

"Pre-sifted" flour saves bakers effort

POLLY'S POINTERS



POLLY FISHER

DEAR POLLY — The all-purpose flour I buy is labeled "pre-sifted." Is there every any need to sift flour nowadays? What about when using a recipe that says to sift the flour? — NANCY

DEAR NANCY — You probably don't have to sift pre-sifted all-purpose flour for most ordinary baking recipes such as breads, quick breads, muffins, pancakes, biscuits, pastry crusts, etc. Just spoon the flour lightly into your measuring cup and level it off with a straight edge. However, for the most delicate cakes such as angel food or very fine butter cakes, sifting can give you a lighter, finer-grained product. And don't forget that not all flours are pre-sifted — cake flour should be sifted before using, for example.

As for older recipes that specify sifting the flour, it also depends on the product. For most things, I wouldn't bother, but for delicate cakes prepared for a special occasion, sifting will give you a better result. — POLLY

RECIPE OF THE WEEK: Yogurt cheese, which is yogurt drained in a cheesecloth-lined colander for several hours, contributes a smooth, creamy texture to this delicious dressing for linguine. For a version even lower in fat, eliminate or reduce the butter in the recipe and use non-fat yogurt for making your yogurt cheese.

Cook 8 ounces linguine according to package directions. Drain and place in a heated bowl. Combine 2 tablespoons melted butter with 1 cup soft yogurt cheese and heat over a very low flame, stirring constantly, or in a microwave oven until just warmed through. Do not allow mixture to come to a boil. Pour over the linguine, sprinkle on 1/4 cup freshly grated Parmesan cheese and freshly ground pepper to taste, and toss gently so all the linguine is well coated with sauce. Serve immediately.

Yogurt can add flavor, and reduce calories and fat, in many delicious dishes. For more recipes such as herbed yogurt cheese, yogurt bread

and grilled yogurt chicken, plus complete directions for making your own yogurt and yogurt cheese, order my newsletter "Cooking with Yogurt."

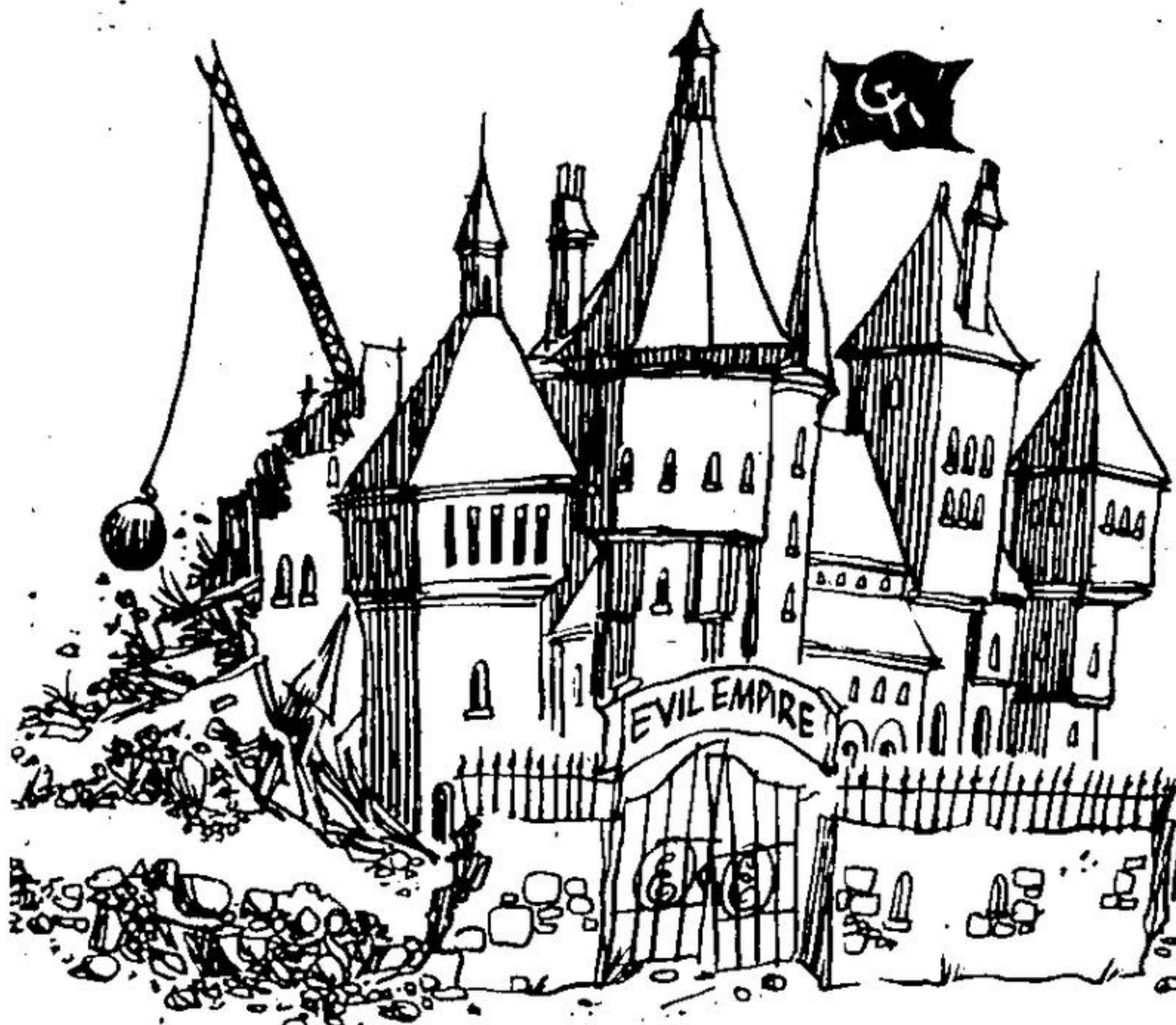
DEAR POLLY — I'm constantly confounded by recipes that call for "6 medium potatoes," or "3 cups mashed potatoes." One measurement is too vague, and the other doesn't let you know how much to buy! (I'd like to see the look on my produce manager's face when I walk into the store and ask for 3 cups of mashed potatoes!) Why can't recipe writers specify the weight in pounds of produce, so you really know how much to use? — M.W.G.

