

On the Menu

By Tom Jolly

Luis, a Master Chef, sat across from his friend and gastronaut, Antonio. Luis' restaurant was situated in the West Village, wedged in between two much nicer restaurants. Luis was always experimenting with edgy foods in a futile attempt to compete with their quality and ambience.

Luis looked expectant, leaning over the edge of the table. "What do you think?" he said to Antonio, almost whispering.

Antonio wiped his mouth. "It's not bad. But it tastes much like every other steak you've forced on me. I don't taste the difference."

Instead of being insulted, Luis grinned broadly. "Yes! But there is a big difference! This steak costs me only a tenth of the going price."

Antonio looked suspiciously at his partly-eaten steak. "Is it actually beef?"

"Oh, of course! I wouldn't serve you beef that wasn't beef," he said, waving his hands over the stained paisley tablecloth as though to banish the idea.

"Then...the only way you could get it so cheaply is if it's some of that new vat-grown beef. There is no cow involved, just stem cells and a petri dish."

Antonio looked smug. "You are very close, my friend," he said, shaking a finger. "You are referring to 'shmeat.' But the problem with that is that you grow it once and then you eat it, and then you have to harvest new stem cells to grow the next steak. The process makes the meat cheaper, but not by much. What I discovered was a company that used cells that reproduce and reproduce, they never stop, as long as the nutrients are there. The meat is constantly growing and harvested from the original batch of cells!"

"Well, I have never heard of such a thing. Animals don't have cells like that," Antonio grumbled.

"Oh, but they do!" Luis exclaimed.

"Do they have a name, then?" Antonio asked.

"Yes, of course. They are called cancer cells."

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