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SHORTCUTS BLOG

A SIDWAYS LOOK AT THE NEWS

Why is cheese the most shoplifted food item in the world?

Antony Worrall Thompson was far from alone in stealing cheese from a supermarket



Antony Worrall Thompson ... apologised for stealing cheese from a supermarket. Photograph: Rex Features/Tony Buckingham

In one respect Antony Worrall Thompson's snaffling of low-value goods from Tesco was bang on trend: the celebrity chef also nicked cheese.

"I have been Edam fool," was the Sun's front-page headline, amid much conjecture about the disaffected middle-classes chasing thrills, and luxury items that they can supposedly no longer afford. US statistics show shoplifting is on the rise with austerity. And cheese was last year found to be the most pilfered food in the world.



Cheese: easily concealed by shoplifters. Photograph: Mark

Weiss/Getty Images

Cheese – and raw meat in the US – is stolen at a much higher rate than other foods, according to [Global Retail Theft Barometer and Checkpoint Systems](#). "The reasons why are reasonably clear, including high demand, easy 'disposal' by thieves and small, mobile formats that make it easy to conceal," say the US consultants in a [2011 report](#) about what the industry euphemistically calls "shrink".

While some of what the criminologist Ron Clarke termed Craved items (Concealable, Removable, Available, Valuable, Enjoyable and Disposable), such as razor blades, DVDs and bottles of spirits are protected with security tags, supermarket cheese is rarely given the same protection, according to Lorraine Gamman, [director of the Design Against Crime Research Centre](#).

She points out how cheese conforms to the Craved acronym: widely enjoyed, easy to conceal and kept in fridges rather than shelves that are subject to more extensive surveillance.

So how did Worrall Thompson shoplift cheese? Not caerphilly enough, as the tweeted jokes cruelly suggested.

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