



Wordplay David Aistle

Six months ago, I cast doubt on the achacha. Call me sheltered, but I'd never heard of this Amazonian succulent. The word sounded more like a dance, a wag of the maracas, rather than some "egg-shaped fruit with reddish-orange skin and pearly white flesh".

So goes the Macquarie's definition, a con job in my books. The dictionary reckons the achacha is a super fruit. Super-suss, if you ask me. Its oddity derives from an indigenous tongue of Bolivia, where achachairu means honey kiss.

But really, the achacha's chutzpah! How dare this bogus mangosteen steal the limelight from more worthy neologisms. Who's ever encountered this tropical furphy, compared with realer notions such as regift or tiger mother, beachy or doof-doof? None of these last four scored berths in the Macquarie, usurped by a mythical jungle-berry.

Thus my tantrum ran its course, and there the matter rested. Until

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a box arrived on my verandah. Timmy, my sniffer dog, failed to detect any traces of explosives, or boiled rabbit. I prised the box open to find a jar of jelly and a letter.

"You seem to know the word," wrote Helen Hill, "but not the fruit."

Helen is the achacha's chief marketer, which suggests the fruit exists. The jelly was Exhibit A, along with some achacha-blossom honey.

After an agreement with the Bolivian government, orchardists in north Queensland now grow achacha aplenty. And might I add: the stuff is delicious. Like mandarin sorbet. Pretty heady for a word I thought was fraudulent.

Makes me lament that we can't sample every dubious word, savour its realness on the tongue. Take umfy for example, the opposite of comfy. Or yarb, a person who talks about his job all the time.

Never heard of them? Not surprising. Collins Dictionary is running a contest until the end of

August, seeking words that warrant inclusion in their database. Both yarb and umfy are among the 2000 nominees. Every hour the list keeps growing, with a prize a day for the suggestion most likely.

Mind you, the dodgier candidates are leading by a long chalk. What chance do you give doncrete, being the cement that mobsters put in their victim's shoes? Or hoplundie, which means "the stark and poignant absence of soaps, lotions, shampoos, pebbles, mirrors, postcards and inexplicable tiny chrome instruments in the bathroom after your girlfriend has moved out". Breaking up is never easy.

Different from achacha, a weirdness you can verify, this outsourcing exercise has attracted the flimsy and the flaky. Neard is a neck beard. Jisme Misali is a coloured aura that radiates some three metres around your body.

Ned is the past of need. Such drastic bids seem less words than the fruit of so many fevered brows, minus the marmalade to back it up.

Oodles of suggestions betray the suggester. I'm sure mrsbro (the nominee) has an office trauma in her past to propose voluntold: "When your boss volunteers you to do something." Or jawynne rues a recent bender to offer wozwocked: "The strange feeling you have after a night of drinking where you suspect that you may have done or said something inappropriate." While dougal48 must supervise a young brood to suggest fastly: "How you need to complete tasks when you have children."

Then again, some ideas have legs. Meanderthal is a perfect word to identify any slow-moving trog monopolising your footpath. Offendant is a passable synonym for plaintiff, while the rise of Saw and other gory franchises cry out for the subgenre of gorrer. I'm also fond of blunderboss – fatcats who claim gross payouts, but never gross incompetence.

You can't tell me any of these inventions fall short of turntablist (a skilled vinyl DJ) or cash mob (a flash mob that triggers a spending spree), which Collins has already embraced as new language. Register your own inkling here (collinsdictionary.com), and don't forget to forward a box of folate-rich evidence to swing the jury.

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