

For the love of the English language...

By Wesley Trobaugh



Imagine you are in Seville and hungry...here are some of your options...

Anyone up for some vegetable cake? How about some grilled babies? Does the tune cake sing? What is canaria picon sauce? What about the cheese sauce? Nobody mentions that it's CABRALES!!!

Now don't get me wrong. I and every other English speaker in the world truly appreciate the effort restaurateurs make so that we can understand what they offer us for lunch. However, I have one piece of advice to give. If you don't know a word or

have even the slightest doubt, please, pick up a dictionary or ask someone who knows!

The photo you see in this week's Weekly Letter is one that I took in Seville. I took it because it was one of the few that would come out clearly in a photograph. I did not take it because it was the only one. My trip to the South of Spain gave me hundreds of chuckles¹. I thank God that I know Spanish. If I had to rely on the English translations, I think I would have to resort² to eating bread and water.

This practice of "loose" translation is not limited to the South of Spain or even Spain at all. It's not even limited to English (how many times have French tourists turned down "soupe de poison?") Anywhere you go in the world where tourists have a bite to eat³, take a tourist bus, or look at the stained-glass windows⁴ of a cathedral, you will find these humorous, sometimes extremely confusing translations into other languages.

I am convinced that nearly everyone in the world knows someone who speaks English (or X language) well or fairly well. They may be a native speaker or they may have lived in an English-speaking country. Either way, they KNOW English and can probably help out with these translations. I just don't understand why these things are not edited before being published, painted, or printed on an awning⁵!

To have some fun with these, take a look at <http://www.english.com/>. There are mostly Japanese examples here; they are experts at humorous translations. It will give you some laughs, I hope, because I know you all speak English much better than this. And next time you are in a tourist area, take a look at the English menu. Perhaps you can even give some tips to the management!

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¹ laughs

² have recourse (recurrir)

³ informal, eat something (picar algo)

⁴ colored windows, usually in churches (vidrieras)

⁵ toldo