

Would Epicurus Say That Epictetus (A "Virtuous Man") lived a pleasant life?

Post by "Cassius" of March 11, 2017 at 3:46 PM

[Cassius Amicus](#)

[Yesterday at 9:00am](#)

Let's suppose one of our Stoic acquaintances walks into the room and suggests to us that Epictetus was one of the most virtuous men who ever lived. And let's say our Stoic also quoted to us the wording of PD5 (translated below by Cyril Bailey; alternate translations follow below). Question: Would our Stoic be right in suggesting to us that Epicurus would have said that Epictetus had lived pleasantly?

"It is not possible to live pleasantly without living prudently and honorably and justly, [nor again to live a life of prudence, honor, and justice] without living pleasantly. And the man who does not possess the pleasant life, is not living prudently and honorably and justly, [and the man who does not possess the virtuous life], cannot possibly live pleasantly."

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[Cassius Amicus](#) type unknown

[Cassius Amicus](#) One point of clarification - it appears to be Bailey who uses the word "virtuous" in the parenthetical expression near the end. Other translators do not use that term.

Epicurus Wiki: "It is impossible to live pleasantly without living prudently and honorably and justly, and it is impossible to live prudently and honorably and justly without living pleasantly. Whenever any one of these is lacking (when, for instance, one is not able to live wisely, though he lives honorably and justly) it is impossible for him to live a pleasant life."

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Cassius Amicus

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Cassius Amicus

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Ron Warrick

Ron Warrick You say he quotes PD 5. Are we to assume he endorses it also?

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Cassius Amicus

Cassius Amicus For purposes of this hypothetical let's presume that the Stoic simply asserts that the clear meaning of PD5 is that the man leading a virtuous life must necessarily be living pleasantly. Since stoics are masters of dialectical gamesmanship I would never presume that a true Stoic (eg- Seneca) is being sincere with a question like that.

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Ilkka Vuoristo

Ilkka Vuoristo [1f603.png](#)  type unknown

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Ron Warrick

[Ron Warrick](#) [Cassius Amicus](#) I can't see a Stoic saying that. If a passage has two claims, he wouldn't say the meaning of the passage is just the one claim, unless the one claim implied the other, which it doesn't in this case. Even the Stoics were not that faulty in their logic.

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Cassius Amicus

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[Jason Baker](#) or type unknown

[Jason Baker](#) I would tell our stoic friend to stick to his own criteria and not play games. Epicurus preceded Epictetus by some three hundred plus years. It's like asking what Voltaire would have thought of any of us. It's a vain fantasy. I grow weary of vain fantasies. Hypotheticals should be shut down immediately, they serve to illustrate very little about the scenario but a lot about the person posing the question.

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[Bartosz Morzynski](#) or type unknown

[Bartosz Morzynski](#) Not sure if getting angry at hypothetical Stoic or at Cassius for posting that hypothetical scenario.

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[Jason Baker](#)

[Jason Baker](#) It does read angry, doesn't it? Not my intent at all.

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Cassius Amicus

Write a reply...

Cassius Amicus

[Cassius Amicus](#) Well in this case Jason I think the hypothetical has a useful point and will lead to some interesting discussion. We can substitute anyone else who is reputed to be virtuous, but the key is that whoever we are talking about is simply considered to be extremely virtuous, at least as that term is ordinarily understood by most ordinary people who are not applying a special definition to the word "virtue"

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[Jimmy Daltrey](#)  or type unknown

[Jimmy Daltrey](#) Not sure if I get the question, both Epictetus and Epicurus would hold that virtue (arete) and eudaemonia are symbiotically linked. The difference being that the Stoics thought pleasure to be a baser goal than living in accordance with one's rational nature.

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[Jimmy Daltrey](#)

[Jimmy Daltrey](#) Epictetus does say that the Epicureans are good people following a bad philosophy, whereas Stoics are bad people following a good philosophy...rather cryptic...he doesn't claim to be a sage.

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[Cassius Amicus](#)

[Cassius Amicus](#) So [Jimmy Daltrey](#) (or anyone else) the question is, considering PD5, would Epicurus had held that Epictetus (as a paragon of virtue) had lived a pleasant life?

