

Science News of the Weird for the Weekend: July 22-23, 2017



By Alex Berezow, PhD — July 21, 2017



Panera Bread ad on Twitter

As a native Midwesterner who made the move across the country to Seattle for graduate school, I have grown accustomed to very pleasant summers. Apparently, I have grown soft as well. When I got on the plane at SeaTac, it was about 75 degrees. When the plane landed on ~~Venus~~ in Kansas City, it was nearly 100 degrees. I guess I just never noticed how miserably hot Midwestern summers are. And the cicadas? Goodness. Shut up already.

Coming back to the Midwest -- which I don't do often since most of my family has left -- creates in me a weird mix of nostalgia and déjà vu. But it's definitely not as weird as these stories from the past week:

1. Mice fall from the ceiling of Chipotle. The PR team at Chipotle just can't catch a break. In 2015, you were [more likely to get sick from eating at Chipotle than you were to get bitten by a shark](#) [1]. Just this week, a [Norovirus outbreak](#) [2] occurred yet again at a Chipotle restaurant, this time in Virginia. Yesterday, a customer at a Dallas Chipotle filmed mice [falling from the ceiling](#) [3]. Admittedly, I'm suffering from a bit of Schadenfreude. The company made a big fuss over how it's food was safer and healthier than everybody else's because they removed all GMOs. Unfortunately, in their anti-biotechnology moral crusade, they forgot about basic stuff, like personal hygiene, cooking food properly, and hiring exterminators. As ACSH President Hank Campbell said, "I now believe in karma."

2. Panera Bread continues its war on chemistry. Completely oblivious to the universe's revenge on Chipotle, Panera Bread has decided to flirt with fate through a PR campaign that mocks chemistry. Taking a [page straight out of the Food Babe's playbook](#) [4], the company has decided

that the best way to sell food is by laughing at scary-sounding chemical names, then self-righteously declaring that their food contains none of it. Panera keeps releasing new ads, picking a different chemical each time to mock. Much to my surprise, they are receiving blowback from customers on Twitter who are angry with their dishonesty.

3. An anti-GMO activist accuses a science journalist of being pro-science. As a science writer, I've been called all sorts of things: A pharma shill, a Big Ag shill, a deranged Lefty, a tyrannical Righty. The one thing I've never been accused of (in a derogatory way) is being pro-science. Yes, indeed, I'm pro-science. Being pro-science, however, is now suspicious to the folks over at the Huffington Post:



Paul D. Thacker, Contributor
Freelance writer

Keith Kloor's Endearing Love Affair With GMOs

New York University's adjunct journalism professor has curious ideas about science and reporting

07/19/2017 06:21 pm ET

There's a bit of a back story here. For reasons completely unknown to everybody, Paul Thacker absolutely hates Keith Kloor. Who's Keith Kloor? A science journalist. Who's Paul Thacker? Well, Keith Kloor describes him perfectly: "[The Once Promising Journalist Who Became a Sadistic Troll](#) [5]." Thacker has been relentless in his war against GMOs and anybody who supports them. Kloor, for some reason, has been the primary focus of his ire. Why the Huffington Post would give a platform to an activist to smear a pro-science journalist for the crime of being pro-science is beyond comprehension. HuffPo should note that sports journalists tend to like sports, and tech journalists tend to use computers.

4. Serial cat killer sentenced to 16 years in prison. Torturing and killing animals is a heinous crime. A person who engages in that sort of behavior is sick, in need of psychiatric treatment, and should be imprisoned. It is weird, however, [for this to happen in court](#) [6]: "The name of each cat... was read out to him by the judge in Santa Clara Superior Court." I understand that pets are like family members, but this is a bit much. This isn't 9/11.

5. Coffee recalled for containing "Viagra-like" ingredient. A coffee that was marketed as a male enhancement product is being [recalled](#) [7], precisely because it contained an ingredient that might enhance males. Because the ingredient also may have dangerous interactions with other drugs, the company is asking people to return the product. (What do you bet they don't?) This is a perfect example of why the [supplements industry needs to be regulated like the pharmaceutical industry](#) [8]: Some of the products contain actual drugs. Just because something is "natural" does not mean it should get a free pass from regulators.

COPYRIGHT © 1978-2016 BY THE AMERICAN COUNCIL ON SCIENCE AND HEALTH

Source URL: <https://www.acsh.org/news/2017/07/21/science-news-weird-weekend-july-22-23-2017-11591>
Links

- [1] <http://www.acsh.org/news/2017/07/19/chipotle-or-shark-attack-youre-safer-sharks-11582>
- [2] <http://www.cnbc.com/2017/07/20/chipotle-virginia-customer-tested-positive-for-norovirus-official.html>
- [3] <http://www.nbcdfw.com/news/local/Rodents-Fall-From-Ceiling-of-Dallas-Chipotle-Customers-435476763.html>
- [4] <http://www.acsh.org/news/2017/07/13/panera-bread-takes-page-food-babes-playbook-11556>
- [5] <http://www.keithkloor.com/?p=14917>
- [6] <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-40619161>
- [7] <http://edition.cnn.com/2017/07/21/health/coffee-recall-viagra-like-ingredients-trnd/>
- [8] <http://www.acsh.org/news/2017/03/30/danger-loosely-regulated-supplements-11070>