

# Foreword

by Marc Abrahams

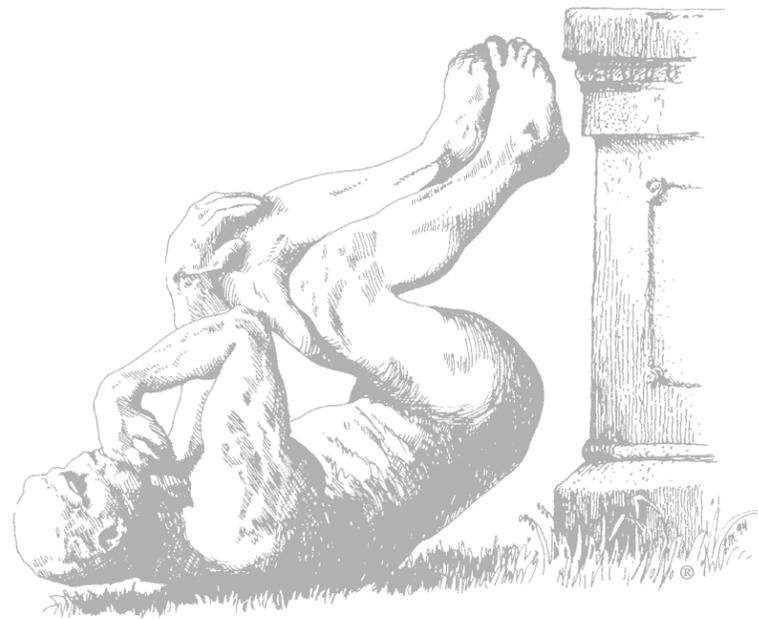
No matter how many cookbooks you've read, you've not seen one like this cookbook.

The recipes here are all from people who have won Ig Nobel Prizes, or from people who have Nobel Prizes and have gleefully taken part in some of the Ig Nobel ceremonies to honor the Ig Nobel Prize winners, or from people who helped organize some of the Ig Nobel Prize ceremonies.

Every year since 1991 we have awarded ten new Ig Nobel Prizes. The prizes honor achievements that make people LAUGH, then THINK.

The achievements, and the people who achieved them, are quite real. Most of those people come to the gala Ig Nobel Prize ceremony, where 1100 spectators watch a bunch of Nobel laureates physically hand the Ig Nobel Prizes to the new Ig Nobel Prize winners, with a worldwide audience watching the live webcast. The first four ceremonies were held at MIT (the Massachusetts Institute of Technology), in Cambridge, Massachusetts, USA. The fifth year, we moved two miles down the road, to Harvard University, where the ceremony has happened ever since.

Some of these recipes produce food that's delicious. Other recipes produce food that's intriguing. I wish you bon appetit and happy conversation when you serve them to guests.



Who, you may ask, dunnit? Here's who:

- **Professor Merry “Corky” White** did most of the work of gathering and preparing (in both the culinary and the literary senses) these recipes.
- **Gus Rancatore** contributed wise counsel and gusto-intellectual heavy lifting, and also considerable quantities of Toscanini's Ice Cream.
- **Marian Parry**, illustrator of *The Space Child's Mother Goose*, which properly rearranged the minds of several generations of children who grew up to become good scientists, drew the brilliant Marian Parryish drawings.
- **Geri Sullivan**, master designer of the *Annals of Improbable Research*, designed the book.
- Ig Nobel Literature Prize winner **Glenda Browne**, whose recipe for The The The Thé you will find here, produced the index.
- **Lauren (N.) Maurer Trew** converted everything into the e-book version of the book.

Our greatest thanks, of course, go to the illustrious chefs who contributed the recipes that are about to impinge tastefully on your consciousness.

Corky cooked up the idea of this book, in celebration of the 24<sup>th</sup> First Annual Ig Nobel Prize ceremony, in the year 2014. Every year we choose a new theme for the ceremony. (The theme does not necessarily apply to any of the new Ig Nobel Prizes awarded that year. Rather, it threads through many other portions of the event, especially the year's new mini-opera, a featured part of the evening.) The theme of the 24<sup>th</sup> First Annual Ig Nobel Prize ceremony is FOOD. The keynote speaker for the ceremony is Dr. NakaMats, who was awarded an Ig Nobel Prize in 2005 for photographing and retrospectively analyzing every meal he had consumed during a period of 34 years. Dr. NakaMats has contributed a recipe to this book.

You can find more info about the Ig Nobel Prize winners, and the ceremonies, and eversomuch more, at [www.improbable.com](http://www.improbable.com).