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[Ron Warrick](#)

[Ron Warrick](#) Epictetus denied he was a sage, meaning he was not 100% virtuous. So, it is not clear whether he would have had a pleasant life or not. It would be a psychological matter of how he viewed his imperfection, I think.

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[Jimmy Daltrey](#)

[Jimmy Daltrey](#) I would think so. If pleasure is inner peace in the face of adversity, yes. (with the caveat that no Stoic ever claimed to be truly virtuous, just doing their best to head in that direction, there has never been a sage)

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[Cassius Amicus](#)

[Cassius Amicus](#) OK there you guys are taking a specialist (Stoic) interpretation of virtue and saying that even Epictetus did not think he was virtuous. That sounds like

correct reasoning to me, but it takes the practical use out of talking about living virtuously if...[See More](#)

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Jimmy Daltrey

[Jimmy Daltrey](#) There is no "specialist" definition of Hellenistic virtue/arete. It is shared by every ancient philosophy, Stoic, Epicurean, Platonist alike. Wisdom, prudence, courage, justice, moderation.

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Jimmy Daltrey

[Jimmy Daltrey](#) Perfection is what is impossible to achieve. One can try to be wise on a case by case basis.

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Jimmy Daltrey

[Jimmy Daltrey](#) The Christians added "faith hope and charity, which confuses people and causes them to conflate Greek sagacity with Jihadis and the Spanish Inquisition.

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Jimmy Daltrey

[Jimmy Daltrey](#) Are the prudent happier than the rash? Probably.

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Jimmy Daltrey

[Jimmy Daltrey](#) Are the courageous happier than the fearful? Definitely.

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Jimmy Daltrey

[Jimmy Daltrey](#) Are the wise happier than the foolish? Probably.

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Jimmy Daltrey

[Jimmy Daltrey](#) Are the just happier than the unjust? Sadly, I doubt it, but maybe.

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Jimmy Daltrey

[Jimmy Daltrey](#) Is it better to be foolish than wise? No...

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Cassius Amicus

[Cassius Amicus](#) Just trying to bring this down to real life [Jimmy Daltrey](#). Talking philosophy makes no sense if it is not of practical value to living. Epictetus is just being used as an example. The question before the house is: Does PD5 mean that Epicurus would say that everyone who lives by the definition you state to be "shared by every ancient philosophy. Wisdom, prudence, courage, justice, moderation]" living pleasantly? If not, why not? If more information is needed before answering, what else needs to be known?

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Jimmy Daltrey

[Jimmy Daltrey](#) I think Epicurus would say to live philosophically, to live virtuously is to live pleasantly.

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Cassius Amicus

[Cassius Amicus](#) " to live virtuously is to live pleasantly." << That is exactly the conclusion that I think a lot of people draw from PD5, and that is exactly what I intend to question with the hypothetical. By most any common definition Epictetus would probably be thought by many people to have lived virtuously. Would Epicurus agree that Epictetus lived virtuously? From that perspective would Epicurus also agree that Epictetus lived pleasantly? I do not think that either of those questions is obviously answered "yes"

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Cassius Amicus

Write a reply...

Cassius Amicus

[Cassius Amicus](#) Or to ask the question another way, is an Epicurean bound by PD5 to conclude that anyone living virtuously is living pleasantly? If not, what are the limitations and why not conclude that?

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Ilkka Vuoristo

[Ilkka Vuoristo](#) If it were actually true that someone was living a virtuous, then they would be living a pleasant life. But it would be impossible for us to say, that a single

person is actually virtuous. They might be hiding vice from us.

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Cassius Amicus

[Cassius Amicus](#) Yep - hiding vice, and also, once again, do we really have any definition of what it means to live virtuously? And if we do try to define "living virtuously" the more specific we get about it without talking about pleasure, the further we get from the ability to conclude that whatever we are talking about is pleasant living.

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Jimmy Daltrey

[Jimmy Daltrey](#) The Stoics would hold that personal integrity would trump pleasure. If given the choice between bowing to a tyrant or death, the ideal Stoic would take death. So there is a big gap there.

