

DINER JOURNAL

ISSUE N° 27

Booze Cruise

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a joyful numbness bloomed late into the night p.61



Mississippi Queen, 1981

ISSUE N° 27



Booze Cruise

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The Middle of the Night Has You In It

In the dark I am present to a fault. A couple shots of the hot stuff and forget about it. It's like I have the urge to push away at any finish line. I never want to leave a bar. I get attached. Action or no, sometimes the bottles alone are enough for me. Shoulder to shoulder. I join them. I become barnacle.

One year I found, in my parents' stacks, a Tom Waits album cover. It's funny how album covers can feel like big art when you are small. *The Heart of Saturday Night* is Tom Waits' second studio album, right before his voice goes all marble and sand. The cover features an illustration of him smoking a cigarette. His eyes are closed, his hand rests on the back of his neck like he's hearing some inner twilight. Behind him a woman in a burgundy dress; she allows her eyes to linger on him. I must imagine this. Can paint linger? Is it a painting even? Or do I make that also. The pair stand on a dark avenue, a pink neon sign blinks, *Cocktails*. Holding the cover in my two tight hands, stick-arms stretched out, and then closer, was the album taking me in? Narnia be damned. *This*, my seven year old self said, *is the world I belong to*. Romance. Tension. Solitude. Moon.

Foolishly I became a bartender. I should have stayed the coat check kid for salsa night at the Parkside Lounge. I should have kept dancing with the grey haired man named *Fleur*. It means *flower* he told me, his feet creating equations below us. Instead I get fired and decide to invest in the subtext. Isn't that what ordering a drink is anyway? How people order tells you so much about who they are. *Scotch, in a glass*. What people order tells you about who they want to be. *Vodka, neat*. Wretch. No one wants to drink that. Maybe I just like being asked for ridiculous things.

Stars up. Here I am, back at the open till. Drinking is so often about our darkest water. But one true thing about booze is that it transforms. Impairs, whatever. Whether you end up in bed, in jail, or watching the sun interrupt the six a.m. sky, as Tom Waits puts it, "Fishing for a good time starts with throwing in your line."

I was playing the album in Greenpoint last night, letting the music delineate a feeling. "Hey, if it's vibrating I'll drink it," I heard someone say across the not so crowded bar. Moon, or was it lamplight, spilling onto my shoulder. Could it spill into me? Inaccuracy, desire, rye whiskey and I fusing on in, to one soft channel of night.

-AD



photo by Dam Markson | Portland, Oregon 2009



PHOTO (upper left) by Louise Ingalls Sturges(London, 2013 PHOTO (upper right) by Adam Lukens(Old North End, Burlington, Vermont 2004 PHOTO (lower right) by Louise Ingalls Sturges(Marrakesh, Morocco 2011
PHOTO (lower left) by Christina Paige(Springfield, Massachusetts 2010



TITLE by Mark McCormick

BOOZE IS THE ANSWER

MILLICENT SOURIS

Now what was the question. I woke up this morning to a lost phone and an empty wallet with an attorney's card in it. Another great day. Lucky for me this is the Booze Issue so I can write last night off on my taxes. If only there were receipts for the things I have paid. The Booze Issue of Diner Journal brings up the booze issue of life, which is a tricky thing.

To know booze is to love it. Sort of. Or hate it. To know it, to really know it, is to not be indifferent about it. Booze is the great facilitator, the thing that brings people together and tears us apart, adds a warm hue to the movie screen of our lives. Sometimes right before it all goes black. The *je ne sais quoi* to move things along, to ease through the day, forget the day, leave the day, remember the day, commemorate the day, love the day, hate the day... good lord, Booze. You are all things.

I've had a lot of it in my time and it's taken up a lot of this brain space. *I love you, I hate you* kind of stuff. It's

deep in my brain right now, and I won't insult you or I by pretending the sobriety word hasn't been tossed around this morning. I take comfort in knowing I am not alone in this world here. But really, Booze, what have you done for me?

Right. You've gotten me laid. A lot. And even better than that, you've illuminated the night time and revealed the unexpected, the lusty, the chance, and the strange. Every night doesn't end with a roll in the sack, sometimes it ends way better, bringing together the skewed souls that need salvation. We can be wicked and randy.

And sometimes I want to thank you. Only some of the times.

A sweet biker by the name of Fred passed through town on his way to take his bike's engine home to its birth factory. We bowled at a friend's birthday, threw back some Budweisers and whiskey, spent a sweet night on a porch swing, held hands and holed up in the crash pad above a



Bobby & Sally Souris | Souris' Saloon 1969

bar. He invited me the next day on his trip. He probably could have made an honest woman out of me. He called me Pinky. I should have gone.

A great way to make out with a bartender is to tell him or her that the ladies room is out of toilet paper. Then wait in the bathroom.

Under a full moon, at a 4 a.m. bar on the far north side of Chicago, I sat between two fellas, deciding. With one I had an impassioned discussion about Lynyrd Skynyrd. With the other one I left. In the same city in another year I sat between two men in the Old Towne Ale House enjoying a moment of quiet and whiskey after a night checking IDs at the Gold Star Bar. One fleece-wearing man took it upon himself to regale me with the importance of a good Guinness pour. The other had just woken from a nap on the bar and liked my boots. I don't care about the finer points of beer.

I've turned an argument about my birth state Maryland versus another's birth state Virginia into a memorable evening. He loved Gillian Welch's music, smoked Marlboro Reds and had a beautiful pitchfork collection, a real rarity in the city.

A man was a friend of a friend, the bartender. I sat on the good side of his eye, never realizing until the morning that one was completely wall-eyed. He was very tall and strong.

One night I met a neighbor who was also out walking his dog. We shared some tall boys.

I was locking up and leaving the restaurant one night when I struck up a conversation with a man I had seen around Greenpoint. He came upstairs for some Jim Beam, then we headed off to his boat on Newton Creek. He led me through a hole in the fence, then along the edge of the East River. We swung around fences and hopped down on his dock, a big tire in the water. The next morning I couldn't remember where that damn hole in the fence was, so I trespassed in both Bay Crane and MTA property until I could find a way out. Or in, depending on your perspective. It was Valentine's Day. He had a bottle of Cutty Sark, which makes me laugh to this day. He lived on a boat, had a beard, wore a pea coat and drank Cutty Sark.

An art hanger gave me money to choose the songs at Rosemary's Greenpoint Tavern one evening. He liked The Band, me, and cocaine. Not in that order.

In Chicago we lived in a 9,000 square foot warehouse space, an old carbon factory that would make our snout and feet black. We threw art parties; thinly veiled excuses for kegs and bands and togetherness. One Halloween we covered the fourth floor with aluminum foil, dressing it

up as Warhol's Factory. The Velvet Underground and New York Dolls played, five kegs of Iron City were purchased from the Greeks. I ended the night watching the sun rise on the roof with an old friend. I was Patti Smith. He was Dick Cavett.

The warehouse (not a loft, you don't shower in pickle barrels if you live in a loft) was in the industrial section of Chicago on Lake Street where the Green Line runs from downtown through the projects to the Frank Lloyd Wright homes in Oak Park. Around the corner was a 24 hour porn store. The front was magazines, movies, dildos, and novelty gifts. The back was all video booths. They had a very loose policy regarding booth occupancy.

For our eviction we had one final farewell party. I introduced myself to a man at the keg (always kegs in a warehouse) by pouring him a beer and simultaneously kissing him. Then I shook hands with the woman standing next to him. His girlfriend. It was a very emotional night.

An architect in a favorite dive told me my leather bracelet told him I liked to be spanked. He had a tool kit of sex toys and a real fondness for Van Morrison.

It turns out three people can fit on a motorcycle. And when you lose your keys in one of the video booths at previously mentioned 24 hour porn store they get turned in by a kind soul.

On Arbat Street in Moscow I shared champagne and vodka with two black marketers who sold black lacquer boxes and balalaikas to tourists. Before the coup, Gorbachev really opened up relations with the West, both business and personal. So did I.

"Why don't we get out of here, sit on the tailgate of my truck, drink some beer and talk more?" It's an excellent thing to say to a schoolteacher.

I snuck into Motorhead's dressing room at the Crystal Ballroom in Portland, Oregon. I was the only person there minus the band. I handed my flask of bourbon to Lemmy and said "Thank You." He handed me his flask. It was also bourbon.

Just last night I entered what seemed to be a competitive champagne drinking contest with California chefs at the James Beard House. One of the cooks is actually an attorney helping the chef, an old friend. Maybe this is why I have a lawyer's business card in my wallet in lieu of cash. Perhaps my liver has retained his counsel in a suit.

Here's the thing, here's always the thing: We seem a bit hard-boiled, us drunks. Like we don't care. Like we don't think about it. Like we'll just keep doing it with no thought. And that's not true. There are days when we should win awards for our poker faces, even though you all can read the circles and the lines. Some of us can only



PHOTO by Julia Gillard | McSorley's Ale House, New York 2008

make connections with others through the injection of alcohol, and sometimes that leads us to stumbling through the streets, making out in doorways. It's not romantic. I don't write this thinking it makes me great or interesting. It actually makes me a bit sick and sad. But it's the truth.

And it makes me shake my head too. Us human beings, we're a gross lot, full of brains and reasons and logic and appetites and feelings and longing. I'm a bit sick and sad and a disgusting human being but we are all disgusting human beings. Some of us just know it. And then we try to find each other, usually under the spell of night and the slight turn of light the brown bottle gives it. And we stay with each other, for a bit.

Peter Pavia

A

SNOWBALL

HEADED

FOR HELL

LETTERING by Mark McCormick

Sadie was far from maternal, but she did do her best to take care of me where she could, and on that night she was pushing Dewar's across the bar, quizzing me about my Miami experience.

The Beach had been a debacle. The bars were open till 5. The after-hours joints were cranking. I drank round the clock and wasted what little money I had buying drinks for strangers, leaving profane tips for bartenders I would never see again. Fired from three jobs in four months, I slept behind the barricaded door of my crack-hotel room. The Beach was a wipeout.

Sadie was born in the north of England, but boarding school had knocked the Geordie accent out of her, and she sounded like a BBC correspondent; an amulet-like quality that added a drop of class to the dump where she was working. If a cherub from some Rococo painting had sprung to life, ditched its wings and took on a champagne glow, that would be Sadie, with blue eyes and an alabaster complexion that flushed crimson in the cold.

So after a winter off for bad Beach behavior, I found myself back in New York, and within a few short weeks, reignited my dope habit. If that part was a secret, I didn't let Sadie in on it. But I needed money bad, and Sadie understood. She understood a lot of things. Turned out her boss had recently opened another bar, and he needed bodies to staff it. The boss's name was Jerry, and since there's another Jerry who figures into this story at an earlier juncture, let's call him Jerry Too.

"Make a point," Sadie said, "of mentioning how great his jukebox is. He's quite chuffed about the selections." Jerry Too, like most of us, believed that he was a very discerning individual.

I scouted out the bar where I hoped to be working, and soon. Nothing special. Lotta space. Neighborhood-y. But the record machine was stocked with CD albums, technology that was new at the time, and amid the usual jukebox bullshit, Jerry Too had sprinkled in some drop-dead country classics, like this Lefty Frizzel Greatest Hits package that included his spooky rendition of "The Long Black Veil."

A couple of days later, I was walking up the stairs to the office Jerry Too maintained in the Village. He was a middle-aged guy with an oblong head. Steel rimmed glasses sat on the bridge of his nose. Bar ownership, I learned, was a sideline for Jerry Too, whose main concern was real estate. Naturally, right?