*Marc Abrahams is chair of the Ig Nobel Board of Governors. He founded the Ig Nobel Prize ceremony, and serves as its master of ceremonies. He also edits the magazine Annals of Improbable Research and its web site, [www.improbable.com](http://www.improbable.com). He is a columnist for the British newspaper The Guardian, and writes for other publications, as well. Marc's books are somewhat numerous, most recently including This Is Improbable Too and its predecessor, This Is Improbable, but Marc's favorite among his book titles is food-related: Der Einfluß von Erdnußbutter auf die Erdrotation, which translates to the English “The Effect of Peanut Butter on the Rotation of the Earth.”*

## Introduction

by Merry “Corky” White and Gus Rancatore

We are most delighted to present to you the product of years of research and practice. This is, as the name indicates, an Ig Nobel cookbook. The Ig Nobel Prizes, awarded each year in a gala ceremony at Harvard University, honor achievements that make people LAUGH, then THINK. We have distilled the nutritional essence of the Ig Nobel Prizes into (sometimes) edible form through recipes donated by (1) Ig Nobel Prize winners; (2) Nobel laureates who physically handed the Ig Nobel Prizes to those Ig Nobel Prize winners at the Ig Nobel Prize Ceremonies; and (3) some of us the people who organize the annual Ig Nobel Prize ceremonies.

Food, long considered unworthy of scholarly attention, has come into its own for academic and scientific (and we should add, environmental, political and nutritional) scrutiny. For Ig Nobel attention too, food is a pre-eminently suitable subject – gastronomy that “makes you laugh and then makes you think.”

You have evidence in your hands that prize-winning researchers eat, or at least cook, more than packets of instant ramen. The idea that scientists and engineers, innovators and start-up geniuses are successful when they reach ramen self-sufficiency – that is, three packets a day – is a trope among geeks. But although ramen itself has become a subject for inquiry (four academic books so far and counting, that we are aware of...) in their kitchens and labs, our creators are beyond ramen. Young brain workers are often not about the food – they may even eat their ramen uncooked (dry out of the bag). They pop corn by clustering their smartphones or other electronic devices. They order in pizza in the evening because of its cold excellence as a breakfast food. Everything is washed down (and the dishes, if there are any, are washed) with Mountain Dew, by the romantic light of the Bunsen burner. Their careers if not their guts, prosper.

We have pleaded, begged and bribed these busy people to divulge their Ig Nobel-related food habits and dreams. In these pages, Ig Nobel Prize winners, and Nobel Prize winners who handed out Ig Nobel Prizes to those winners, and also some of the ceremony organizers, have contributed their finest gustatory products. Some (well, one), straight from the lab, have brought us Ehrlenmeyer flasks spewing the mists of liquid nitrogen. Some, more conceptual, have offered theories about tensile strength to be applied, perhaps, to confections of marshmallow fluff. We have examples here of brilliance and of flexibility, of food as technique and precision, or creative and reckless abandon.

Readers and audiences of Ig proceedings will recognize many of the studies producing these recipes: they know for example that herring (probably) communicate through farts. Magnus Wahlberg, one of the scientists who made the herring fart discovery, contributed a recipe for fried herring dinner with mashed potatoes and white sauce which will evoke but not reproduce the original research. Showing the incredible,

often edible, range of scientific research lauded by the Prizes, Chris McManus of University College London celebrates his study “Scrotal Asymmetry in Man and in Ancient Sculpture” with a recipe for “Testicles” (quotation marks so no one will think any animal was unmanned for this dish) on Toast. This version is also called “Eggs in the manner of Donkey’s Bollocks” and other bawdier titles, but it is, in the end, a testament to the joys of eggs on garlicky toast, with the little tweak of anatomical reference.

Karl Schwarzler won an Ig Nobel Prize for making it possible to rent the entire nation of Lichtenstein (for whatever purpose you might conceive: wedding, tractor pull, product introduction, Quinceanera, or Bar Review Class). His “kasknopfle” briskly introduces the national spaetzle-like dish and reminds us that we too, with enough cash, might some day be Lichtensteinian.

While every attempt has been made to assure that these recipes will work in your home kitchen (or laboratory), we cannot guarantee results. After all, most likely, you the reader have never hat-pinned out thousands of periwinkles from their shells, nor, probably, calibrated the timing of a nuclear oven. Not every reader has access to the dairy products contributed by the happy, named cows near Newcastle University. These recipes are unique offerings, possibly unreproducible, but with your own creative persnicketyness, you can use them to launch your own research, leading (one cannot rule out the possibility) to your own future Ig Nobel laurels. As a former colleague of one of us said often, “Bon Appetit!”



*Corky White is professor of anthropology at Boston University, and author of several books on Japan as well as two cookbooks, one of which has just reappeared as *Cooking for Crowds: the Fortieth Anniversary Edition* (Princeton University Press 2013). Corky sings in her sleep and in the car. In 2013 the government of Japan conferred upon her the Order of the Rising Sun, Gold Rays with Neck Ribbon, in recognition of her significant contributions to the development of Japanese studies and the introduction of Japanese culture in the United States of America.*

*Gus Rancatore is creator and owner of Toscanini’s Ice Cream, handily located near MIT, where many budding, and many fully-blossomed, scientists refresh their own genius with his, in the melting shape of bowls of “The World’s Best Ice Cream” (New York Times) and “Best of Boston” (Boston Magazine). Both Corky and Gus have helped organize several of the Ig Nobel Prize ceremonies. Gus also created a special ice cream flavor to honor 2007 Ig Nobel Chemistry Prize winner Mayu Yamamoto. (Yamamoto developed a way to extract vanillin — vanilla fragrance and flavoring — from cow dung.) Many other laurels have been placed on Gus’ brow for his flavors that make you smile and think, and come back for more.*