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Ilkka Vuoristo

[Ilkka Vuoristo](#) We have a pretty good definition of virtuous living in the PD 5. We can define what such a life is, but not say that any particular life is like that. Most definitions are the ideal cases, and most particulars fail at some detail of the definition. Life isn't easy to cram into convenient boxes.

And, yes, if we are talking about virtues without talking about pleasure, we've gone astray. Principal Doctrine 25 reminds us that "If you do not on every separate occasion refer each of your actions to the end prescribed by nature, but instead of this in the act of choice or avoidance swerve aside to some other end, your acts will not be consistent with your theories."

Virtues are actions, not empty words. Things that lead to death are vices.

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Cassius Amicus

[Cassius Amicus](#) [Ilkka Vuoristo](#) your last post raises another point I think is relevant here. The list of qualities in PD5 seems to be at most prudently, honorably, justly. As [Jimmy Daltrey](#) has listed earlier in that thread, the classic list of "virtues" is considerably longer than that, and at least in regard to justice, we know that Epicurus' definition of justice is almost the opposite of the common definition of

justice. I think it is entirely possible that Epicurus did not intend this list, which the Epicurus wiki suggests is just a subset of prudence, to be synonymous with "virtue" at all.

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Cassius Amicus

Cassius Amicus Note from Epicurus.wiki that maybe this is not a broad reference to "virtue" but maybe all PD5 refers to is prudence: 

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Cassius Amicus

Write a reply...

Ilkka Vuoristo

Ilkka Vuoristo I would say that it's not right to make such a suggestion.

It would be impossible for anyone (Epicurean or not) to say that a single person is living virtuously or pleasantly. We have to also remember that Epicurus is talking about the virtues in the context of Epicurean Philosophy... and in that context Epictetus wasn't "prudent".


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Cassius Amicus

Cassius Amicus Yes [Ilkka Vuoristo](#), that is exactly where I am going. And yet I regularly see PD5 used as if it were totally clear that Epicurus endorsed virtuous living in the same way the Stoics did, and that because virtuous living leads to pleasure there is no reason to worry about distinctions between the goal of living between the two philosophies.

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Ilkka Vuoristo

Ilkka Vuoristo When I see that I laugh and laugh and laugh and laugh and laugh... And then go do something pleasurable. 

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Ron Warrick

Ron Warrick At some point we'll be challenged as to why it is necessary to live

pleasantly in order to live wisely, honorably and justly. Frankly, I've not been able to make that connection to my satisfaction, and haven't seen it discussed anywhere.

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Cassius Amicus

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[Elli Pensa](#) Image not found or type unknown

[Elli Pensa](#) The moralist stoic translators put words in the mouth of Epicurus.

I have translated from the webpage of the greek gardens based on the ancient greek prototype text.

V.(5) Οὐκ ἔστιν ἡδέως ζῆν ἄνευ τοῦ φρονίμως καὶ καλῶς καὶ δικαίως, <οὐδὲ φρονίμως καὶ καλῶς καὶ δικαίως> ἄνευ τοῦ ἡδέως. ὅτω δὲ τοῦτο μὴ ὑπάρχει ἔξ οὗ ζῆν φρονίμως, καὶ καλῶς καὶ δικαίως ὑπάρχει, οὐκ ἔστι τοῦτον ἡδέως ζῆν.

new greek V.(5) Δεν ζει κανείς ηδονικά δίχως φρόνηση, ομορφιά και δικαιοσύνη, ούτε δίχως την ηδονή μπορεί κανείς να ζει με φρόνηση, ομορφιά και δικαιοσύνη. Όταν δεν υπάρχει αυτό, δεν υπάρχει ηδονική ζωή.



V. (5) No one lives pleasantly without prudence, beauty and justice neither without the pleasure one can live with prudence, beauty and justice. When there is not this, there is not a pleasant life.

Where did all the translators find the word honor and honorably in this PD 5 ? In the greek language for this word honest the adjective is έντιμος or the adverb <εντιμότητα> or the other word adj <ειλικρινής> or the adv. <ειλικρινώς> ?

But Epicurus used the word <καλῶς> which means beautiful or nice.