Just as the interview was about to get underway, I started to jones. Noticeably, if you knew what to look for, the first flickers of dope sickness descended upon me, the strained voice that gives junkies that horrid perpetual whine. I was doing my best to mask my irritability. My nose ran. To these charming characteristics, I added a signature extra: a shallow, dry-throated hacking.

Out in the middle distance, I heard a voice. It occurred to me that Jerry Too was talking. I searched for an angle from which to flatter him. Rising to help myself to a cup of water from the cooler, I launched into a dissertation, between coughing spasms, on Nashville's Golden Age. I did not fail to mention how impressed I was with the man's taste. Jerry Too put me to work.

Jerry Too had a pair of partners in this joint, located on lower Avenue A. They had unearthed a trove of metal signs, advertising ephemera meant to tap

into nostalgia for some Our Town-type of community, painful enough in its natural iteration, that is, when it's real, but as the result of ironic commentary and small imagination, it's excruciating. See: contemporary Williamsburg. The largest sign was a billboard-sized ad for something called the Jay Cox Coal Company, so that's what Jerry Too and his cohorts decided to call the place.

Their drawing card was a Happy Hour that ran two-for-one drinks from 5 till 8, pig heaven for local juicers boozing on the cheap. Nobody blunders into a dive like this by accident, and by 7 p.m. the bulk of Jerry Too's bar stools were tenanted by that bane of bartenders the world over, the regular.

Tom was a baldheaded grandfather who grinned the thin-lipped smirk of an imp, and would appear, as if conjured, at the stroke of 5. Before I arrived on this dismal scene, Tom had staked out his place at the bar. If by some fluke, a body that was not Tom's inhabited this preferred space, he'd shift his weight from one foot to the other for some minutes, eventually capitulating to some unexplored, foreign territory, and eye-ball his usual spot with the gaze of a hawk, waiting for the interloper to vanish. He sucked back gin and tonics until he either toppled from his stool, or his daughter came in to pry him off of it, and woe to the bartender who lost track of Tom's two-for-one. No matter. The man always knew where he stood when it came to a free drink.

Another Jerry (Jerry Three?) an anvil-headed washout of Norse extraction, suffered the most severe stutter I have ever encountered. The drunker he got, the more challenging it became to push a single syllable past his lips. Ultimately rendered mute, he was reduced to jotting his comments onto a cocktail napkin. Interesting sidelight, though: One balmy morning, I stumbled across Jerry Three, hair still damp from his morning ablutions, stone-cold sober but swathed in a swine-like sweat. He strung together five or six sentences without one stammer, then darted off to go get a drink down his neck. It was I who was struck dumb.

There was a frustrated writer, who at that point in his life had accumulated more years on the planet than the then-freshly elected Bill Clinton. This fact jolted him, as he was now, by his own lights, old. His second novel was in the throes of being rejected by every publishing house in town—a sting I have since felt acutely—but this only got the guy more motivated. Quoting William Faulkner after learning that his third manuscript had no hope of seeing the light of day, he said: Good. Now I can begin to write.

The failed novelist gave me the deepest chill because I saw myself in him, glimpsing some point on the not-too-distant horizon, a guy in his mid-40s still talking about what he was going to do, and in the meantime, drinking himself into a nightly haze.

I spent stretches of those Happy Hours (and then late nights, once I demonstrated that I was capable of working full shifts) where the only thing breathing on the premises was me. Inserting himself into these desperate interludes would be Ed, a Jerry Too partner who came sniffing round, I guessed, to make sure I wasn't tapping the till.

Ed had a good-sized dome, nothing that would threaten the primacy of Jerry Three's King Kong cranium, but a substantial noggin nonetheless. He was

either hard of hearing or deaf in one ear, but his speech was thick-tongued and loud. I wondered what a conversation would be like between Ed, the man who couldn't hear, and Jerry Three, the man who couldn't speak, their Thanksgiving Day parade-balloon heads abut in deafness and sputter.

Ed was obsessed with the Clausthaller count in the cooler—Clausthaller, a malty sweet non-alcoholic beverage, the only thing he drank. Downing a bottle in three gulps, hand out for another, Ed didn't tire of talking about how he quit booze. "You don't wanna see me drinking," Ed yelled. "No, sir. That's one thing you don't wanna see. Me drinking. If you see me drinking, man, I don't know. You can just forget about it."

Assured I'd replaced the Clausthaller he chugged and that his cash drawer was secure, Ed slid off to go stultify some other sap, and left me alone to feel sorry for myself. I devoted a lot of time to that, cueing-up the most mournful ballads the jukebox contained. The bluest of blue Sinatra interpretations. Merle Haggard's "Are The Good Times Really Over", from which I stole the title for this piece. And my sulkiest favorite, "Leavin' On Your Mind," with Patsy Cline's contralto soaring over the melody. Hurt me now. Get it over.

A skyscraper at 6'6", most of it legs. I had a buddy we used to call Muggs who was living in a walk-up at No.8 St. Mark's Place. Muggs possessed a Bugs Bunny-like demeanor, bright blue eyes like Sadie had, and unlike Sadie, a lantern-jaw that reddened not with the cold, but with each blast of cocaine he shoveled up his omnivorous nostrils. Although the cure for cancer wasn't going to be issued from his desk (or mine) any time soon, Muggs was an intelligent guy. He just wasn't capable of acting in his own self-interest.

When a man lands in circumstances as compromising as the ones that I was in, he doesn't require one thing that will right him. He needs many things. So on top of a job, I was desperate for a place to lay my head. Muggs saw himself as the kind of man who could be counted on to help out a pal who'd hit hard times, and me crashing in his spare room went a long way toward helping him realize this vision.

The lease was a verbal deal Muggs made with the landlord: he'd perform superintendent-like chores in exchange for a cut-rate rent. I never did find out what the exact number was, but that didn't matter. We couldn't pay it anyway. We bootlegged electricity through an extension cord that ran under the door and out into the hallway, and all of the power in the apartment was funneled through a junction box that hummed ominously on the kitchen floor, inches from the bathtub, also in the kitchen. There was no phone.

My room lacked a door, and it was six feet wide and ten feet long. A pair of crates contained my wardrobe. I was sleeping on a box spring with a sheet stretched over the slats that, once upon a time, had belonged to Muggs' mother. I got used to it.

Muggs had some background in the construction industry, but had lately been working as a bellman in a swank hotel. Then they fired him. He aspired to stand up comedy, but his show business career to that point consisted of an encouraging audition or two, and like any other aspiration, comedy requires a

discipline that Muggs simply could not claim.

He was way too fucked up at this point in his life to get off his futon and be at any job site by 8 a.m. Not when he had been up until 5 horking blow. I used to find him semi-upright in coke-catatonia, snorting lines off a plate he held under his chin, changing the channels on my television with his toes. Christ knows we couldn't afford cable, and the set didn't fit in my room. Sick with remorse, he'd hand over the dregs of his stash, knowing full well he would need to buy more the next day. He was always quitting. So was I. So was everybody else we knew. And we did quit. Until it was time to get high again.

The Jay Cox Coal Company was but one jewel in the Jerry Too crown. He owned that joint where Sadie worked, another one in the West Village, and flinging his empire far, he operated the worst dive I have ever had the dishonor of darkening, on the Upper West Side, no less, two train rides and an hour from the crash pad on St. Mark's. It was August, and I was covering Sundays for somebody who had gone on vacation.

An invisible adhesive covered every surface. I didn't pick up a bottle that my hand didn't stick to. This dump had its own collection of losers drinking cheap, regulars whose lives gained meaning because the bartenders knew their names. I did not. They were expecting Stephanie. Or Margaret. Who was I? "Pete."

"Fuck you, Pete. Gimme a two dollar bottle of beer, and keep 'em coming."

A Puerto Rican abuela wasted no time in advising me that the other bartenders didn't charge her for her drinks. Emptying her ashtray and popping open her Rolling Rocks, it took me a minute to figure out why. As she sloped out of the bar for the third time, to the apartment she kept upstairs, I realized she was pushing cocaine on the all-stars who haunted this shit hole. When I refused a bag of her bork as a tip, she was shocked.

I might not have been Margaret or Stephanie, but the clientele expected me to entertain them, and that would've been impossible. I posted-up at the far end of the bar and chain-smoked, interrupting my sullenness to blend a highball or draw the odd glass of ale. Even that was too much for me. I looked sidelong at the faces sneering back at me, and I ignored them, each of their departures a tiny victory. I pulled the chain on the stupid neon clock Jerry Too displayed in the window, and closed up around 1:30 with \$80 in my pocket. It was all the money I had in this world. I understood that I was getting very near the end of something. What it was, I didn't know.

An habitu  of the late night scene at the Jay Cox Coal Company, Mikey and I had known each other maybe an hour before we were trading his dope for Jerry Too's Courvoisier. Burly, black, dreadlocked, brother was gangster, and he ran a drug spot that operated under the stairwell of a building on 2nd and B, where I used to cop all the time. Look-outs were posted up and down the block and when the law was on the prowl—when it was hot—a minion would let loose a blood-curdling scream of Miiiiikee! to warn the sellers and the

junkies that Five-O was out and it was going down. This game could go on for hours. Rat-like hopheads lined up at the door, the cry of Mikey, the scattering of the skulls, the reformed line, another cry of Mikey, ad infinitum, until the shift changed at the 9th Precinct, by which time there were some mighty sick junkies, of whom your boy was most definitely one, waiting for the man on 2nd and B.

One night, with a couple bags of *schoolboy* tucked into the change pocket of my Levi's, I was strolling out as a Tactical Narcotics team stormed in on a raid, and like the Fool in a deck of tarot cards, bindle stiff over one shoulder and a terrier at his heels, I breezed right past them. Hey, it's a lifestyle.

My deal with Mikey worked out swell, except I was getting strung out farther and farther, and Mikey didn't always show up when I needed him to, and when he did, he wasn't always holding. Johnnie Walker Black is only going to make so much of a dent in a habit like the one I had. Moral of the story: Your dope dealer is not your friend. But to his credit, the nights that Mikey was dry and didn't even have enough junk to satisfy his own cravings, never mind sell, he'd come over to the bar and writhe right along with me, the occasional wince slipping between his teeth. Bitching about being dope-sick was unmanly. After all, Mikey reasoned, who put us in this condition? We did. There was kinship there.

Now, there was a stick-up man working the Lower East Side that summer, and his M.O. was to drift in late, flash his piece, and make the bartender fork over the cash. During the dispatch of his duties, he'd managed to knock over the Jay Cox Coal Company on a night I wasn't working, but there was one part that bothered me. After he got the dough, the perp forced the bartender to the floor. I didn't give a shit if Jerry Too got robbed, but I saw no reason why I should be injured, perhaps fatally, in the process. And if you must pump a slug into me, do me a favor? Shoot me while I'm standing up.

Mikey provided the solution, a .45 automatic ("It's clean") that I stuffed into my boot, wondering what I would do if I actually had to fire the thing. Mikey was sage on this matter, as he was on many others.

"Remember, if you gotta plug somebody, drop the piece and walk."

"Drop the piece and walk?"

"Drop it and walk. Don't run. You'll call attention to yourself. Be better if you can stuff it down a sewer grate, throw it in a garbage can, but don't worry about that. Just drop it and walk."

