

I propose that American English speakers pronounce the word banal to rhyme with "anal".

Nothing throws the conversational rhythm of American English (standard Midland accent) off like the high faluting second beat of "banal". You're ambling along at a nice loping gait until you hit that preposterous -NAL and suddenly you are launched like a satellite set to orbit Fancy Pants World.

Say it: BuhNAL.

Baynul.

Certain Northeast accents (Brooklyn, Mid-Atlantic Brahmin) and well as the softer Southern variants could pull it off, but I think it doesn't sound right coming out of... me. I don't like saying it. I'm saying bay-nuh.

As to the pronunciation of the word "aunt": sometimes I say "awnt" (as per the spelling) and sometimes I say "ant". Depends on the mood, where I am in the sentence, and who I'm talking to. My preference most of the time is "ant", especially since the time I was corrected (upbraided, actually) after using "ant" by an insufferable woman I wanted to sleep with in my early twenties. That moment diminished her appeal greatly (though not totally. She was sort of hot precisely because she was such a snob about silly crap like how to pronounce "aunt") and since then whenever the subject of female relations comes up, I find myself mentally taking stock of my interlocutor -- are they an "ant" or an "aunt"-type person? Neither are better -- just different. My kids say "antie", which is also the juvenile affectionate diminutive for a pet ant.

As for the nut called "Almond", I have taken up the pronunciation "Am-und" mostly, because my sister's father-in-law is an almond farmer and that's how he says it. George (the almond farmer in-law) justifies the pronunciation this way: "To get 'em out of the tree, you gotta shake the "L" out of them. Heh."

(You might be interested to know that in the 1920s when the BBC set up a committee on standard pronunciation, it was headed by none other than George Bernard Shaw. One word which was the subject of contention was 'canine'. Plummy British pronunciation at the time was can-ine, not cane-ine. Shaw was on board with cane-ine against the wishes of all the other committee members. He said that that was how his dentist said it. One of the others remarked, 'in that case, your dentist must be American'. Shaw replied 'Of course!! How do you think I still have all my teeth?' Nice one.)

So Baynul. Try it out. Or not. But don't get upset with me when I drop it. That's how I roll.

