

# Astroglide on Toast, Please

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2015-04-23

I was cooking in Lauren's kitchen while she prepared evening plans. She disappeared without any explanation, leaving me to fend for myself in her unfamiliar space. I needed cooking oil for garlic bread. She didn't answer when I called out. I searched on top of the stove, which didn't make sense, because oil stored there would overheat from the stovetop below. Spices, cake mixes, other sundry cans filled the pantry. I opened each cupboard probing like a thief wondering what was useful or would pertain to preparing dinner in a kitchen that was not mine. It was an odd assemblage of food not of my choice, but then not alien if merely in brands unfamiliar to me. At last, I found oil in the cupboard next to the stove.

Crisco in a can. Vegetable in its jug. A small jar of pistachio oil. Another small jar of walnut oil, which interested me though I decided against use it since walnuts inflame the inside of my mouth. It would be a bad choice with a mouth swollen if I could not talk during a first date. Very unattractive.

I observed coconut oil congealed like the Crisco and too strong for my cooking after tasting it. I found a trace of olive oil in a big bottle, not enough for the frypan, and also probably too strong a taste for the envisioned glazed strawberry dessert. There wasn't enough to sear the steaks. So, I pulled out the emptied olive oil from the shelf as a friendly reminder for a shopping list.

There was a bottle of Astroglide, oil I didn't quite recognize on the shelf. The text was too small to read without my prescription glasses forgotten at home. I found a pair of dollar store readers by the telephone for the fine print on the bottle, and even though magnified the list of ingredients was too small. I don't know why manufactures hide it so. I tasted this oil, flowery, more like a pressed rose hip. Without further thinking, since it was in the food cupboard, I added a measure to the frypan.

I cut garlic cloves for toast. The outside peel separated cleanly in pieces attached together. I turned the cutting board to dice the garlic. I thought better of the evening's potential, so I poured more of this oil into the frypan to cook the garlic for the scalla bread so it would be less pungent. The garlic bounced and sizzled in the oil. I swirled it to keep from burning. In less than a minute it was evenly browned to pour atop the bread arrayed on a baking sheet for final oven toasting.

I cleaned the garlic pan and dried it so that remaining oil and moisture would not splatter me as I seared her thick-cut marbled steaks for the main course. I put out another measure of the same George Jetson *Astro* oil wondering what button I would soon push with Lauren. I added cornstarch and sugar, and mashed strawberries for the tart into a saucepan. I cooked on low heat for a few minutes. I put up cauliflower and asparagus to steam. Everything would be ready at the same time. I'd planned to finalize the dessert by baking the pear tart later with the prepared berry glaze for topping once cooled.

Where was Lauren? I felt expectation as I figured she was preparing something elaborate given her time elapsed in the bedroom, which might later involve less clothes and more skin. I dropped the steaks to

cook with its loud sudden sizzle. I figured five minutes each side. "Ten minute warning! Lauren?" I added dribbles of Astroglide to the hot frypan intending to prevent the meat from catching on the iron pan.

Smells overfilled the kitchen bringing Lauren to my side with arms around my waist and lips at my ear. I shuddered and almost melted into the pan joining these porterhouse cuts. I laughed into her arms. "Dinner is almost ready. What were you doing this whole time?" I asked with curiosity now turned to surety with the hoped-for playful contact not so soon expected. I hope, but do not always know in retreat from my insistent side for the liaisons torched, which often sparks my explosive backfire in a buyer's remorse for a rash entanglement which later can't be uncooked.

Lauren answered, "Getting my plans ready for you, Oscar."

"What plans?"

She said, "You'll see."

"What do you need to plan for me, the simplest of men, and ready without much effort?" I said in layers of proper meaning, suggestive if she so wanted, and as I was sure she would grasp. "Should I worry?" I asked in propriety so necessary for the uncertainty of physical beginnings.

Lauren laughed before kissing the tip of my nose. "Maybe you should worry. That would be interesting to see you out of your confidence."

I looked at her with furrowed eyebrows.

She said in a low voice, "Don't worry. It's nothing kinky. I hope that's okay with you. I'm just trying to add some spice to dessert," she said as she saw the unbaked pear tort and the pan with its strawberry glaze. She saw the empty olive oil bottle. "Yeah, I know I'm out of olive oil. It's on my list to buy. I forgot during the past few shopping trips. What did you use?"

I lifted the Astroglide from the counter. She turned a color of pale shades lighter than hers. She stuttered before waving her hands up to the side of her face shaking them like the professor she was. "Oh, you found it! I was worried it was lost; that's what took me so long. How did you know I was looking for it? That's what kept me... I couldn't find it. I'm so embarrassed you did!"

"You were looking for this?" I asked without a clue how misplaced oil could elicit her alarm.

"Yes," she said. "I wondered if I might need to run out as an emergency."

"I used it in lieu of olive oil. It made the garlic bread brown fast so it must have a lower temperature ceiling than olive oil. I hope you don't mind garlic bread breath, mind you, sautéed a bit to mild."

I noticed she blanched, so I saw she intended extended kissing. In the situation, it was pointless to press the concerns upsetting her before, and now, considering her distasteful outlook for garlic bread, I changed the subject to dinner. "Everything's done. Are you ready to eat?" I asked in diversion to what seemed awkward for us both as I worried now in having the social skills of the frypan.

