

Secret Pleasures? We Are All Guilty By Kara Martin

ER, or *Urgencias*, can now be seen on AXN at 4 and 8:30 pm, Monday through Friday, in English, with very few commercials. I have to admit I am an *ER*-junkie. For those of you who have not seen this show, it is pure escapist drama with, in the earliest episodes, George Clooney to boot. How can a TV show make me settle into a state of absolute hypnotic bliss? I think it could be the reminder of one of my favorite ways to spend Thursday evenings while I was living in Texas—tuned into the tube. For me, watching *ER* is the epitome of a guilty pleasure.

What is a “guilty pleasure” you might ask? As one friend of mine put it, a guilty pleasure is actually a *sanity saver* in disguise. Especially when so many of us find ourselves thousands of miles, or kilometers, from our native homes, guilty pleasures/sanity savers help us to feel more comfortable with our new surroundings.

A guilty pleasure can come in all shapes and sizes. For me, the simple act of going to the McAuto from time to time for a Big Mac and a Coca-Cola Light fits the bill. One former INC member who has since moved on to other parts of the world had this delightful experience while fulfilling her Mc-guilty pleasure. She noticed the addition of *patatas deluxe* on the menu and asked her daughter if she'd like to try them with her Happy Meal. While she was ordering the Happy Meal she decided to order *otro patatas deluxe* for herself. Even though the meal cost a bit more than she would have thought, she accepted the food and drove home. Imagine her surprise when she opened the bag and realized there were *eight (ocho not otro) extra patatas deluxe*. Sometimes our guilty pleasures get lost in the translation.

Guilty pleasures can be found in the most unsuspecting places. I nearly cried last year when Carrefour began selling Mountain Dew. And don't even get me started on being able to find peanut butter in just about any supermarket in the city. The addition of Starbucks into the Spanish market has provided us gringos with yet another way to satisfy our java jones.

Finding a new bookstore with a vast collection of international books is a fabulous way to ease your translating-tired mind. I recently stumbled upon one such bookstore, right around the corner from a Subway sandwich shop, and could have spent hundreds of euros on books and movies.

Whenever my husband pokes fun at my craving for pan pizza, I remind him that he undoubtedly would have been ordering tele-paella like a *loco* and drinking Fanta Limón if only he could have while living in the United States. No matter where you are from, sometimes the key to saving your sanity really is a guilty pleasure. So park me in front of the television with George Clooney saving the lives of the pediatric ER patients, give me a Starbucks' caramel *macchiato* to sip, have waiting the latest New York Times' bestseller to devour in English and you will have created the picture of my ultimate guilty pleasure. What's yours?

Kara, her Spanish husband and two kids have been living in Spain for three years. Some of her favorite guilty pleasure-quenching places are: Taste of America, Hesper & Suarez, The American Store, and, of course, Starbucks.