

## **Austrian Pastafarian dons colander for driver's licence**

15 JULY - Pasta strainers are now considered suitable religious headgear in Austria ... at least as far as the transport authorities are concerned.

Three years after applying for a new driver's licence, an Austrian man has finally received the laminated card. And the picture shows him sporting an upturned pasta strainer on his head.

Nothing to worry about: the authorities ruled the kitchen utensil was a suitable religious accessory for a Pastafarian.

Niko Alm, an entrepreneur, told the Austria Press Agency he had the idea when he read that headgear was allowed in official pictures only for "confessional" reasons.

The atheist says he belongs to the Church of the Flying Spaghetti Monster, a light-hearted "faith" whose members call themselves Pastafarians and whose "only dogma ... is the rejection of dogma," according to its website.

Accordingly, Alm sent his application for a new driver's licence in 2008 along with a picture of himself with a colander on his head.

*Niko Alm's driving licence.*

The stunt got him an invitation to the doctor's to check he was mentally fit to drive, but after three years, Alm's efforts have paid off.

He now wants to apply for Pastafarianism to become an officially recognised faith in Austria.

("International Business Times," July 14, 2011)

Those who reject religion seem to do more crazy things in the name of religion.

An Austrian self-confessed "atheist" has claimed - and won - the right to wear religious headgear in his driver's license photo.

What a serious claim. And it's a spaghetti strainer.

When Niko Alm first applied for the license three years ago, he told the authorities that he needed to wear a sieve, which was a requirement of his religion, Pastafarianism. The only headgear permitted in Austrian ID cards need to have religious purposes.

According to BBC, Alm was asked to submit to a medical interview to check on his mental fitness to drive in the process of application. He was proven to be psychologically fit to drive.

Pastafarianism, or The Church of the Flying Spaghetti monster, holds a dogma "the rejection of all dogma". The light-headed, US-based religion that despises religions came out as a

protest in response to the pressure for American schools to teach intelligent design, which some Christians favour as an alternative to natural selection, reports BBC. The Church of the Flying Spaghetti Monster wrote to the Kansas School Board asking for the pastafarian version of intelligent design to be taught to schoolchildren, said the BBC report.

According to Pastafarianism's website, Pastafarians:

Believe in pirates, the original Pastafarians, were peaceful explorers and it was due to Christian misinformation that they have an image of outcast criminals today

Are fond of beer

Consider Every Friday as a Religious Holiday

Do not take themselves too seriously

Embrace contradictions (though in that we are hardly unique)

Alm is a member of the Church of the Flying Spaghetti Monster. The Church was established in a 2005 when a 24-year-old Bobby Henderson wrote to the Kansas State Board of Education, saying that his belief of a "flying spaghetti monster" that created the universe should be taught as well. The letter became an Internet phenomenon, creating a satirical new "religion."

The next step for Alm is to apply for pastafarianism to become an officially recognized faith in Austria. With the headgear request now permitted, it may not be so far ahead.