Many years passed before I realized this was the same advice Clemenza gave Michael Corleone before young Corleone rubbed out Salazzo and the crooked cop McCluskey in *The Godfather*. I also inserted Mikey's word-for-word wisdom into one chapter of a novel I wrote. In all three scenarios, it sounds good.

I tried to imagine a situation in which I would fire the weapon. If my life were threatened, I would pull the trigger, and I guess most people would, but the stick up guy terrorizing East Village bartenders hadn't hurt anybody— not yet, anyway—and I didn't think he'd start with me. Plus, he'd already hit the joint where I was working. I ended up giving the gun back to Mikey, and he

didn't make too much of it one way or the other.

Would-be entrepreneur that I was, and cottoning a glimmer of the reason people were coming to the places where I worked, that is, to see me, Sadie and I organized a Monday night party at the Jay Cox Coal Company. In periwinkle and on the cheapest stock known to man, Sadie had some business cards printed. They said: SADIE PRESENTS MONDAY NIGHT. The local barflies turned out in droves to see the comely Sadie, no doubt spurred on by the possibility of having sex with her, which several of them already had. And with me rehearsing my Prince Charming act behind the bar, the Monday night parties were a hit.

Since the extent of the entertainment I could provide was limited to my winning personality, by then somewhat more erratic than usual, what with the potions and the pills and the powders, my role involved giving away gallons of Jerry Too's booze for free. Still, our modest Mondays crushed his regular business.

I kicked dope about thirty times that summer, gutting-out the aches and the twists, the moaning and sweating that make withdrawal such a pleasure, until majestically, 72 hours later, I would start feeling better. Ready to get high!

I began each day by throwing up. Eyes open, time to puke. I would then go back to my bed—check that—back to Muggs' mother's box spring—to try and sleep until it was time to open the Jay Cox Coal Company for Happy Hour. It didn't matter how bad I felt, I always went in there. (I didn't miss a single shift working for Jerry Too.) I needed that money to buy drugs.

I had those two crates. And I had a clock radio. At some dim juncture I looked over at the thing and it said 6 o'clock. It always said 6 o'clock. A single window peeked out on an airshaft, through which no oxygen or light ever dared creep in, and I honestly couldn't say if it was 6 o'clock in the morning or 6 o'clock in the evening. I tried to piece together the hours before I passed out. I couldn't do it.

I knew: I would make a comeback. Except I had just made one, hadn't I, when I busted out of the Beach and limped back to New York. In five short months, I landed myself exactly where I had been, only worse.

I was 33 years old. I felt like I should be maybe 23, with a decade of promise ahead of me. Where had those years gone? What had I accomplished? Where was I going and how was I going to get there? In one brief flash, I understood that if I kept doing the things I was doing, in the way that I was doing them, i.e. drinking and drugs, that my life was never going to change, and I would be in the process of making another comeback, if I was still alive, at age 63. The thought was too horrible to bear.

Though I don't remember paying a single bill, the phone I had installed was still working. I called a friend who had started going to meetings, and told her that maybe it was time for me to check one out.

The gathering was held in what I think used to be part of a school, at once harshly lit but dim, and since this was the East Village and it was 1993, filled out with busted rock n' roll chicks wearing preposterous heels, swirling in the

orbit of their own drama. There was crying and the gnashing of teeth. The Twelve Steps were spelled out on a window shade, and as I read them off to myself the information all seemed so familiar, so, well, Catholic.

After the meeting broke up a guy offered me his phone number. I told him, arrogant cock that I am, that he could keep it. I had a lot of friends. I got what they were doing, I just didn't think it would work. Not for me. But I went to another place the next day, and a different place the day after that, and somewhere else the third day.

There've been hundreds of quit drinking-memoirs published, and they stop being interesting the moment the author goes clean and dry, so I'm not going to say any more about that. But I will say this: I have never been the same, and I owe my life to a bunch of broke-ass Bowery bums and thrown away children and guys like the one who reached out to me with his phone number and sat in dank church basements telling stories ten times more harrowing than my own, talking, however ambivalently, about God.

SADIE PRESENTS MONDAY NIGHT (I had wanted to call the party Positive ID, but Sadie feared the word "positive" suggested an undesirable HIV status; besides which, it didn't have her name in the title) had slacked off a bit, but we were still doing strong numbers, even affording for the amount of free drinks flying across Jerry Too's bar. I believe this embarrassed him. So he cancelled us. Oh, and he shit-canned me, as well. It went like this:

ME: Still lying aboard the box spring in Muggs' apartment with the bootlegged electricity.

JERRY TOO (on the answering machine, nasally Long Island accent): Yeah, Pete this is Jerry from Jay Cox (emphasis on the first word; JAY Cox, never Jay COX, and never, ever the Jay Cox Coal Company. I think even Jerry Too was snapping to the fact of how corny that was). Listen, you don't have to come in tonight. Actually, you don't have to come in any other night, either. I've decided to go with someone else. Okay, Pete. Thanks. Take care.

I would like to say that I never looked back, but what I'm doing now is... looking back. The Jay Cox Coal Company has been many other places since it closed, and I haven't set a foot in any one of them. I think Jerry Too got out of the bar business. Years later, I saw Happy Hour Tom, he of the meticulously tracked free drinks, propped up at the bar across the street and wearing the same imp-like smirk, gin blossoms in fuller, more radiant bloom. Jerry Three and his anvil head appear once in a while in unlikely East Village locations, without the foggiest notion of who I am. I'm not about to put him wise. Muggs retreated to New Jersey, from whence he came, and when last heard from or cared about, was doing the odd construction gig. Sadie had a baby with a rock star. And Mikey, Drop-it-and-Walk Mikey, what happened to him? Gangster to the last, he was either shot dead or doing life, two highly plausible ends. Which one it is, I haven't had the heart to find out.



BOOZE, CARDS, & SAND- WICHES

RECIPES by Scarlett Lindeman & friends

It's late. Unfinished drinks. When all of your non-smoker friends finally light up. Cards on the table. Green felt and sandwiches. There is something attractive about a simple sandwich. It should be easy to assemble in dim lighting, a couple rounds in, sustaining, not distracting, to keep drinking. Sliced, sometimes stale bread, a swipe of mustard, a layer of cheese. Something to hold while gesturing, arguing, while slapping down your royal flush.

These recipes do not give quantities in some cases because they are sandwiches. How many slices of ham? How many layers of pickles? You choose. Or have someone make it for you. Sandwiches tend to taste best that way, anyway. -SL





HAM & CHEESE on a PRETZEL ROLL

An ideal marriage—ham & cheese, on a buttery pretzel roll.

- pretzel roll
- house-smoked ham [thinly sliced]
- Swiss cheese [sliced]
- salted butter [room temperature]
- Dijon [just a bit]

HOUSE SMOKED HAM

TJ Burnham

FOR THE BRINE:

- 3-4 # pork [trimmed and tied]
- 1 gallon water
- 1 cup salt
- ½ cup brown
- 3½ T pink salt

FOR THE GLAZE:

- 1 cup honey
- ¼ cup white wine vinegar
- 2 T Dijon mustard
- 1 t cayenne pepper

Boil water and add the salt, sugar, and pink salt. Make sure everything is fully dissolved. In a deep container large enough to hold and submerge the ham, cover the pork with brine. Make sure the brine has fully cooled before adding the ham. Let sit in the refrigerator for 11 days. Pull ham from the brine, rinse with cold water and let dry in the refrigerator, overnight. When ready to smoke, whisk together all glaze ingredients. In an outdoor smoker* smoke the ham at 220 degrees to an internal temperature of 150 degrees, about two and a half hours. Brush the ham with the glaze during the last twenty minutes of smoking time.

*If you do not have an outdoor smoker and don't mind your kitchen getting a little smoky, you can smoke the ham in an oven set to 200 degrees, on a cooling rack fitted into a sheet tray. You will need an aluminum baking tray with a quart of wooden chips, lit, extinguished, but left smoldering on a rack underneath the ham. You may have to re-light and extinguish the chips if they fully extinguish. Turn off your smoke alarm and turn on your kitchen fan before you attempt this.

PRETZEL ROLLS

Ashley Whitmore

These pretzel rolls can be made a day ahead and stored, wrapped tightly, but are best the day of.

[yields 9 pretzels]

FOR THE DOUGH:

- 1½ cups warm water
- 1 T sugar
- 1 T yeast
- 5 cups all purpose flour
- 2 oz butter [melted]

FOR THE BOIL:

- 10 cups water
- ⅔ cup baking soda

FOR THE BAKE:

- 1 egg yolk [beaten and thinned with 1 T water]
- Maldon sea salt
- sage, rosemary, thyme [finely chopped]

In a stand mixer outfitted with a dough hook, mix the water, sugar, and yeast until incorporated. Let this mixture sit, undisturbed, for ten minutes until bubbly and active. Add the flour and mix on medium speed with the dough hook for about three minutes until a dough develops and starts to pull away from the bowl. Remove the dough from the bowl, shape into a ball, spray the inside of the mixing bowl with a spritz of vegetable oil and put the dough back in the bowl. Cover with a kitchen towel and let rise until doubled in size, about one hour. After the dough has risen, dump it out onto a lightly floured surface. Pat the dough to slightly flatten and then portion it into nine pieces; roll each piece into a ball. Pat each ball into a small flat rectangle; starting from the wider end, roll it up tightly into a log. Pinch the ends and seam tightly closed – it is important for the seams to be tightly sealed or they will crack open when cooked. Roll each log into a two foot rope. Starting from one end, roll up the rope into a tight spiral, pressing the end into itself to seal. Repeat with the remaining ropes. Chill them in the refrigerator or proceed to boiling.

Preheat the oven to 350 degrees. To boil the pretzels, combine the water and baking soda in a medium pot and bring to a boil over high heat. As soon as it starts to boil, drop in three pretzels. Boil pretzels for ten seconds, flip with a slotted spoon and boil for another ten seconds. Pull out the pretzels and place them on a sheet tray lined with parchment paper. Continue boiling the pretzels, in batches, until they are all boiled and on the sheet tray. Preheat the oven to 350 degrees. Brush each pretzel with the egg wash, sprinkle with salt and herbs and bake until golden and puffy, about ten to fifteen minutes.



PAN BAGNAT

A pan bagnat translates to *bathed sandwich*, which means that this sandwich needs to be saturated in the oily, vinegary run-off of the marinated tuna. It should be as tart and salty as a vinegar chip.

- good canned tuna [packed in oil or water]
- baguette
- red onion [thinly sliced]
- hard boiled eggs [sliced into wedges]
- a tomato [if you have a good one, sliced into rounds]
- chunky sea salt
- pepper
- lettuce [if you have some, cleaned and ready]
- parsley [lots]

FOR ONE CAN OF TUNA:

- 2 T red wine vinegar
- 1 t Dijon
- ½ t salt
- ¼ t freshly cracked pepper
- 3 T olive oil
- a few green olives [chopped fine]

Whisk together the vinegar, dijon, salt, and pepper, until smooth. Whisk in the olive oil. Fold in the drained tuna and chopped olive. Mix well, to combine. Taste and adjust the seasoning.

Assemble the sandwich: Spoon the tuna onto the halved baguette first, then a layer of sliced red onion, the hard boiled egg, then tomato. Season the tomato with sea salt and pepper. Lettuce and parsley last.