She was stuck like a statute, her hands still to the sides of her face with a quizzical look. I had the feeling I had done amiss, said something thoughtlessly, violated her kitchen etiquette, and yet without the clue for what. "Did I use the wrong pans or food you wanted for another day?" I asked.

"No. No. No." She seemed lost for words. "It's not that..."

Early steps of a relationship are fraught with mishap while the rapport is yet so fragile. My heart worried for potential passion poisoned. "I'm sorry. You didn't hear when I called out. You said to use whatever I wanted in the kitchen. I don't have a clue what I could have done wrong. I hope it's not fatal..."

She stuttered again. She moved her hands to her cheeks. Her mouth opened in surprise until the moment she was able again to find her words. "Oh." Then she laughed with an audible relief. "You didn't do anything wrong. I just don't know if it's okay. It's probably edible...I mean it *is* edible...it says so on the bottle. Oh. Oh. Oscar. Don't worry a thing. Worst case, we'll go out for dinner. Or, you...we can make something else together the way we are supposed to...with the Astroglide. That's what took me so long...I was wondering why it wasn't in the bathroom or bedroom, because without it literally would be a sore point. I couldn't find it and forgotten I'd put it in the kitchen away from prying eyes."

"What?" I didn't get it. I was thinking how I wanted to make it into the bedroom, where she said she had planned to make me comfortable, when now tangled into uncomfortable by my awkward confusion.

"Oh," she sighed with a pat on my cheek. "Don't worry." She squinted at tiny ingredients to repeat each aloud. "The silicone is odd, but not too odd as an allowed commercial food additive. The label warns," as she read aloud, "'Ingestible. No harmful side effects.' Then they have the legal black box warning though it is not FDA-vetted, 'Anyone with known allergies to these ingredients should avoid usage.' I think it's okay. If you're concerned...clearly you weren't...I can google these online. What you cooked looks so good, thank you, and smells to heaven good enough to devour. I'm so hungry," she added with a glint.

"What?" I asked. I could not understand how oil would not be edible and oddly termed 'ingestible' despite the unexpected enhancers. It seemed like a modernist *Jetson* brand I wouldn't buy when olive oil lacked adulteration of superfluous additives, and in portions bigger than four ounces.

"Oh," Lauren said as she realized I hadn't the first hint about Astroglide. "Sorry it's even in the kitchen. I get embarrassed leaving intimate things in the bathroom where my kids and business guests might see them in this small condo, so I hid it here in the pantry, like I said, with the cooking oil."

I asked, "What? I seem stuck saying 'what.' I understood now it isn't going to poison us. I tried to use your reading glasses by the phone. The ingredients were too small, so I figured it was probably okay even if I didn't recognize the brand. The oil smelled and tasted rosy, so unless you're allergic to rose water, but then you wouldn't have this in the kitchen. I'm really so sorry if I've ruined dinner for you..."

Lauren laughed in relief and she reached forward to hug me. "You're a sweet man. You're a winner for me. You're not poisoning our relationship tonight with Astroglide. Rather it will bring us closer. We're gonna eat now, and then eat some later," she said hoisting her eyebrows. She laughed again seeing my persistent puzzlement. "Oh. You don't know? Is that what you missed?"

I take it too personally when I am wrong, oft aggressive in becoming defensive. “I don’t get it,” I said lost with the context of the mistake now thankfully with Lauren after exonerating me by her admission.

She laughed again. “You’re gonna get it tonight, I promise.” She reached around my waist as high as she comfortably could while crushing her pelvis into mine. “I’m so ready for you!”

I smiled lamely. Now, it was my turn. I held up my two hands like hers when first surprised and looked into her face. I knew what she meant, and how could I not, but not in the larger context to the choice of oils still in my fear of a ruined dinner and with it any chance for her evening plans or mine yet voiced.

“Don’t worry, Oscar.” She laughed again. “We’ll use the Astroglide later,” she said with a wink and then another inflated wink just to be sure I picked up on her cues, “by way of its intended usage.”

“What?” I asked again. “I’m still missing what’s obvious to you.”

She laughed at my persistent puzzlement. She then added explicitly, “So you’ll know, since I realize now you don’t, it’s a sexual lubricant for me.”

I was flustered more suddenly, if that were possible, with the news of my awful misuse.

Instead, Lauren warmed into an embrace. She called me ‘endearing,’ thus breaking the ice as elaborate dinner efforts succumbed first to her dessert enjoyed backwards from the typical script.

Later, my friend Nikki, who had introduced me to Lauren, asked about this date. I related dinner had become appetizer to more than conversation. He latched onto my innuendo and added his own to see me squirm through what little I would reveal in hesitancy for such reserved matters. He laughed with his well-placed snorts. “What a loving recipe,” he sighed, “Astroglide on toast, please.”

“Funny for you,” I said. “You weren’t there on the cusp of my kitchen disaster.”

Nikki asked shrewdly with his head turned down askance, “Are you sure you didn’t engineer this?”

I answered, “It wasn’t intentional,” though I shook my head hesitant whether he could be correct.

Nikki remarked to my bashfulness, “As Shakespeare said in *Romeo and Juliet*, ‘Tis an ill cook that cannot lick his own fingers,’ or other nether parts.”