



So there I was strolling across Walmart's parking lot, studying my wife's shopping list – omnipresent in the hands of many husbands. Watch him next time, the lone husband shopper scratching his head, eyebrows furrowed, trying to decipher The List. He'll bounce from one side of the store to the other ten times before asking for directions then give up, happy he found most of the items.

"Sliced turkey, strawberries, Advil, paper towels, *chèvre* ..." *Chèvre? Is that right? What the heck is chèvre?* As an experienced husband, I didn't panic. I whipped out my cell and called home. No answer. No worry, I'll call her cell. *Uh, oh, no answer. You're in a mell of a hess, now panic!*

"Calm down," I said to myself. "Come on, if you can teach at a University, hit a squirrel's butt on the birdfeeder at fifty yards with a BB gun, even try a law case, surely you can find *chèvre* at Walmart."

You need to know my wife is a foodie. (food•ie n. *Slang* A person who has an ardent or refined interest in food; a gourmet.) Foodies are not to be trusted. One time she wrote "dulce" on the list. Cost me an hour. Yet another, "organic arugula." I discovered there is probably no such thing as "arugula."

There are problems with foodies. Take my wife, for instance. She dances around the kitchen like a ballerina, slinging twenty ingredients into a dish, supposedly going by a recipe, but I know she sometimes *estimates*. I've seen it. How can she be trusted to balance the checkbook when she can't even stay inside the lines when recording a check in the register? "Balance the check book?" she may chuckle. "Nah, just estimate it." See my point? She can't be trusted.

So there I was with no clue. I scratched my head, grabbed a buggy, and set off in search. Since she's a foodie, I suspected *chèvre* may be food related. But at Walmart, you can't assume such things. You can buy anything from wart cream to ice

cream, a weed eater to Velveeta. You can get a breakfast table and sign up for cable, go for a loan and buy cobblestone. *That's also the best part of Walmart – ninety-eleven aisles of stuff!* Point is, if I were at a mere grocery store, the possibilities for *chèvre* would exponentially decrease.

“May as well be logical, start on one side and work my way across.” Needing BBs anyway, I wheeled to Sporting Goods. Even had the presence of mind to slow down and flip some Advil into the buggy. There wasn't a clerk in Sporting Goods, never is when you need one. I lingered by fishing tackle until one ambled by wearing shorts, legs so skinny he looked like he was riding a chicken.

“Excuse me, sir. I was wondering if you have any *chèvre*?”

He posed like Rodin's *The Thinker* for a moment. “We might. Let me check.” He walked behind the counter and looked at a paper. “Nossir. All we got right now is Canadian Night Crawlers.” I know she didn't send me to buy worms, but I got to thinking ... “I'll take a carton of those Night Crawlers, please.”

I left Sporting Goods and spotted a clerk in Automotive, a rare sighting. *What the heck.* “Excuse me, sir. Do you have anything called *chèvre*?”

He contorted his face and pulled on his ear. “Do you mean gas? You looking for gas, like a Chevron station? Some Walmarts sell gas but we don't. Sorry.”

“Roger that. Have a good one.”

*Where to now? Chèvre sounds French, maybe a French bra.* I wandered over to Lingerie. Never shopped there before. After making sure no friends or colleagues were in sight, I started looking at name tags on bras, panties, and the like. What a shocker! The smaller, the more costly. Kids these days. I was about convinced nothing in Lingerie was called *chèvre* when a lady startled me out of deep concentration.

“Can I help you find something, honey?” A Walmart lady with dyed red hair was looking right at me.

“No ... ah, I mean yes. Actually, I was looking for *chèvre*.”

“Honey, she don't come in 'til four. I'll be happy to help you.”

“No. That's okay. Have a good one.”

I peeled out of Lingerie, rounded the corner and Music stared me down. It was possible. She listens to classical and such on the radio and has some of those CDs. *What the heck*. I hailed the gent behind the counter, a very large young man with music muffling out of his headphones.