SMOKED BEEF TONGUE SANDWICH

TJ Burnham

This beef tongue is brined, rubbed with lots of cracked black pepper, almost pastrami style, then smoked. It needs nothing more than a swipe of horseradish mayonnaise and bread, of course, to carry it.

smoked beef tongue [sliced]
horseradish mayonnaise
crusty white bread [sliced]

FOR THE BRINE:

- 1 gallon water
- 1 cup salt
- ½ cup brown sugar
- 3½ T pink salt
- 1 T peppercorns
- 1 T mustard seed
- 1 T coriander
- ½ T red pepper flakes
- 3 allspice berries
- 3 cloves
- 1 t ground mace
- 1 t ground ginger
- 1 stick cinnamon
- 2 bay leaves
- sprig of thyme
- 1 beef tongue

FOR THE RUB:

- ¼ cup pickle brine
 [from a jar]
- ¼ cup Dijon mustard
- ¼ cup beef tallow
- 12 T peppercorns
- 1 T mustard seed
- 1 T coriander
- 1 t garlic powder
- 1 t onion powder

Bring the water to a boil, add in other ingredients and stir until salt is fully dissolved. Allow this to cool completely before submerging the tongue in the liquid, keep in the refrigerator for 8-10 days. Pull the tongue from brine and simmer it in a pot of fresh water, for about two hours. Remove the pot from heat and let it stand until you are able to pull the tongue from the water; it should be warm. Peel away the outer membrane from the tongue. When ready to smoke the tongue, in a small bowl, whisk the pickle brine with the mustard. Grind all of the spices together in a spice grinder. Slather the tongue with the pickle and mustard mix and coat with the dry spice mixture. Melt the tallow in a small saucepan and reserve for basting the tongue when smoking. Place the tongue in a 220 degree smoker basting with tallow every 30-45 minutes in order to prevent drying out. Smoke until it is fork tender, about two hours. Serve warm or allow to cool and slice thin for sandwiches.



HORSERADISH MAYONNAISE

This recipe works best when made in a food processor, which can easily shred the fresh horseradish.

- 4 inch piece of fresh horseradish [peeled]
- 2 egg yolks
- 1 t Dijon
- the juice of a lemon
- freshly ground black pepper
- salt
- 1½ cup grapeseed oil [or any neutral vegetable oil]
- ½ cup olive oil
- splash of water

Chop the horseradish into one inch pieces then throw into a food processor and blitz until finely shredded. Add in the egg, Dijon, lemon juice, and season with salt and pepper. Blend together. While the food processor is running, drip in a couple of drops of the grapeseed oil. Once it's combined, slowly add in the oil, in a thin stream, to emulsify the mayonnaise. It should thicken and turn whiter as this is happening. If the mixture gets too thick, add in a splash of water. Once all of the oils are combined, taste the mixture, adjust the seasoning, and blend for ten seconds more. Transfer the mayonnaise to a container and let sit, refrigerated for an hour or two. Pass the mixture through a fine strainer, to remove the horseradish, taste again, and adjust the acid, salt, and pepper, as needed.

Assemble the sandwich: Spread a slice of bread with the horseradish mayonnaise. Layer on the tongue. Spread the other slice of bread with more mayonnaise. Eat!

(A McSORLEY SANDWICH) CHEDDAR & ONION on RYE

This sandwich is inspired by McSorley's, an old ale house in downtown Manhattan that has been in operation since 1854. Their cheese plate is a sleeve of Saltines, a pile of sliced cheddar, sliced white onion, and mustard so spicy it blows a hole through your nostrils. Pickles can be added to this sandwich, thinly sliced, but we like them on the side.

cheddar cheese [sliced]
white onion [sliced]
Coleman's mustard
rye bread [sliced]
cornichons on the side

Assemble the sandwich: Spread one side of a slice of rye with mustard. Layer on the cheddar cheese. Add sliced white onion and top with the other slice of rye. Simple.



BAR NUTS

Let's say you happened to double the fat and spices, tossed in some square rice cereal and pretzel sticks—couldn't hurt.

2 cups cashews
1 cup pecans
1 cup peanuts
3 T bacon drippings [warmed until liquid]
2 T Worcestershire sauce
1 t chile powder
1 t salt
1 t garlic powder
½ t onion powder

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. In a large bowl, toss all ingredients together until the nuts are coated. Spread the nuts onto a sheet tray. Bake, stirring nuts occasionally, until toasted and browned, about 15 minutes.

BLACK BEAN DIP

Good with tortilla chips, pita, or crudite.

2 cups black beans [soaked in water overnight]
2 T olive oil
2 white onions [sliced]
1 green bell pepper [de-seeded and sliced]
4 cloves of garlic [sliced]
1 T cumin
1 t coriander
2 limes [juiced]
¼ cup sour cream [optional]
salt to taste

Cook the black beans in salted water until soft. Drain and set aside. In a medium sauté pan, heat the oil over medium-high heat. Add in the onion, pepper, and garlic. Season with salt and pepper, lower heat, and cook until sofrito is soft and starting to caramelize, about ten minutes. In a food processor, combine the beans and the sofrito; pulse to combine. Add in the lime juice and the sour cream and blend until smooth or leave fairly chunky, if you like. Taste the dip and season with salt. Transfer the dip to a bowl and serve.

POPCORN

It's surprising how many people do not know how to make popcorn without using a microwave. Making it the old fashioned way is infinitely more fun and you can customize the toppings. All you need is popcorn kernels, a little oil, and an appropriate lid.

3 T canola oil [or grapeseed]
⅓ cup popcorn kernels [good quality]

w/ **BUTTER**
3 T butter [melted]
salt to taste

w/ **BUTTER & NUTRITIONAL YEAST**
3 T butter [melted]
2 T nutritional yeast
salt to taste

w/ **SESAME & NORI**
2 T butter [melted]
1 t sesame oil
2 T furikake [Japanese seasoning w/ nori, sesame seeds, and ground shrimp]

In a medium saucepan with a lid, heat the oil over medium high heat. Once the oil is shimmering, pour in the corn kernels and give the pan a shake to distribute them in an even layer. Cover the pot and remove from the heat for 30 seconds. This will temper the kernels and allow them to pop more evenly. Return the pan to the heat. Once you hear the first kernel pop, start shaking the pan back and forth, agitating the kernels. You can prop the lid up slightly to allow steam to escape while this is happening. Once the popping slows to several seconds between pops, remove the pan from the heat and dump the popcorn into a wide bowl. Immediately toss with butter and seasonings, then serve.



PHOTO by Adam Lukens | Old North End, Burlington, Vermont 2004

MILLICENT'S WILDCARD

I may have taken liberties with Millicent's concept but I'm partial to the dense, seeded, German-style brown bread. The kind wrapped in plastic and heavy as a brick.

- blocky German brown bread [toasted and sliced]**
- 6 oz cream cheese**
- 8 pepperoncini [stems and seeds removed]**
- 1 T pickling liquid from pepperoncinis**

Rough chop the pepperoncinis. In a small bowl, smash the cream cheese with the chopped pepperoncinis, whisking in the pickling liquid until everything is spreadable. Spread the cream cheese mixture onto the toasted brown bread. Top it with another slice of bread or eat it like a tartine.

A note on toasting from Millicent Souris: Nothing stronger than a toaster should ever be operated under the influence, including a toaster oven since I know someone who repeatedly set his kitchen on fire toasting tortillas with cream cheese and banana peppers. Obviously the inspiration for this recipe.



PHOTO by Julia Gillard

CHURROS Y CHOCOLATE

When you're out partying like a Spaniard until six in the morning, churros y chocolate are what you need before turning in. If you are not in Spain and are attempting this recipe at home, let your least drunk friend tend the fry pot.

FOR CHURROS:

- 2 cups sugar**
- 1 T cinnamon**
- 1 t salt**
- 5 T unsalted butter**
- 1 t salt**
- 1 t vanilla extract**
- 2 cups water**
- 1 heaping cup flour**
- 1 egg**
- canola oil [for frying]**

FOR CHOCOLATE:

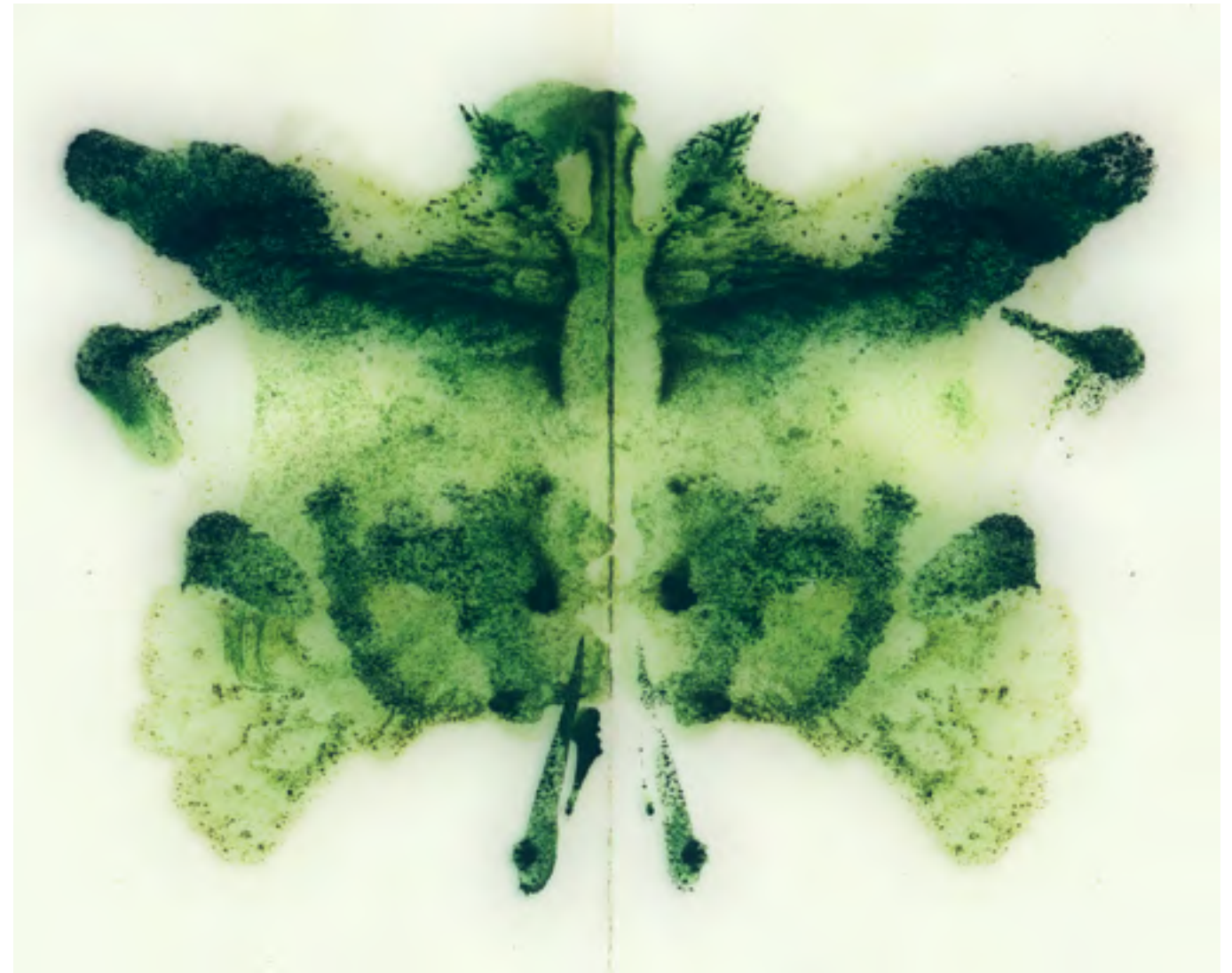
- 4 oz dark chocolate**
- 2 cups milk**
- 1 T cornstarch**
- 4 T sugar**

Whisk together sugar, cinnamon, and salt in a shallow baking tray. In a medium saucepan over medium-heat bring the butter, salt, vanilla, and water to a boil. Add in the flour and cook, stirring constantly with a wooden spoon until a smooth dough forms, about five minutes. Transfer dough to a bowl. Stir in the egg until smooth and homogenous. Transfer dough to a piping bag. Meanwhile, heat the oil in a sturdy pot over medium heat until 400 degrees. Pipe lengths of dough, about six inches into the hot oil, cutting the lengths with a paring knife at the end. You can fry a couple at a time. Fry until golden brown, turning often, 2 to 3 minutes. Pull the churros from the oil, and transfer to the cinnamon-sugar mix, rolling to coat completely. Meanwhile, make the chocolate dipping sauce. In a small saucepan over very low heat, place the chocolate and the milk. Whisk often until the chocolate has melted. In a separate bowl, whisk together the cornstarch and sugar. Sprinkle this mixture into the milk, whisking constantly until smooth. Cook on low heat until it starts to thicken. Once all churros have been fried, serve with the warm chocolate in small mugs.

