THE LOBSTER REBELLION

I am pleased to report that the scientific community has finally stopped wasting time on the origins of the universe and started dealing with the important question, which is: Are lobsters really just big insects?

I have always maintained that they are. I personally see no significant difference between a lobster and, say, a giant Madagascar hissing cockroach, which is a type of cockroach that grows to approximately the size of William Howard Taft (1857–1930). If a group of diners were sitting in a nice restaurant, and the waiter were to bring them each a freshly killed, steaming-hot Madagascar hissing cockroach, they would not put on silly bibs and eat it with butter. No, they would run, retching, directly from the restaurant to the All-Nite Drive-Thru Lawsuit Center. And yet these very same people will pay $24.95 apiece to eat a lobster, despite the fact that it displays all three of the classic biological characteristics of an insect, namely:

1. It has way more legs than necessary.
2. There is no way you would ever pet it.
3. It does not respond to simple commands such as “Here, boy!”

I do not eat lobsters, although I once had a close call. I was visiting my good friends Tom and Pat Schroth, who live in Maine (state motto: “Cold, but Damp”). Being generous and hospitable people, Tom and Pat went out and purchased, as a special treat for me, the largest lobster in the history of the Atlantic Ocean, a lobster that had probably been responsible for sinking many commercial vessels before it was finally apprehended by nuclear submarines. This lobster was big enough to feed a coastal Maine village for a year, and there it was, sprawling all over my plate, with scary insectoid legs and eyeballs shooting out in all directions, while Tom and Pat, my gracious hosts, smiled happily at me, waiting for me to put this thing in my mouth.

Remember when you were a child, and your mom wouldn’t let you leave the dinner table until you ate all your Brussels sprouts, and so you took your fork and mashed them into smaller and smaller pieces in hopes of eventually reducing them to individual Brussels-sprout molecules that would be absorbed into the atmosphere and disappear? That was similar to the approach I took with the giant lobster.

“Mmmm-MMMM!” I said, hacking away at the thing on my plate and, when nobody was looking, concealing the pieces under my dinner roll, in the salad, in my napkin, anywhere I could find.

Tom and Pat: I love you dearly, and if you should ever have an electrical problem that turns out to be caused by a seven-pound wad of old lobster pieces stuffed into the dining-room wall socket, I am truly sorry.

Anyway, my point is that lobsters have long been sus-
pected, by me at least, of being closet insects, which is why I was very pleased recently when my alert journalism colleague Steve Doig referred me to an Associated Press article concerning a discovery by scientists at the University of Wisconsin. The article, headlined GENE LINKS SPIDERS AND FLIES TO LOBSTERS, states that not only do lobsters, flies, spiders, millipedes, etc., contain the exact same gene, but they also are all descended from a single common ancestor: Howard Stern.

No, seriously, the article states that the ancestor “probably was a wormlike creature.” Yum! Fetch the melted butter!

And that is not all. According to articles sent in by alert readers (this was on the front page of the New York Times), scientists in Denmark recently discovered that some lobsters have a weird little pervert organism living on their lips. Yes. I didn’t even know that lobsters had lips, but it turns out that they do, and these lips are the stomping ground of a tiny creature called Symbion pandora (literally, “a couple of Greek words”). The zoology community, which does not get out a lot, is extremely excited about Symbion pandora, because it reproduces differently from all other life forms. According to various articles, when Symbion pandora is ready to have a baby, its digestive system “collapses and is reconstituted into a larva,” which the parent then gives birth to by “extruding” it from its “posterior.” In other words—correct me if I am wrong here—this thing basically reproduces by pooping.

So to summarize: If you’re looking for a hearty entrée that (1) is related to spiders; (2) is descended from a worm; and (3) has mutant baby-poopers walking around on its lips, then you definitely want a lobster. I myself plan to continue avoiding them, just as I avoid oysters, which are clearly—scientists should look into this next—members of the phlegm family. Have you ever seen oysters reproduce? Neither have I, but I would not be surprised to learn that the process involves giant underwater nostrils.

And don’t get me started on clams. Recently I sat across from a person who was deliberately eating clams; she’d open up a shell, and there, in plain view, would be this stark naked clam, brazenly showing its organs, like a high school biology experiment. My feeling is that if a restaurant is going to serve those things, it should put little loincloths on them.

I believe that Mother Nature gave us eyes because she did not want us to eat this type of food. Mother Nature clearly intended for us to get our food from the “patty” group, which includes hamburgers, fish sticks, and McNuggets—foods that have had all of their organs safely removed in someplace far away such as Nebraska. That is where I stand on this issue, and if any qualified member of the lobster, clam, or phlegm-in-a-shell industry wishes to present a rebuttal, I hereby extend this offer: Get your own column.