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Humboldt Counties Missing Mustard

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Recommended Citation

McCollum, Emily A. ms, "Humboldt Counties Missing Mustard" (2020). *Humboldt in the Time of COVID - Digital Archive*. 8.

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JMC 480

November 6th 2020

The Mystery of Humboldt County's Missing Mustard

Living in Humboldt for the last two years has taught me a thing or two about food. Don't be afraid of oysters and learn to stock up on Larrupin. If you have never heard of this delectably sweet, dill mustard it's time to learn.

This delicious sauce is a Humboldt county staple, originating from the Larrupin Café in Trinidad California. Since this mustard's creation some 30 years ago, the local community has cleared a space for this heavenly condiment in Humboldt's refrigerator door. The sauce has become so popular that the manufacturing of the retail product has become its own company apart from the café known as Larrupin Goods.

Larrupin has been manufactured in a co packing plant in Sonoma county for some time now. Lucas Aldinger General manager of Larrupin Goods, has been managing this essential sauce for the last 12 years. While the sauce is a Humboldt icon, it is no longer affiliated with the café where it adopted its name.

This confusion, combined with the pandemic, historic California wild fires, food shortages, lockdowns, power shut off's and other anomalies the last few years have thrown at us, has caused the sauce to temporarily disappear off of store shelves.

"Due to the pandemic and everybody hoarding food, they're super busy and we are just temporarily out of stock," said Aldinger. "This happened two years ago when we had the Santa rosa fire and power shut off."

The shortage of Larrupin has caused customers to clamor around in search for a little jar of Humboldt comfort, myself included. On a trip to Eureka Natural Foods I managed to talk to a distributor for the grocery store who informed me of the lack of stock and subsequent shortage. The last year has left lots of grocery store shelves empty and customers agitated, causing certain individuals to reach out, and act out, in the wake of the Larrupin shortage.

"There were just tons of calls and inquiries, I didn't realize how popular we were," said Aldinger. "People were sort of frantic and then the tendency for people to want to stock up, you know, it's like the toilet paper syndrome."

The shortage has even left people capitalizing on the popularity of the mustard. As people look towards online options to obtain the sauce, third party stores have popped up on Amazon, selling the same little jar for over double the actual price.

"I had a friend call me up and say hey that's a great give away you're doing on Facebook, and I said, we don't have a Facebook page," said Aldinger. "I sent them a cease and desist order."

Aldinger discovered that someone made a Larrupin Facebook page, gained a good following and created a fake contest for people to enter and win a prize. Scam artists all over the world will impersonate famous people or companies just to get your information, it's very common online. But little did I know that Larrupin would cause people to go to such extremes, aside from the constant phone calls of inquiry.

"I was probably getting five or six called a day, the majority from Humboldt county," said Aldinger.

While I managed to get ahold of a manager of the Larrupin café, she informed me that they are no longer affiliated with the instore product. I could tell that she has had to say this before. She went on to explain how she has been getting more and more calls about the sauce since the shortage, all consisting of people fairly worried and curious over their missing mustard.

The sauce will be back on shelves within Humboldt county in early November, by the time you read this, I'm sure you will be able to find some. This shortage not only shows the lengths that people will go to for some sense of comfort and normalcy, but it also reveals how weak and unsustainable our current food systems are.

While this sauce has a cultural value in Humboldt county, its fragility, rarity and massive following shines light on the ever-weaker food system we keep in balance. When it comes to the multifaceted issue that surrounds agricultural food practices, supply and distribution systems within the united states, these centralized industries are outdated and unstable.

"it just takes one piece of a supply chain to fall apart and your out of business," said Aldinger.