BOOZE *as* MEDICINE

Tincture, Tisane, Infusion

SPRIT LEVELS carved by Andrew Rumpier PHOTOGRAPHED by Julia Gillard ILLUSTRATION (opposite page) by Lars G. Karlsson



Vermouth at Home Susan Thompson

When Molly and I were traveling in Spain, we stayed with a lovely couple, an Italian woman from Sardinia and her German boyfriend. We went to the market every morning to walk around, grab some fruit, or a baguette. On Thursdays the fish came! Our host told us to buy a fish and some vegetables and she would take us to a woman who would cook it for a couple of Euros. This was, unexpectedly, one of our favorite meals. We had dorade, sardines, and some vegetables all grilled on the plancha, and vermouth. Vermouth was something we had in almost every tavern and I noticed each time it was poured from some nondescript blank bottle, jug, or cask. Usually it was chilled or served on the rocks with a little club soda and a twist. In Barcelona we sought out a vermouth bar called Quimet & Quimet, a standing room only kind of place with tons of cured fish and tins. (continued p.36)

We fell in love with vermouth's ever-changing subtleties. Most of the bars that had their own, made it with wine that had been open for a day or two and could not be used as a glass pour anymore.

Since Molly is a chef and I am good at research and reconnaissance, we found vague recipes for the base and made up the rest. Gentian and wormwood are the base flavorings; the idea is to make a bitter vermouth and then add a caramelized sugar syrup, to taste. So here it goes.

FLAVORINGS

- 2 t wormwood
- 2 t gentian [raw form not powder]
- ¼ t juniper
- ¼ t coriander seed
- ¼ t cardamom pods
- ¼ t chamomile

BASE

- 1 bottle dry white wine [750 ml]

FLAVORINGS PART DEUX

- 1 bay leaf
- 1 sprig of sage
- a few lemon rinds
- a few orange or tangerine rinds
- 1 cinnamon stick

BOOZY SYRUP

- ½ bottle of grappa, brandy, or sherry
[the spirit is up to you, based on the flavor you want:
sherry will be more nutty, brandy more sweet, grappa,
more neutral]
- 1 cup sugar

In a pouch made of cheesecloth combine the first set of dried flavorings; tie it closed. In a medium pot, pour in the white wine, add the cheesecloth bag, the bay, sage, lemon, and orange rinds. Bring this to a boil and then let cool and steep overnight in the fridge. Now you have a bitter dry vermouth. Then make the boozy syrup: take the half bottle of grappa, combine with the sugar in a small pot and bring to a boil to dissolve the sugar. Once cool, add half to the vermouth mixture. Taste. Add in more grappa syrup until it reaches the sweetness that you prefer. Strain it through a cheesecloth to clarify.

Note: You can put many different herbs into the cheesecloth mix; a ¼ teaspoon of any aromatic like juniper berries, cardamom, coriander, etc.

Like I said, it is best with club soda and a twist. Go wild.

THE BASE

- 2 cups Everclear or silver high proof rum
- 2 cups Blue Label Old Raj 110 proof gin

Calming Digestive Tonic

Ericka Martins

- 3 T fennel fronds [finely chopped]
- 3 T dandelion leaves [finely chopped]
- 3 T lemon balm leaves [finely chopped]
- 2 T dried orange peel
- 2 t dried chamomile
- 2 t aswagandra root [broken into small pieces]
- 1 t dried lavender
- 1½ cups bourbon or rum
- ½ cup water
- ¼ cup raw honey
- 2 T brown sugar

Place all herbs, leaves, flowers, and roots in a large glass jar. Cover with the alcohol of your choice and screw on a plastic or canning type lid. Place in a dark place for three weeks to one month, gently shaking every couple of days. After one month, strain the liquid through a sieve lined with four layers of cheesecloth. Squeeze out the herbs to release any excess alcohol. Make a sugar syrup by boiling the water with the honey and sugar until both are dissolved. Let cool then add to the alcohol mixture, shake to combine. Serve straight up or chilled and strained in one ounce portions as a post dinner tippie or nightcap.

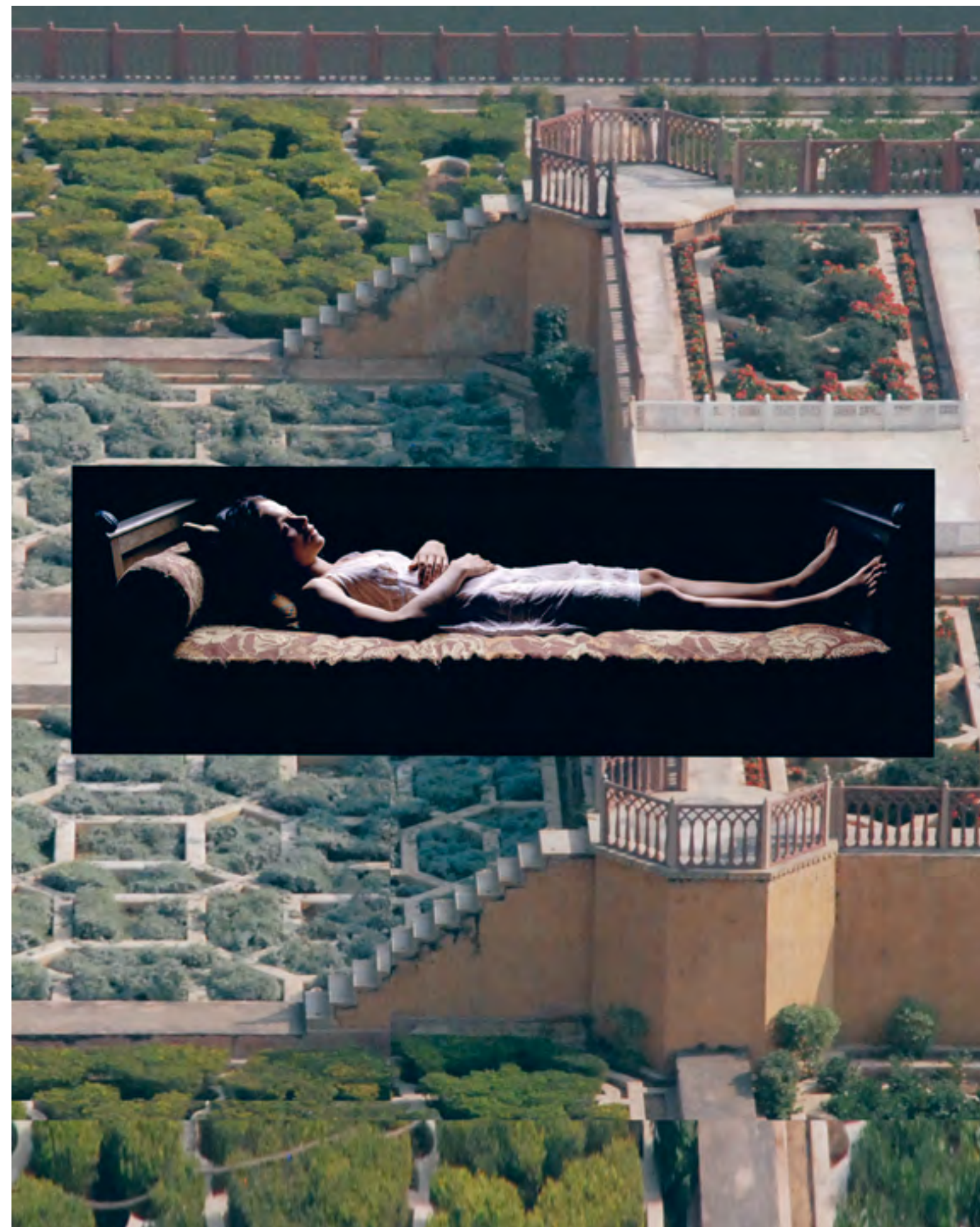




ILLUSTRATION by Lars G. Karlsson

ABSINTHE ABSINTHE

Hugh Crickmore

This recipe is based on non-distilled (maceration) type of absinthe. Although this style is often derided by mustachioed experts, it is perhaps closer to the original idea than the polished versions we know today and therefore may offer the most historically accurate psychoactive effect. Absinthe originated in Switzerland in the mid-18th century. The original formula is long forgotten but it was most probably derived from some archaic magical home brew concocted in an old witches' cottage in the country. A medicine, poison or potion at first, then a libation to wake the dead. Absinthe quickly became the drink of choice among the poets and artists of the second French Empire. Its romantic powers dwindled into the 20th century where it was vilified and eventually outlawed. Long live its resurrection.

FIRST MACERATION

- 1 oz wormwood
- 30 grams anise seed
- 10 grams star anise
- 20 grams fennel seed
- 10 grams angelica root
- 3 grams coriander seed
- 5 cardamom pods
- 5 pieces dried calamus
- pinch of saffron
- 1½ cups mint leaves
- 3 sprigs sage
- 1 sprig lemon balm
- 2 sprigs anise hyssop
- 2 sprigs dill
- the zest of 1 lime

SECOND MACERATION

- ½ cup fresh mint leaves
- ½ oz Roman or petite wormwood
- 2 sprigs lemon balm

SYRUP

- 1 cup sugar
- ½ cup water

Combine the alcohol with all first maceration ingredients in a large Mason jar and tightly seal. Place in a kitchen cabinet or anywhere away from sunlight for four weeks. Do not shake the jar. After four weeks, slowly decant the alcohol by pouring it carefully into another jar, leaving the spices and herbs behind in the original container. Discard the leftovers, then strain the alcohol through cheesecloth back into the jar. Add in the second maceration ingredients, let sit for one more week. Do not shake the jar. After one week, decant the alcohol into a clean jar, leaving the solids behind. Meanwhile, make the syrup; in a small saucepan bring the sugar and water to a boil until sugar is dissolved. Removed from heat and let cool. Stir in ¼ to ½ cup syrup into the absinthe until it tastes mildly sweet. Strain the absinthe through multiple rounds of cheesecloth until it is a clear and lovely green color.

