

Bill Rea ? Caviar anyone?

There are some good things in life that we always plan to try at some point, but maybe never get around to. And sometimes, if and when we do get around to them, they might not live up to expectations. And then, sometimes they do. Have you ever tried caviar?

I tried it over the holidays. It wasn't my first taste, but more about that later.

I already knew a bit about caviar. It is a delicacy consisting of salt-cured fish-eggs. But it was also something that I assumed only rich people consumed, and I'm not rich.

If one hears enough about something, one is likely to get curious, and I have heard of caviar lots of times over the years.

I think the first reference I recall was from the 1960s TV series *Lost in Space*. I was a stupid kid in those days; stupid enough to watch the show. There was one episode in which the featured antagonist Dr. Zachary Smith somehow came upon some caviar and made a major production out of consuming it with dialogue that only an actor like the late Jonathan Harris could have delivered. Then there was an episode of *Green Acres* (it wasn't all trash that I watched, you know) in which the Douglasses end up taking care of a bunch of kids for a couple of days, and Lisa was busily making them caviar sandwiches for lunch. My mother was never like that ? peanut butter sandwiches was what I usually got for lunch, although it is true I never asked for caviar. The expression on her face would have been interesting had I asked.

There were other references in the time-wasting stuff on watched on the tube. Alfred, faithful butler to millionaire Bruce Wayne and his youthful ward Dick Grayson was once kidnapped while shopping for caviar, but Batman eventually solved the crime.

Have you ever seen the motion picture classic *Casablanca*? I personally think it's the greatest movie ever made. Relatively early in the film, German Major Strasser enters Humphrey Bogart's establishment and orders, among other things, a tin of caviar. Granted, I am no expert on such things, but the tin which he started attacking with a spoon looked about the size of the jar from which my mother extracted peanut butter to make the previously-mentioned sandwiches.

In the 1972 movie *Sleuth* (another of my favourites), Laurence Olivier's character is seen prancing about the kitchen, toasting some sort of bread product, then spreading what was later revealed to be caviar on it. He also squeezed what appeared to be a liberal amount of lemon over the snack, poured himself a healthy glass from a bottle that had been chilled, then was interrupted by the door bell as he was about to take his first bite. The caller (I won't identify him, not wanting to reveal too much of the plot to those of you who have not yet seen the film) helped himself to a bite.

?Can't say I care for it all that much,? he said. ?It tastes like fish eggs.?

I will say the movie ends before poor Olivier gets a bite.

I guess there are lots of other references to caviar over which I have stumbled in the past. In time, it became one of those things I resolved that I would have to try. And then it happened, and I think it was about a year ago (maybe two).

My wife and I were having dinner at one of the more upper-crust establishments in town. The serving staff at this place have a rather nice habit of describing the dish when they set the plate down, highlighting the various ingredients. I think it might have been the appetizer, but I recall the gentleman who was serving us telling us one of the garnishes was a variety of caviar. If memory serves, I think I even mentioned to Beth that this was the first time I remembered eating caviar.

It was quite nice. I understood why Dr. Smith enjoyed it so much.

But the fact is it was just a small sample. Something I had heard so much about deserved a proper serving. It didn't have to be an evident case of bulk consumption that Major Strasser seemed to be engaged in. I was thinking of something like what Olivier had in mind, before someone came calling.

I'm sure we have all had the experience of identifying something we want to try, yet never seeming to get around to it. I've never found time (or then necessary courage) to fly in a glider, go skydiving to try bungee jumping. Those are among several activities that I don't plan to try at this stage of my life.

But it occurred to me that caviar didn't have to be in the same group. There was no good reason why I couldn't acquire some of it, assuming of course I could find some.

Actually, I found it's not too hard to come by. Grocery stores carry it, I learned almost by accident some months ago (okay, I don't normally go browsing for caviar). But such an experiment deserves an occasion for it to mark.

And then Beth and I were planning to be away for a couple of days over the holidays, including over New Years, so I figured that was as good a time as any.

The day we were to depart on the holiday mini-vacation, I walked purposefully in to one of the local markets and found a supply of caviar without too much trouble. Actually, I discovered there was a bit of variety.

There was some orangey-looking stuff called Trout Roe, which looked rather appealing. It was in a 50-gram jar, but there was no indication as to the price. Remember, I was a rookie when it came to caviar. I was curious, but since I was going on a mini-vacation, I had no desire to leave home with a maxed-out Visa.

There was a store employee behind the counter, and he was able to tell me how much this stuff was going to set me back. It was a little more than I was expecting, and a lot less than I was fearing.

I also noticed another product in a 100-gram jar, and the chap told me it was actually cheaper than the first one. Unable to make up mind, I got both.

I waited until we were up north before telling Beth what I had done, assuring her it was all on me (I didn't want her worrying about the impact in the household grocery budget).

We, therefore, had our first real samplings of caviar. We both tried a bit from both jars. I tried a bit more.

About an hour later, Beth told me she really didn't care for the stuff. You have to try these things to find out if you like them.

That left us with more than 100 grams of caviar. It was my idea, so I finished it over the next couple of days.

It was better than peanut butter. Caviar doesn't stick to the roof of your mouth.

