

Dear Carol

Dear Carol,

My husband and I belong to a gourmet dinner club. Three couples get together every six weeks or so and have a special dinner. The couple hosting the dinner chooses the theme, usually a country, and each couple brings a course or two; appetizer and salad, dessert and vegetable or starch and the hosts provide the main course and bread, and each couple brings a bottle of wine. We all really enjoy each others company and have a good time. The problem is that one couple does not bring gourmet fare. They pick up pre-made or frozen food at the grocery store or fix something from a box. They don't seem to understand, despite our explanations, this is supposed to be a meal with unique food. They don't cook a lot at home but they can read and follow directions. How can we get them to do what is expected of them?

Food Critic

Dear Food Critic,

If this couple hasn't understood your broad hints about the meaning of a gourmet meal, perhaps the hosting couple could provide recipes for the courses they want the couples to bring to the next event. That way there could be no misunderstanding about the expectations for the evening. If this couple continues to disappoint, a decision will have to be made about the purpose of the evening. Is the intention to share excellent food or to enjoy excellent company? Bon Appétit!

Dear Carol,

My daughter is going to celebrate her eighth birthday soon. She says the only thing she wants in the whole world is a pony. She asks for one several times a day. We live in the city and can't afford to purchase, board and transport her to ride a horse. She is making me crazy with her constant begging for a pony for her birthday. I explain all of the reasons this is impossible yet she keeps asking. How can I get her to stop?

Marla

Dear Marla,

Just say, "No." the next time she asks. Don't explain or apologize. Say, "No, you can't have a pony, and I'm not going to talk about it anymore." Then talk about something else. If you give her the same one sentence answer every time she asks eventually she will give up asking. When children can keep us involved in discussions about what they want they think there is a chance of getting the object of their desire. Refuse to feed her obsession with your attention. If you can afford it, you might consider taking her for a pony ride or give her riding lessons as a birthday gift. This may be a passion that will inspire her for the rest of her life or it may be a passing fancy that would be satisfied with a short experience with horses.

Send questions to askcarolnow@gmail.com
Carol is a Life Coach available for private consultation in person or on the phone. •



Political Penguin

By Duane Plank

Sometimes writing the *Political Penguin* seems like a veritable walk in the park. But sometimes it can be a challenge because nothing too noteworthy seems to have occurred in the prior week. Or nothing that I can make fun of while I am sitting in my skivvies, hanging out at the mansion on a Sunday evening.

Well, this past week, the national headlines were dominated by stuff taking place in Iran. Some of the fine folks over there seemed pretty torqued off about an issue or two. Something about a disputed election and the results of said election. Fires were set, cars overturned, and people were rioting in the streets of Tehran. A lot of the same stuff that the Laker "fans" were doing the night the locals dispatched Orlando to capture the NBA championship. Wonder if any shoe stores were looted?

But this column isn't about sports, so I digress. Not that the tumult occurring in Iran isn't all-important. Heck, more than 1,000 protesters gathered in Westwood over the weekend to rabble-rouse, get their mugs on TV, and support their homies. Good for them, I guess.

Back on our side of the world, a world that looks kinda bleak at times, L.A. Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa is still hoping, some say, to make a run at Governor Arnold's job. Why, you so helpfully ask? Don't know, I answer. Tough job. But it is apparent that Tony V. is facing an uphill battle. Seems that many out there believe that Tony V. has done a crappy job as mayor of the City of the Angels. And some of those "many" may be actual registered voters, and not illegals or Sanctuary City untouchables.

Sure, all of the ills that are currently plaguing the city can't be blamed on one man, right? Is it the Mayor's fault that home

foreclosures are rampant in the ciudad? Or that unemployment is rising weekly? Heck no, his supporters say. They blame the Republicans. They blame the long-departed President Bush.

Who knows where the actual blame falls? Obviously a combination of ills are plaguing the city, what with Villaraigosa seemingly spending more time polishing his resume and preening at photo ops than in the day-to-day nuts and bolts work of administering to the city's needs. In fact, Mr. V. was dubbed the "11-percent mayor" because a newspaper article calculated that he spent precisely that amount of his work time on the city's business.

Some of the fault has to fall on the shoulders of the guy in charge, right? But the electorate reelected the philanderer Villaraigosa three months ago, even though it appears that they have no confidence in the managerial skills of Tony V. You voted for him, you got him, for better or worse. Heard those words before? Any of you married folks out there take those vows?

So who else is circling the political waters, angling to take Guv Arnold's job in 2010? How about San Francisco Sanctuary City Mayor Gavin Newsom? Let's check out a snippet of the Newsom file.

The 41-year-old Newsom was in the forefront of the move to legalize gay marriage. He has been the mayor of San Francisco since 2004. And he, reportedly, had an affair with his best friend's wife. What are friends for, right? I am sure Mr. Newsom has done some fine things for the folks living in the city by the bay. We shall effort to find out what those things are.

And how about ex-Governor Jerry Brown,

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