after years of use I am one with this DuPont coated product.

My hands repeatedly touch its handle.

I wash and dry her with loving care.

I could not replace it with a new *Cuisine de France*.

As I gently place the pan back on the shelf, realizing that over the years the pan's Teflon has etched my veins, becoming part of me as have all my health department experiences.