Absinthe is traditionally prepared by placing a sugar cube upon a slotted spoon then resting it over the rim of a glass which has been filled with a measure (1½ ounces) of absinthe. Cold water is slowly poured over the sugar cube until it completely dissolves within the spirit and causes the liquid to turn to an opalescent cloudy green.



**THE RECREATION CENTER -
TER FOR THOSE ACROSS
THE STREET JESS ARNOT**

It might just be my Leo temperament, ie, loyal to the point of dipsomaniac ruin or at very least romantic suffering—still. I like drinks you can commit to. So does my travel accomplice, A.D.. Death to the happy hour cocktail, the aperitif, wine with dinner, an amaro or two, the nightcap circuit!

We're in Mexico. There's pulque.

**

In the pulqueria of my dreams, at least the way I imagine it, A.D. and I each start with a “screw.” It's just an eighth of a liter. Do it a couple times. But pretty soon we've graduated to a “dandy.” No big thing, somos insaciables. It's fresh and dimensionally yeasty. Also: filthy murky medicinal cool. There's a slight white froth on the top. We grind on. From there, it's “little goats,” “cannons” and finally 2-liter “flower pots” in handblown green glass. This is how they serve it.

We're in a 19thC pulqueria of course: “The Recreation Center for Those Across the Street.” All the old ones have names like this, which must have been a pretty good reason to go to them. “My Office.” “Memories of the Future.” “I'm Waiting for you Here, on the Corner.”

Plus in places like this, there's sawdust on the floor. Perfect. You're supposed to sit together and drink for hours: a social club. A rec center. We slop some out under our stools for that special brand of endurance called survival. But we're tough. (It's only got the alcoholic jolt of beer??) And the pails they fill the pulque from are poetic, brought in weekly from los ranchos. Point being: A.D. and I are writers with projects, drinking isn't something we do pneumatically but with gusto.

Other great features from ye old pulquerias? Bright murals all over the walls and zero cocktails. We're into it. Forget the “MEN ONLY” thing. What can't happen here?? In the suspended chimera of experiential possibility—the halyconlike magic of the maguey (a form of agave plant native to Mexico)—we're chugging sap that's been fermented into a milky pale yellow extraction. Sacrificial fluid of the Aztec death priests. Booze as we know it, discovered by a mesoamerican possum who, approaching the nectar-swollen center of the maguey plant, popped out a claw and scratched.

But how and what? Post-marsupial. Before the tequila craze and single origin wild-cultivated mezcal, before European colonialism (DISTILLATION, BEER) and European colonialism's descendants (neocolonialists? ecotourists? Brooklynites? me?), maguey was already king. In other words, especially in Central Mexico, pulque was THE maguey product, produced and consumed for millennia. First thought, best thought. The OG.

**

In the real Mexico City, D.F., 2014, it's a little bit different. Sure the pulquerias of my dreams still exist, somewhere. Instead one slightly polar January night A.D. and I traverse a tiny section of the longest thoroughfare in Latin America, Avenida Insurgentes, and find ourselves at: “The Sale of Fine Pulques,” Col. Roma. We slide past the well-lit taco stalls, pause at the long scrape of grilled meat. Dogs underfoot biting fleas and smiling. To enter: pass a bouncer, or maybe just a serious dude, a big one. Nod heads, no problem.

We walk down a cement ramp like we're heading into a crumbling sports auditorium. Suddenly there's something livestock-y about it. Then the ceiling vaults upwards into dim nothing. Patrons in leather jackets hunch at wood tables. There's one painting on the wall, only. But it's prodigious. Dazzling.

In it, a girl version of Donnie Darko (replete with bunny ears) stands naked in the center of a maguey plant. Around her, similarly naked children lie dead or drunk. Less dead kids slop red and blue pulque from large barrels over the doped forms. There's also a mother (Mary??) nursing and a guy (Joseph??) touching his chest and jacking off. And wait, is that Baby J in the corner watching?!! Basically the canvas obliterates interpretation.

“I will never forget this painting,” A.D. says.

We're playing “rock paper scissors” with pulque cured with strawberries, oatmeal, celery. It's mouth-thick.

Rock. She drinks.

Rock, again.

“For the rest of my life.”

But there's a gap. Or at least a cranial slice made by drinking. We forget stuff all the time. Like in another town we're walking up what must be 1,000 stone stairs, or a million. We have a pyramid as goal and pulque natural in plastic cups that we ferreted from an old man and a bucket. Is this the strongest? I asked before. He went around the corner to another bucket.

It's: animal-like, part dead, faintly sparkly, sour.

The climb is epic. It should be, it's to the birthplace of the Aztec god Quetzalcoatl, the feather serpent, god of the wind. Our faces are sweaty red but we won't put down the pulque. I'm convinced of its nutritional value and stimulant-like qualities. In fact, this is exactly the thing I'm trying to prove.

If mezcal and cousin tequila are the only liquors that don't act as depressants, it must be the maguey in common.

PAINTING (previous page) by Noel Hennessy

“This comes from deep in the plant!” I say on stair 5 million and 82.

“It self-ferments!”

“We could live on it!”

When we land down the mountain, I race to the toilet and eject, shitting. But I won't be disproved.

“Digestive like fernet,” I say. “But better.”

**

Later still, the thing I was forgetting, the thing I can't forget. When we got to the top, the pyramid had been all shut up already and the sky seemed torn to bits. Quetzalcoatl is also a god of: caves, maize, dawn. Plus Venus and warfare. Aztecs and Mayans connected the two.

Was that why my chest is on fire, a deep rip under everything for the rest of the week? The Aztecs call the sun the heart-soul: “round, hot, pulsing.”

The most common sacrifice—heart extraction.

Where is your heart?

You give your heart to each thing in turn.

Carrying, you do not carry it...

You destroy your heart on earth

—Aztec poem

When we drink, we take something in to leave something behind. I think.

**

But you can't have everything you want all the time. Since pulque is extremely hard to bottle, has no shelf-life and must be consumed within 2 weeks of production, it seems impervious to the “market” ie, distinctly not co-optable. Plus you have to be in maguey land.

I love this about it. Newsflash: Pulque doesn't care about New York.

But a few weeks after returning home, I sense a fear of completion, something unfinished between me and pulque, some supply and demand... have I really had enough?

It's 20 degrees out, still winter. I make some calls, finally landing a bodega under the JMZ train called, somewhat magically: Mexico2000. They have pulque in sixpacks. A small company from Boulder Colorado is canning and distributing it. It's by all accounts sacrilege. I am awash, relieved. I can always get what I want!

At the door with the steamy windows and the little bell, there's the Valentina hot sauce, chicharron, tamarind candy with chile powder on it called Pulparindo—all the right stuff. My pulse spikes anyway.

Tienes pulque? I manage.

A big-shouldered jefe dives into the walk-in and emerges with a dusty 6. Then seeing I'm serious, disappears somewhere, returns with more cans in Smirnoff Ice containers, loading me up.

Call me ahead next time, he says conspiratorially. I'm about to open Mexico3000 next door.

The rest is a vibrant blur. Someone brings a palm tree. We shake can after pulque can, add mezcal and chug. Same basic juice! It's like turducken! Then clouds of palo santo, thoth tarot card: “the moon,” you're passing through sinister sentries whose heads are those of wolves, the kitchen now tall and many chambered, for a second my heart=toilet, ARE WE ON AYHUASCA?? I'm so awake, I say, before belly flopping blindly onto my bed. Someone else is asleep sitting up in a chair.

I swim to the next morning with, briefly, the worst hangover of my life. But I still have that energy.

My brain isn't broken and I'm not depressed even though I can't move, look at anything, keep water in my stomach. I lie with my dogs weakly. If my head would only stop pounding. Or my nausea would head south.

In this state, counting down from 100 again and again to pass the time, I have a realization or two. 1. Gods don't get hangovers. 2. Ritual sacrificees die while still at least pleasantly buzzed.

Had anyone actually tested out aftereffects of this stuff??

But maybe it's the wrong question. Pulque's an ancient fluid. “Bawdy!” My friends kept saying through the raucous gleam of a pulque drunk like no other. Or “This stuff tastes like body!” I couldn't tell which.

I think about Quetzalcoatl and the Aztec priests pouring pulque down victims' throats.

Who's recreation center is it?

An hour later my vision has slightly cleared. I call A.D..

Things are muttered:

“Percocet is not pulque improved.”

“Oh god we drank it all and I remember feeling sad about it.”

“My car service home was like being in a sea dream.”

I look across the street to the pyramids, the rooms for ritual cutting, the pits full of shells and polished jaguar bones, the scattering of cans. 18 in total. I open a recycling bag and shovel them in.

“What the fuck about love?”

Dogs whine and dream. Sunday in New York. I might rejoin the living.



BY
KATY
MOORE

Pickle BROCK

ILLUSTRATION by Grace Lee
TITLE by Lizzie Swift

Whiskey, to me, is a reminder of home; distilled in the hills by young men wearing overalls, just as their fathers and their father's fathers have for decades. Sure it can get you drunk but it can also chaperone you on an afternoon of otherwise mundane tasks. Tennessee whiskey is a pastime in and of itself. Snapping beans? Mindless. Snapping beans on the porch with a glass of whiskey? This is where stories are shared and traditions are born. My favorite activity to tackle with a whiskey in hand: Pickles.

A properly made pickle takes time. Yes, there are lots of steps and no, you cannot take a shortcut or you'll be disappointed and hungry. You must embrace the process and make it your own. My pickle of choice? Cucumber, bread and butter style. Sweet and crunchy. Best enjoyed with salty crackers, rat trap cheddar, and a cool glass of Tennessee whiskey.

This recipe is a good one for beginners. It can be bulked up or shrunk down and the measurements are more guess-timates. It wants to be shaped and to satisfy the maker. I like a classic B&B so that's what I'm going for here. It all starts with an afternoon at the produce stand, strong arming little old ladies for the smallest, greenest, bumpiest kirbys (trust me on this one) and ends when you crack into jar, pour yourself a drink, and realize it was all worth it.

8-10 # Kirby cucumbers [sliced]

6-8 white onions [sliced]

5-6 garlic cloves [smashed]

1½ cups Kosher salt

ice

10 cups apple cider vinegar

10 cups sugar

1 cup water

3 T yellow mustard seeds

1 T turmeric

1 T celery seeds

2-3 dried chillies [or a pinch of chili flakes]

¼ cup Kosher salt

Combine the first four ingredients. Be sure to evenly distribute the salt. It will seem like a lot but most if it will get rinsed off in the next step. Cover with a layer of ice and place in the refrigerator. If you do not have enough space in the fridge a cooler will work perfectly. Let sit 12 hours or overnight. This salting process makes for a crunchier pickle.

The next day combine remaining ingredients in a large pot and bring to a boil. Meanwhile remove any remaining ice from your cucumbers and rinse thoroughly to remove any excess salt. Pack your cucumber mixture into jars, quarts or whatever vessel you want them to end up in. Be sure to use sterilized jars if you plan on canning. When your liquid comes to a boil taste for seasoning and adjust if necessary, it will be quite potent at this stage. Pour hot liquid over cucumbers. Wipe rims and replace your lids. Let jars cool on the counter until they are room temp then move to the refrigerator. Pickles will be ready to eat within a day but are at their best after a week.

the GOLD DUST

JEFF HANSEN

There used to be a bar near Union Square in San Francisco named The Gold Dust. Walking in you're greeted by a prospector carved of wood, his pan filled with loose change. The gold is on the walls. According to the marquee sign above the door it was established in 1933, just after prohibition. As Chuck, one of the bartenders told it, before that it was a brothel and speakeasy where the ladies of the house would come downstairs from a trapdoor in the ceiling, slink along the bar, find a "gent" and disappear him back upstairs. I don't know if Chuck was telling a good tale or a true history, but sitting in The Gold Dust, you'd be a fool or an ass not to believe him.

