

Longing For Lysol and a Burger

By Fredricka R. Maister - June 6, 2021



Disinfecting wipes, a thermometer, bottles of hand sanitizer, masks, mega rolls of TP and paper towels, boxes of Kleenex, and cool purple latex gloves. The only item missing from my overstocked arsenal of anti-COVID household products: a can of Lysol Disinfectant Spray.

I used to always have a can of Lysol on hand. My luck, I ran out of it just as the novel coronavirus and the hoarders struck, snatching up every last can on the planet.

For almost a year, I've been trying to score a can—one can!—in stores or online, but the product is perennially out-of-stock which has made me want it even more.

The clerk at my local CVS told me the store sometimes receives a limited supply of Lysol spray, which the staff puts out in the wee hours of the morning. Since the store is open 24/7, people line up to get first dibs on the new inventory. The Lysol, along with other items endangered in the Age of COVID, are gone within hours.

I have a friend, a night owl, who happened to be in the store a few months ago at midnight when she spotted a box labeled "Lysol" in a stack of boxes waiting to be unpacked. Without hesitation, she pried open the box with her fingernails and pulled out a can. If only I had been with her, I could've checked Lysol spray off my wish list.

I've repeatedly complained in person at CVS. The staff's only solution to my plight is for me to wait in line in the middle of the night with the desperadoes ready for a scrimmage in Aisle 6, Cleaners. Even for Lysol, I have my limits.

So, I've had to accept the inconvenient reality that Lysol Disinfectant Spray may continue to elude me until this pandemic is over.

I've also experienced a relentless longing for a hamburger due to COVID-19. I almost never indulge in red meat, but there is something familiar and comforting about a burger slapped with lettuce, tomato, onion and a slice of melted cheese, served with crispy fries drenched in ketchup, that can satisfy my burger craving for months on end. A take-out, reheated-at-home burger doesn't taste the same. I like my burgers hot off the grill.

With the reopening of restaurants, especially the pub across the street, the aroma of grilled hamburger wafting through the air has constantly reminded me of my last burger eaten only a few days before self-quarantining. My fear of eating out in a pandemic, inside or even outside, has trumped the instant gratification I know a hamburger could deliver.

I've been surveilling the pub for the last few months to check out the outdoor dining situation. Tables are properly spaced. Staff and customers, when not eating, are masked. Weeknights are quieter and street traffic is minimal. "Maybe it's time to take the plunge while the weather is still cooperative," I thought.

With my heart and mind set on finally having a hamburger, I called up my friend Phyllis, a like-minded COVID-phobe also in need of a burger fix.

"Look, we have a window of opportunity before it gets really cold. Let's go to the pub tomorrow night," I said.

Phyllis was game so we, with some trepidation, ventured out to the pub. Our dining experience did not disappoint. We savored every last bite of our burgers and fries. "I'm good to go for another six months," I told Phyllis.

Sharing a meal with a friend and chatting about things unrelated to COVID felt like old times, a much-needed reprieve from our new reality.

After eating, Phyllis asked if I wanted to walk with her to CVS. "Sure, not that they have anything I need or want," I said.

As I browsed the aisles with little or no inventory, Phyllis suddenly called out, "Look!" She pointed to four cans of Lysol Spray in the center of an otherwise empty shelf. I stared in disbelief.

"Do you think it's the real thing?" I asked. I picked up a can. Sure enough, "Lysol Disinfectant Spray...Kills 99.9% of Viruses & Bacteria."

No one can accuse me of being a hoarder. The happiest of campers, I left CVS with my one can.

For me, just the mundane acts of being able to hold a can of Lysol Disinfectant Spray and eat a hamburger in a restaurant assumed monumental significance that night, restoring a sense of normalcy to my life turned topsy-turvy by COVID-19. For a few hours, for the first time in many months, I forgot I was living in the midst of a deadly pandemic.

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