DEAR M.W.G. — Yes, in the best of all possible worlds, every recipe would include the information you ask for, but of course we know they don't. I'm as guilty of this as other recipe writers. Here's a handy capsule of potato information that might help you while you search for that perfect cookbook:

- One pound potatoes equals:
 - About 3 medium potatoes;
 - 3 cups peeled and sliced potatoes;
 - 2 1/4 cups peeled and diced;
 - 2 cups mashed; and
 - 2 cups French fried.
- Two pounds medium potatoes equals about six servings.

With this information on hand, you should be able to cook some delicious potato creations from the recipes in my newsletter "Potatoes! Potatoes! Potatoes!" including some tasty ideas for topping low-cal baked potatoes, a potato-ham soup, crisp potato skins, several potato salads and side dishes, potato main dishes and even potato desserts!

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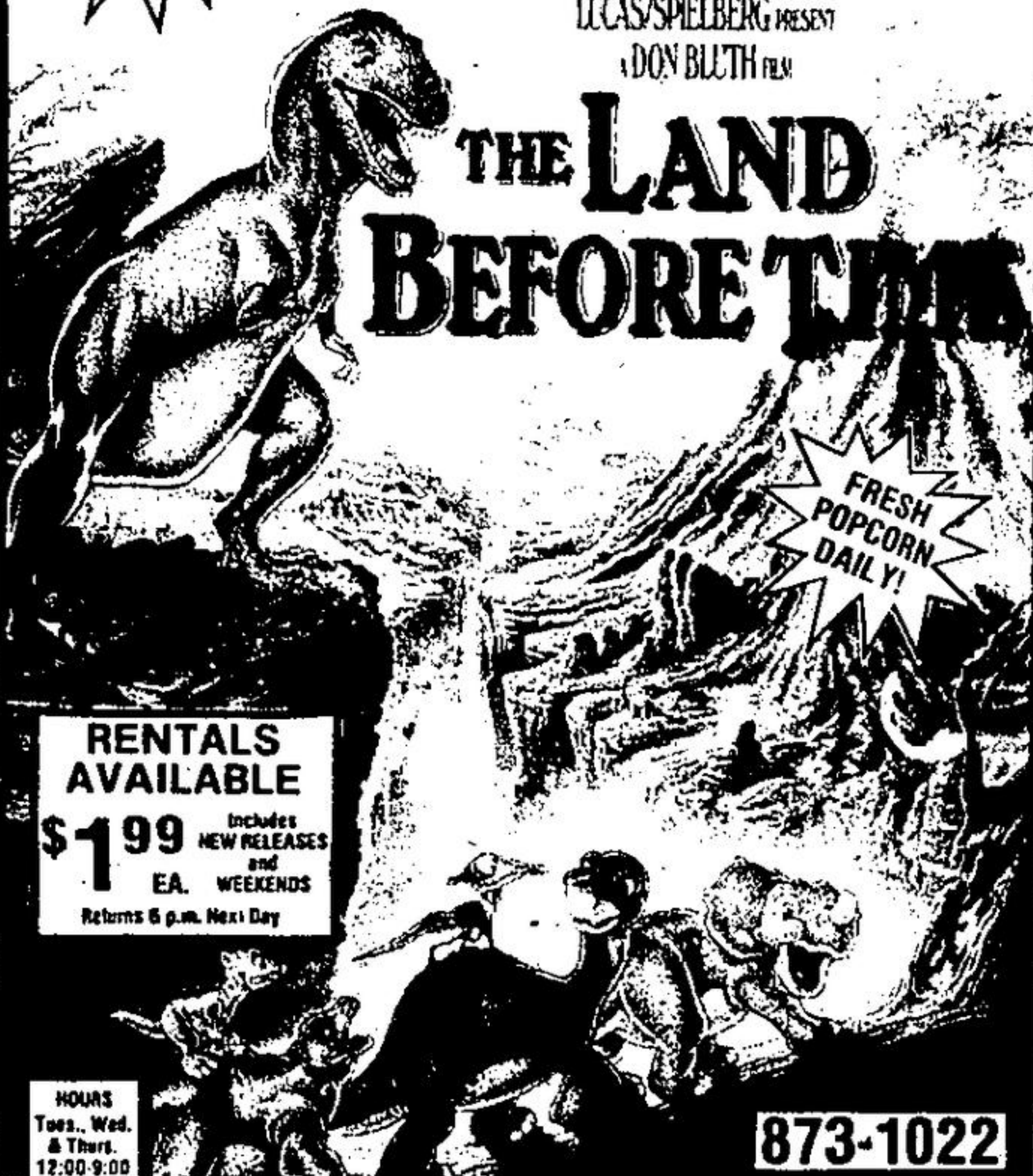
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