Chuck wore a Sam Malone hairstyle, a 70s mustache and the cursory white shirt and tie. His belt buckled one loop over to the right. He kept a Canon F1, with a large Vivitar flash, mounted on an extension arm behind the bar and would snap pictures throughout the night of the patrons. I always wanted to be in one of those photos.

The first time I encountered him he barely acknowledged me as a person or customer. After sitting at his bar all day one Friday he warmed up and I felt like part of the place, a little. Most regulars were old guys in old suits and distinguished ladies who all but lived there. The room reeked of history; dirty gold walls, red velvet, a curvy bar, a house band every night. Dusty paintings of nudes strung about. And that 'trap door' above the end of the bar.

Chuck was *the* bartender there. There were others whose names I forgot. The "new guy" who, then in 1997, was probably thirty-five at most, seemed old to me in my early twenties. There was a woman named Tina who tended bar there during the day and once came to a party my roommate and I threw, wearing Versace. She made that very clear. After she left the next morning I had to take my roommate to the hospital due to a tight, acute pain in his nether regions for which he was given a shot and sent home. I saw Tina often at The Gold Dust; my roommate

never went back. There was another old timer tending bar there who I never witnessed speak. I also never saw anyone thirsty while sitting at his bar and he never seemed in the weeds, so something was working. Just a quiet man spending his last days doing what he knew best and preparing to be a ghost.

The Gold Dust just was easy and nice. There was room for tourists and regulars. It also had the best drink special I had seen. From 7 a.m. till 2 a.m. you could get a margarita, glass of champagne, or Irish coffee for \$3.25. The margarita was not good. The champagne was worse. The Irish coffee was made with Powers, sugar, lightly whipped cream, and black, dank, oily coffee. And it was delicious. It made you feel great. Vividly awake and drunk and happy and warm. I never let anyone order anything else there. Maybe a Bud. But why bother when the Irish coffee was perfect.

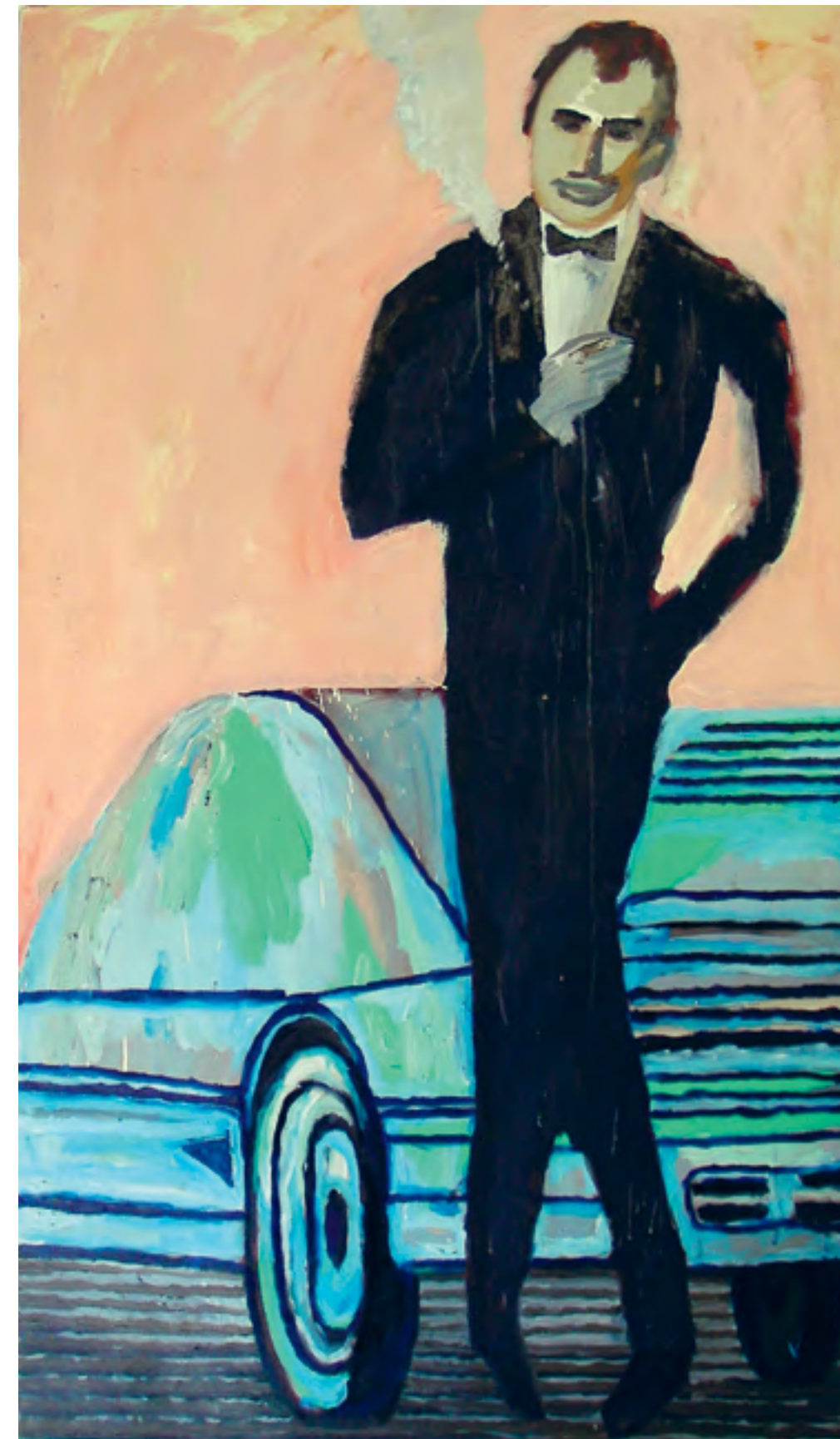
I used the bar as a sort of litmus test for dates. I would ask a woman to meet me there, at The Gold Dust, midday. If she liked it, the date would keep going. If not, it would end. Sometimes she wouldn't show, and I can't blame anyone for that, it was not in the coolest neighborhood and was surrounded by assholes. No hard feelings. Its location also helped me discern critical thinking. One woman tried to drive there. There is no parking downtown. And I just like punctuality. So I had a few Irish coffees with Tina and after about 45 minutes left. I got a call 15 minutes later from my ex-date who had just arrived wondering where I was. And, asking why I asked her to meet me 'here', in a sort of confused tone. If she couldn't tell while inside the place it only confirmed leaving was best.

Should the date go well, and some did, we would have an Irish coffee or three and cross the street to the St. Francis Hotel. I can't afford a room at the St. Francis, then or now. With the courage of the Irish jacking up my confidence we would rush through the grand lobby, under the soaring ceilings, through the fancy people, passed the uniformed guards, straight to the elevators, punching the button, and staring down the guard with that bullshit confidence till the doors open. Then I'd rush us into the car and to the front window. When the elevator starts it pushes you heavy into the floor. It rockets in darkness for two floors before shooting out fifty feet above street level on the side of the building. The car has floor to ceiling windows. The ground feels as though it's racing away as the city widens, spreading itself before you. Soon you're over Union Square and the shoppers are tiny now. The ubiquitous bums are spread about below with their shopping cart condos. Downtown plays out before you with the Bay Bridge and the East Bay beyond. The Transamerica building stabs at the sky, its dagger point just north. Further north Coit Tower stands at salute on Telegraph Hill. Built with dollars

from the estate of Lillie Hitchcock Coit, the tower is said to have been erected as a tribute to the firemen of the city, of whom Ms. Coit was rumored to be quite fond. When we reached the top we'd get off and stare out the window, then ride down. We'd keep our knees loose so when the car stopped they'd buckle and you'd almost feel like you were being sucked into the earth.

Then, perhaps it was back to The Gold Dust, as the tourists would rotate out, and leave the regulars in their places like totems to day-drinking. Or we would continue to run about that small city and burn off the caffeine and booze. Once I was with my friend, Katie, and when we busted out of the hotel and tried to get a cab, a limo pulled up and the driver asked where we were going. I told him he had the wrong couple. He said get in and, for \$10 bucks he took us to the Red Vic Theater in the Haight where we were to meet some friends. He let us drink the booze in the back and roll about being young and drunk in a limo that wasn't ours. It seemed as though every trip to The Gold Dust brought about a completely ridiculous outcome.

That was a long time ago. I try to go back whenever I return home. I've brought my wife there. I was already mad about Siobhan when we went, not yet engaged, but I can say it was a relief when she expressed her love of The Gold Dust as well, if not for the \$3.25 champagne. I've recently learned that The Gold Dust is now an Express clothing store. Its marquee is there but the swinging doors and red velvet are all gone. I've read that it reopened in Fisherman's Wharf, but I don't know anything about that.



TITLE by Mark McCormick | PAINTING by Eric Mast



The best thing about a **purse sandwich** is forgetting you have one. I was leaving work one day to meet a couple of friends at East River Bar. I hadn't eaten yet and knew they probably hadn't either. I decided to make a sandwich for us to share. I sliced a baguette in half and smeared it with butter. We had a country ham at the time that I couldn't stop eating, so it had to be. The only other thing it needed was pickles, so I sliced them thin and scattered them among the meat waves. I wrapped it up and threw it in my tote. I was excited.

The bar was fun. My friends were fun. I had completely forgotten about the sandwich. Then, someone said something about being hungry. I made what I'm sure was a crazy face and reached in my bag. I pulled the sandwich out and placed it on the green felt of the pool table. They reacted as if I had just performed an act of magic. We named it *purse sandwich*, and we ate it.

Not long after, I made another purse sandwich, the same as the first. I put it in my bag and headed out for the night. This sandwich did not make an appearance on the dance floor that night. I had completely forgotten about it.

The next morning I woke up, rolled over and reached in my bag to grab, let's say, my phone. My hand instead found something unexpected. It felt heavy. It was girthy. It was the sandwich.

I ate it in bed, and it was perfect.

Think of the purse sandwich as you would the hunter's jerky, or the soldier's landjäger. Two things that aren't so bad to have on hand either. The purse sandwich is now one of us, well known amongst my friends and family. It's not the same every time because it doesn't have to be.

The only requirements are as follows:

1. The bread should be simple. Baguette is perfect.
2. The dairy-based fat you add (if any) should be an aged cheese or butter.
3. It can easily be vegetarian but if you add meat just make sure it's cured and would probably be found hanging somewhere, not in a deli case.
4. Be free with your use of pickled things. They are your sass and your crunch.

ORANGE CAKE, ALTMAN'S

I recently acquired my family's heirloom recipe box: a small, wooden, Globe Wernecke that originally lived in my grandmother's Oyster Bay kitchen. Amidst recipes for *24 Hour Salad* and *Salty Oatmeal Cookies*, I uncovered a gem in pink ink on folded legal paper, *Orange Cake, Altman's*.

