

## How Do You Say 'Hot Dog' in Latin?

*This witty article was found many years ago in the "New York Times" by **George K. Plohn**, himself a multilingual professional translator, and it is presented to you in a condensed version, with a broad smile... It may also help chef Bob Wasserman in writing our daily menus...*



REMEMBER your ninth-grade Latin lessons? Here's a test:

What is an "escarium lavator"? Or a "birota automataria levis"?

Doesn't sound like Horace to you? Not surprising, because these are the new Latin terms for "dishwasher" and "motorcycle."

The Vatican has for the first time published a single-volume edition of its Latin-Italian dictionary, the *Lexicon Recentis Latinitatis*, and it includes not only divine diction but modern terms that have had no equal in Latin -- like pornographic film, which has been translated into "pellicula cinematographica obscena." Indeed, Cicero can now visit the "orbium phonographicorum theca" (disco) before practising "oppugnatio inermis Iaponica" (karate).

This new lexicon is a 728-page monster dictionary, which had previously been published in two volumes, A to L and M to Z. The book is necessary because while the official language of the Roman Catholic Church is Latin, the working language has long been Italian.

Available in bookstores around the Vatican, the dictionaries are selling briskly, said Giuliano Piva, a salesman at the Ancora Bookstore in front of St. Peter's Basilica. In the first 16 days after arrival, six were sold, not bad at \$115 apiece, and impressive considering the packaging. The Vatican published 500 in total. Mr. Piva attributed the modest success to what he called the Latin lovers (Latini feminarum captatores).

The Vatican Latin Foundation (Fondatum Latinitas), which put the book together, is already working on a new edition, due out in a few years, according to Pietro Villa, an official with the foundation. "There are so many new words to add, mainly technological words or those dealing with information," Mr. Villa said.

Indeed, the dictionary gives Latin words for every aspect of life. You can order a meal in Latin. Want lasagna? Ask for "pasta segmentata." A hamburger? Grill an "isicium Hamburgense." A hot dog? "Pastillum botello fartum."

Or you can talk politics: A "conformitatis osor" (hippie) and a "communista" (communist) butt heads with a "novi Hitleriani motus assecla" (neo-Nazi).

Hitleriani? What kind of Latin is that?

Call it made-up Latin, just like "iazensis musica" ("music of the jazz variety"). "Iazensis" may look Latin, but "i" is the "j" of Latin.

"This is essentially an admission of defeat," said R. J. Tarrant, a professor of Latin language and literature at Harvard. "When all else fails, stick a Latin ending on a word and move on."

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