

## Jesus Potato

I saw the face of Jesus in my baked potato.

It happened last night during my solitary dinner. I baked a potato and decided to get fancy with it so I stuffed it with cheese, garlic, chives and butter, and tossed it back in the oven for a few minutes while I finished watching the news. Little did I know...

When the news was over, I took my potato from the oven and set it on a plate. Uninspired, I decided to eat just the potato, without green beans or any other balancing of my diet. I plopped down in front of the TV and unwrapped the foil—and there was the face of Jesus, staring up at me from the wrinkled skin of an Idaho Russet!

I'm not a Catholic or a Protestant. I used to be both, if you count my ancestors. I take my religious experiences as they come, or just make 'em up as I go along. And seeing Jesus' face on the skin of my potato was a religious experience—for about two seconds. Then I remembered all those news stories of sightings of The Virgin Mary in glazed bathroom windows; and of the Muslim pilgrimages to England to see some crazy eggplant whose seeds spelled out the name of Allah; and of the fundamentalist bees who spelled out somethin' religious in their honeycomb.

All that stuff seemed a little weak to me. Now, if they'd opened up the eggplant and found a gold nugget inside, it might have been somethin' to write home about. If I could just figure out some way to squeeze a few bucks out of this Jesus Potato thing, maybe I'd have a religious experience that would last a little longer than two seconds.

What to do?

I called my friend Dolores, an ex-Catholic. She told me to eat the potato before it got stone cold. —No way!

I set Jesus Potato on the kitchen counter and went back into the living room. I needed to watch TV for a while (I think better when the TV is on). When the show was over, I took another look at Jesus Potato. It was gettin' so you kinda had to use your imagination a little bit in order to see Jesus. I figured I'd better get to preservin' it pretty quick or I was gonna lose it. I headed for the garage.

After rummaging around in the garage for a while, I came up with a can of varnish. Great! A few coats of varnish and my fortune would be secure.

Would a one dollar "donation" be a fair price to charge the 50,000 pilgrims of the weak-minded variety who would flock to my door for a glimpse of this recently-baked relic? Two dollars? Why not five? —I made a mental note to check into accepting plastic.

Would the pilgrims crawling toward my botanical shrine require knee-pads for their bloodied limbs? —A basketball supply house!

And, I could sell rights to fast-food chains to set up booths along the route. My mental list was getting a little long. I figured I'd better get a lawyer to handle the paperwork and incorporate: Jesus Potato, Inc.

I hurried back into the house with the varnish—but I couldn't find the dang Jesus Potato! Had I left it on the counter—or had I shoved it in the refrigerator? I opened the refrigerator. No Jesus Potato. Had I left it in front of the TV? I stomped into the living room. No Jesus Potato.

Then I heard a scrabbling sound coming from a corner of the kitchen. The cat!

If I wasn't such a macho son-of-a-bitch I would have cried. Ragtime, my cat—an atheist—had snagged Jesus Potato off the counter and was batting it around on the floor like a catnip-laced toy. Well, what could I have expected? A cat brain is about the size of a ping-pong ball, and holds about the same amount of air. Ain't much room up there for things spiritual and transcendent—like money.

I pushed Ragtime away from Jesus Potato and examined it for damage. Shit! Looked like Charlie Manson now—another reli-

gious figure—complete with a little cat-scratched swastika on his forehead. —Ain't no money in a Manson Potato.

With great regret I dumped Manson Potato into Ragtime's bowl, reproaching myself for not having immediately whipped out the Polaroid when the spirit had moved me and the vision had been fresh.

—But, wait! How 'bout a new, microwave fast food: “Potato Manson”? I could stuff it with cheese, garlic, chives and butter. Ragtime could do the swastikas...