“Excuse me, do you have any CDs by a group called *chèvre*?”

“Umh. Never heard of ‘em, but I’ll check.”

While big guy was checking his computer, I perused Rock and discovered Paul Simon cut a new CD. I tossed it in beside the BBs. “Yep, I’ve got Chevra. Looks like it’s not in stock but I can have it here in two days.”

*You’re kidding me. I found it. I cracked the code. That was too easy.* “Just to be sure, does it say what type of music?”

“Says, ‘Cheesy boy band pop music with Jewish lyrics.’ Says ‘it doesn’t get much better’.”

*Holy Toledo, say it ain’t so. What has she gotten into?* Decisions, decisions. *Do we know any bar mitzvah parents? Best to be safe.* “Yeah, please order it.” I wrote my name and email.

Having second thoughts about the CD as I headed to Groceries, it dawned on me as I dropped in a monster-sized bundle of paper towels, maybe it is a food item.

Try the phone again. *Where the heck is she?* Then I remembered – the beauty salon. I was on my own and it was crunch time. *Think, think – chèvre ... Wine!* “Hah, of course,” I proclaimed to my Night Crawlers as I jiggled their carton. “That’s it, boys, she’s heard about some new wine.”

I started reading wine labels. *Man, do they have a lot of wine at Walmart.* Ten minutes later I was dizzy. Luckily, I noticed an important-looking man rushing down the aisle. His tie was cinched all the way up and he carried important-looking papers. *Could be the manager of the whole shootin’ match.*

“Excuse me, sir, I’m looking for *chèvre*.”

“Sir, I don’t think we carry it, but if you don’t mind, please check with the Deli ... back, left corner of the building.”

“But of course. Thank you very much.”

I hoofed it to Deli to discover they were short-handed for the lunchtime crowd. I carefully perused the display cases. No *chèvre*. I took my place in line, waited, and watched. Colonel

Sanders would be jealous at the amount of fried chicken moving out of that place. A line stacked up behind me. Finally, my turn.

“I would like some *chèvre*, please.”

“Some what?” The lady behind the counter in an apron and hairnet hollered.

I leaned across the case and spoke in hushed tones. “*Chèvre*.”

“*Chèvre*?” she yelled. “I ain’t never heard of it. Hey, Arlene,” her voice carried halfway across the store. I felt my face flushing. “We got any *chèvre*?”

“What’s that?” Arlene shouted.

I was melting, trying to be small.

“I ain’t never heard of it. What is it?” Arlene walked over, wiping her hands on her apron, abandoning her customers. I felt irritated eyes staring me down.

“Sir, what is it?”

*How the heck would I know ...*

“It’s goat cheese,” a testy voice spoke from behind. I turned and glanced at a short, gray haired lady three deep behind me. *Another foodie, no doubt.*

*Cheese! Sounds like something she’d want.* But how was I to know *chèvre* is some fancy cheese. I’m no foodie. My knowledge of cheese is limited to yellow or white, holes or no holes. I haven’t graduated in the kitchen beyond microwave popcorn and peanut butter and banana sandwiches. Hint: Try toasting the bread. Elvis fried his in butter.

I straightened my posture. “Of course, goat cheese.”

I sensed my fellow shoppers’ wrath. *Who peed in the punchbowl?*

“I got to be back at work in eleven minutes,” one of them moaned. “I left my dog in the car,” another grouched.

“Sir, we ain’t got no goat cheese.” The temperature at the Deli was rising. I coolly tapped the glass as if nothing was awry. “Then give me a pound of this sliced turkey,” I mumbled, “thin-sliced.”

The mood had grown ugly, so I took the turkey and bowed out with no eye contact. I paid up, so flustered that I forget the strawberries. My Night Crawlers and I got the heck out of there.

I'll be back tomorrow. But for today, since my interest in food is neither ardent nor refined, I think I'll see if the fish are biting.