[Cassius](#) my friend, if you remember in our first correspondence that we've

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exchanged with emails, we had the same discussion on this issue. But think now again HOW MUCH pleasure brings the beauty of the Cosmos (means jewel) when you study the Nature or the presence of a sweet form ? Why Epicurus to be so moralist to use in this PD another word like honor ? I found in the lexicon that in the vocabulary of the UK: and the US honour is also a virtue and is also connected with virginity, purity substances  

Is this word "honest" seems to be unnecessary when you said already that one man has to be prudent and just to pursue the goal of pleasure? Is a prudent and a just man and honor too or not ?

All the evidence how the greeks admire the beauty of the reality and Nature is all in their statues and in that word "Cosmos".

And even this word "statue" for them was "agalma" from the verb "agallomai" means I feel joy and pleasure when I stare this form/figure in front of me.  (Y) 

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Ron Warrick

[Ron Warrick](#) In English, honorable is not quite the same as "honest".

I don't see "ὁμορφιά" in the ancient Greek version above.

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Elli Pensa

[Elli Pensa](#) [Mr. Ron Warrick](#) You do not see in the ancient greek prototype the new greek word for "ὁμορφιά". But I can see this word in both texts, because I am an Hellene epicurean lady  .

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Cassius Amicus

[Cassius Amicus](#) Every time I go through all these textual problems I shudder at the concern that so little of the modern translations/commentaries can be trusted without scrutiny. At least in the time of Cicero he would be aware that there were many orthodox Epicureans around to correct him, and there would be some restraint on how far he might go. In the last 500+ years there has been virtually no restraint, and a great deal of incentive, to read "virtue" and other Stoic ideas into every line of Epicurean text. To which the only antidote I have is to point out how illogical it is for modern commentators to imply that these views are reconcilable when the ancients who knew the material far better took the position (and very heatedly) that they were NOT reconcilable

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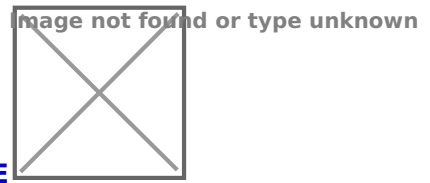
Cassius Amicus

Cassius Amicus But if the principles of Epicurean philosophy are really as simple, and really derived so clearly from Nature as was alleged, then it ought to be very possible to reconstruct them with confidence, which I think is what we are doing.

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Ron Warrick or type unknown

Ron Warrick Check out this refutation of the Stoics on this point.



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Cassius Amicus

Cassius Amicus Yep, for example - ... [Y]ou Stoics, unhappy and inflexible as you are, desire that nothing should exist that is not wicked and vile; you measure everything by a hollow wisdom that is in all respects fixed and complete. Thus, while you take joy in flying prodigiously and in striving toward the higher regions, your wings melt (not being natural to you but artificial and made of wax), and like the foolish Icarus [who flew too close to the sun] you fall into the sea. Truly, what kind of farfetched subtlety is it to describe the wise man in such a way that, by your own admission, no example can be found among us men, and to declare that he alone is happy, that he alone is friendly, good, and free? I would gladly endure this if your law did not deem that anyone who is not a wise man is by necessity a fool, a reprobate, an exile, an enemy, and a deserter, 'anyone' meaning all of us, since no one has yet possessed this wisdom. And lest by chance someone could become wise, you barbarians have made vices more numerous than virtues, and have invented an infinity of the most minute kinds of sins so that there are not more diseases of the body, which you say are hardly known adequately by the doctors themselves. If only one of these maladies were to affect the body, its health would not be completely lost; but if even a minimal spiritual evil exists in a man (as is necessarily the case), you pretend not only that this man incompletely lacks the honor belonging to wisdom but that he is also deformed by every shame and infamy. By Hercules, it is amazing that, when the

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doctors say there is one state of health and many illnesses, you do not also affirm that virtue is also single, although this is the same as declaring that whoever has one virtue possesses them all.

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Cassius Amicus

Write a reply...

[Elli Pensa](#)

[Elli Pensa](#) I have the evidence =====> From the Liddell & Scott the adv. "καλῶς" as used by Epicurus in PD5 derives from the adj."καλός" means good looking, handsome, and for woman is «καλή» means beautiful. In Latin "pulcher". According to Homer as a feature of the external form. Other meanings good body, good physique, according to Homer in Odysseia.; Similarly with the "Callistus", the most beautiful in body in Xenophon.; Kalon means beauty in Euripides. In Xenophon and Plato as the Latin "praeclarus" wonderful, brilliant, kindness.

=====

And now according to CICERO !!!!! 1f61b.png 😊 1f61b.png 😊 "Καλός" means : the good person, the moral beauty, the virtue, contrary to the obscene, the indecent, (the honestum and turpe of Cicero).

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[Ron Warrick](#)

[Ron Warrick](#) That's Cicero's platonism showing.

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[Elli Pensa](#)

[Elli Pensa](#) No, Cicero was not only a Platonist, he was a dangerous mixture of a platonist and a stoic too ! Because even and Socrates through Plato when said for a person these adj. "Kalos k'agathos" meant "the handsome and the brave".

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[Jimmy Daltrey](#)

[Jimmy Daltrey](#) Dangerous?

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Elli Pensa

Elli Pensa Not exactly dangerous, but perilous.

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Jason Baker

Jason Baker Cicero clearly had some philosophical issues that led to much personal peril! He most certainly wasn't using the hedonic calculus wisely. I think perilous is an apt description.

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Ron Warrick

Ron Warrick **Jason Baker** Once when I traveled to Italy on business, I got to talking to a lady in the office I was visiting. At one point, she mentioned she was from Arpinum, which was nearby. "That's the birthplace of Cicerone", she said with evident pride. "He was a great Italian author." Had I been on the ball I would have realized she meant Cicero, before she walked away, instead of two minutes later. I regret not getting the opportunity to pursue that discussion.

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Jason Baker

Jason Baker I think you might have lucked out on that one [Ron](#). I learned a long time ago to never do anything other than offer effusive praise for a hometown favorite while visiting some place.

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Ron Warrick

Ron Warrick I should have mentioned that in Italian, "Cicerone" comes out as "Cheecheroni". I wasn't prepared for that!

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Ron Warrick

Ron Warrick **Jason Baker** No problem, I'm an admirer.

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Jason Baker

Jason Baker   

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Ron Warrick

Ron Warrick Jason Baker Please don't vote me out of the group. 1f642.png  type unknown
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Christos Tsigaridas type unknown

Christos Tsigaridas Ron Warrick I am Greek but my name in SPANISH mean Chicharrón
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Cassius Amicus

Cassius Amicus Vote you out of the group for saying something good about Cicero, Ron? For years I had in my office a three feet tall bust of Cicero. It's not in my office anymore, but I still have it!
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Ron Warrick

Ron Warrick Cassius Amicus When I build my villa, I will have one, too. 1f642.png 
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Ron Warrick

Ron Warrick Christos Tsigaridas And "Cicero" is named after the Latin word for chickpea (garbanzo), which is "cicer".
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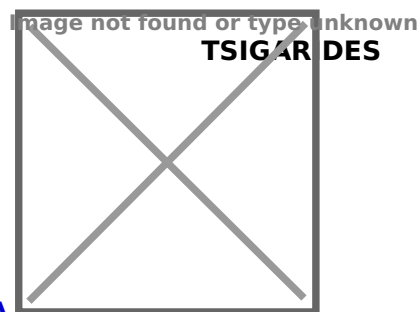
Ron Warrick

Ron Warrick Christos Tsigaridas Be careful, we will nickname you "Porky".
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Christos Tsigaridas

[Christos Tsigaridas](#) LOOK LIKE EPICUREAN GARDEN !!!

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Ron Warrick

[Ron Warrick](#) [Christos Tsigaridas](#) Wow. "My Big Fat Greek Tsigaridas Festival" 

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Jason Baker

[Jason Baker](#) I really feel like I'm missing out! I wish there were more food festivals around here. I'm at the end of a week long beer festival and there's no rhyme or reason to it.

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Cassius Amicus

Write a reply...