An inherited recipe box contains more than just an index of dishes. These handcrafted collections reveal tradition, preference, technique, neighbors and place. My Grandmother, also named Marjory, (now passed away) is vivid in the set of vintage 3x5 cards. Dundee Cake belies her Scottish heritage while variations on ziti tell of the Italian she married. I adored my grandmother. I was her only granddaughter and we were especially close. I feel proud to share her name and think often of her grace, wit, and warmth. She was whip at cards, loved marzipan candies, and almost always wore a string of pearls. She moved to New York in 1926, but never lost the soft, lilting brogue in her voice. She taught me how to hand press shortbread into a tin for baking, and I can still recall the feel of buttery dough beneath my fingertips. It is one of my earliest memories.

My grandmother worked at B. Altman & Co. through the 1970s and 80s. My 103-year-old great Aunt Belle also worked there. "I managed the housewares department!" she reminds me. My mother very fondly remembers shopping at Altman's. Although I never visited the famous de-

partment store myself, the place is ingrained in our family lore. Even the name Altman's feels personal and familiar to me. I can picture the red script of their emblem in my mind, which still occasionally surfaces on boxes and bags recycled for gift giving.

The *Orange Cake* recipe is straightforward: flour, sugar, eggs, springform pan, 40 minutes at 350. Making the cake, however, sparked in me a curiosity about the bygone world of Altman's, its food history in particular. If Altman's was responsible for a cake worthy enough to make it into "the box," then what else? I traced my cake slice to its origin point: the top floor dining room of B. Altman's Manhattan store, the location of a bizarre, but beloved themed restaurant, Charleston Garden.

"For that moonlight-and-magnolias feeling¹," one could retreat to Charleston Garden for lunch, tea and - beginning in the early 80s - "a real drink²" with Sunday brunch. Benjamin Altman opened his namesake department store, the first of its kind to be situated on Fifth Avenue, in 1906. The store continued to expand and by 1914, upon its completion, Altman's occupied the entire block with its white and limestone palazzo, eight stories on the Fifth

¹ Oases For Eating Found In the Department Stores; Tipping Out Here Perch in Basement, Nan Robertson, New York Times, March 18, 1957, Section Family/Style, Page 30

² New York Day By Day, Transitions, David Bird and Maurice Carroll, New York Times, October 22, 1983.

/MARJORY SWEET

Avenue side and twelve stories on the Madison side. The interior was elaborate: white marble drinking fountains, glass display cases, rich wood paneling and iron grillwork around each of the thirty nine separate elevators. Needless to say, "There was never a bargain basement."³ Altman's enticed middle class women with personal, in-store amenities such as custom tailoring, fur storage and, of course, dining options. In 1947, Charleston Garden opened on the eighth floor of Altman's and operated continuously until the store's close in 1989. The restaurant was reproduced for branch locations in Short Hill, NJ, St. David's, PA and White Plains, NY, but the original remained the most notable. For all of the Manhattan store's opulence, the restaurant was its most extravagant feature. The main wall of the dining room featured a mock facade of a two-story antebellum mansion, complete with eight white columns and a balcony. The three remaining walls were covered in lavish murals of tropical foliage, neighboring manor houses and blue skies. Whether you were a woman from the Upper West Side, or the Bronx, or Oyster Bay, you could enjoy a wedge of coconut cake while, "Painted magnolias, bougainvillea and azaleas bloom all around."⁴ B. Altman declared that shopping should be a pleasure, not a chore. His eighth floor oasis upheld that ideal.

It is suspected that Altman was originally inspired by *Two Hundred Years of Charleston Cooking*, Blanche Rhett's 1931 compendium of recipes from Charleston's most prominent families, which was hugely popular at the time. Altman understood the exotic allure of the Holy City, and found a way to deliver that faraway, dreamy lifestyle to East Coast city dwellers.

Charleston Garden served vaguely southern fare, filtered through mid-century cafeteria standards: meatloaf, pastel colored tea cakes and salad with strawberry mayonnaise

³ Point of Purchase: How Shopping Changed American Culture, Sharon Zukin, Psychology Press, 2004. Page 119

⁴ Oases For Eating Found In the Department Stores; Tipping Out Here Perch in Basement, Nan Robertson, New York Times, March 18, 1957, Section Family/Style, Page 30

dressing. Cake and pastry, it seems, were the specialty of the house. "The menu is a dessert-eaters dream," claimed the New York Times on July 27, 1963. Cakes loom large in the collective memory of eating at Altman's. References to a perfect chocolate layer cake, a walnut cake, "B. Altman brownies" and Christmas fruitcake resurface. In one internet forum, Altman's devotees hunt for the elusive recipe to something called *Honey Loaf*. "The last person I discussed the *Honey Loaf* with was the kindest saleslady in Bloomingdales in Short Hills...who knew the baker from her days at B. Altman. She actually, so graciously tried to contact him - she said he had moved to Florida. I believe she also said he was of Czechoslovakian descent."

Altman's eventually faded into economic decline as retail culture began to reject high end shopping in favor of discount megastores and indoor malls. In the winter of 1989, Altman's closed six of its seven locations, including the 5th Avenue flagship. By 1990, all locations were closed. Along with John Wanamaker, Best & Co. and Arnold Constable, the demise of Altman's marked the "End of an era of dignified retailing in lush surroundings...high ceilings with chandeliers and wide, carpeted aisles. Their merchandise was mostly higher priced than the competition."⁵ When Altman's shuttered its doors, much of its physical history disappeared too. What could have become treasured paper ephemera was hastily discarded.

Even the Altman Foundation, (preserving B.A.'s philanthropic mission to "enrich the quality of life in New York City") which celebrated its centennial in 2013, has only just begun to piece together an archive of its signature institution. Today, the Internet serves as the best portal into the lost world of the distinguished shop and its enchanting dining room. The forums of Chowhound, in particular, reveal a tidal pool of nostalgia for Charleston Garden. New Yorkers recall childhood outings gilded by a visit to the eighth floor of Altman's. Wrote one user, "I

⁵ No Bidder To Rescue B. Altman, Isadore Barmash, New York Times, November 18, 1989.

Altman's
Orange Cake

16 Tbsp. Unsalted Butter
1 Cup Sugar
3 Lg. Eggs (separated)
3 Cups Flour
1 Tsp. Baking Powder
1 " Baking Soda
1 Cup Sour Cream
Grated rind 1 orange
1/2 Cup Chopped Walnuts
1/4 " Orange Juice
1/3 " Grand Marnier, Cointreau
or other orange liqueur
Confectioners sugar.

Heat oven to 350 degrees F.

Butter and dust with sugar. 8-9 inch
tube or spring form pan, shaking out
surplus sugar. Cream to gether butter &
sugar til light. Beat in the egg yolks.
Left to gether flour, baking soda and powder.
Stir into batter alternately with sour cream.
Stir in the orange rind & nuts. Beat
whites til stiff. Fold into batter. Spoon
mixture into prepared pan. Bake 40-45 min
til inserted blade of knife comes out
clean. Mix orange juice, liqueur and
spoon over cake while it is hot. Cool.
Remove from pan. Dust top with
confectioners sugar



can picture the gorgeous murals of the flora and fauna on the walls and that the tables had little shelves (similar to school desks) where shoppers could place small parcels or handbags while dining. The walls and furniture were a deep cream color." Certain details, like the memory of the built-in table shelves, reappear throughout these anonymous reminiscences.

Charleston Garden has long disappeared, but the B. Altman & Co. building still stands at 365 Fifth. It is now the CUNY Grad Center. You can take the elevator to the eighth floor and have a meal in what currently houses the University dining hall. It is worth visiting, if only to pay small tribute to a room that helped define the culture of city lunch as something with as much sincerity and significance as going to the theater or a museum.

The orange cake is lovely: dense, sweet, perfumed and big. There is boiled citrus in the batter, orange liqueur in the glaze and powdered sugar on top - vintage techniques that really shine here. I have made the cake twice now. My mother has also resurrected it in her kitchen. She has her own handwritten version of the recipe that she copied down years ago. For me, the significance of the cake is less about the history of Altman's and more about the ceremony that is embedded in preparing it. Following a recipe written in my grandmother's hand feels deeply intimate in a way that old photographs or even inherited objects could never replicate. The process of baking allows me to closely engage in a quiet, domestic hour or two of my grand-

mother's own life. Preparing food stimulates our nerve organs; smell, taste and touch give meaning to the action of culinary instructions. Unlike an inherited object, which can certainly recall a person and place, the execution of a handed down recipe viscerally animates a lost person and place by awakening a shared sensory experience. This is the beauty of a recipe. It yields to changing circumstances. In response to my grandmother's printed instructions, I can adjust proportions and ingredients according to my own kitchen - while my mother does the same. The cake, then, becomes a conversation between my grandmother, my mother and myself. In baking cake, I am also building on an oral history that belongs to our family matriarchs.

You do not, however, need to be in my genealogy to love Altman's orange cake. It is delicious, and it does somehow magically evoke the crepe de chine and blooming azaleas of 1947. It also holds up equally as well on a cake stand today, as a salute to all the lost dining rooms and all the good cakes, and to the women who save them.

by Kelli Farwell & Sue Walsh

For the early settlers of Colonial America taverns, or public houses as they were known then, were a necessity. The building of public houses was a legal obligation, and was often the first structure to be built in a village, before even churches and town halls. The earliest taverns functioned as way stations for travelers and could be easily mistaken for people's homes. They were modest wooden houses or cabins with a few rooms for sleep accommodations. The rooms had feather beds (in the best case scenario) on the floor and many times complete strangers, up to four to a bed, had to bunk together. One fixed price meal was served at the same time each day and there was no bar to sit at, just wooden tables and chairs. On cold days the tavern doubled as the courthouse, the wheels of justice properly lubricated with beer and rum punch. Your name written on a tavern door was considered a sufficient jury summons.

To this day, taverns are a staple in American culture. They are both the gathering place when there is trouble in the world and a raucous celebratory romp house when things are on an upswing. From its earliest stages, The Water Table was going to be a tavern. My partner, Sue Walsh and I wanted the experience inside the boat to measure up to the Manhattan skyline and the great feeling of being out on the water. I was homesick for my New England roots, but my home was here, so the plan was to bring some of New England to Brooklyn by using one of the best untapped resources in the city—the rivers.

New York City was built on merchant trade and the waterways were a critical aspect to economic growth for the developing colonies. Today, our focus has shifted to be more concerned with what's happening on land, and the rivers, up until very recently with the launch of the ferries, have been under utilized.

The East River ferries in particular have opened up the floodgates in regards to how people think about the water in New York City. Ferries are affordable and accessible, and Brooklynites love the service. But there was no dinner boat for locals. Definitely not anything on the East River, which is hard to believe since dining culture thrives on this side of the island.

We had no money. There was no business model to pull from. We wanted a historic boat, but with no resources, it was tough. We looked at tons of boats with the idea that somehow the money would be there. We started an Indiegogo campaign to raise money, and from the generosity of family, friends, and strangers came up with just about the full amount to buy the Revolution, a US Navy Yard Patrol boat built in 1944.

When I first walked up to the Revolution in Winthrop, MA, its presence was overwhelming. The battleship gray bow was sloping up off the surface of the water in typi-

cal proud military fashion with the stern settling lower behind. There were no doors on the back of the cabin at the time and a couple of pigeons flew out as I boarded. The first thing I got excited about was the main deck, much of it was the original cherry stained oak from the 40s. The cabin was spacious and lined with windows and I had the feeling pretty immediately that this would be our boat. It was rustic, had lots of natural wood and seemed perfect for a tavern.

After making that fateful 24 hour trip to Winthrop and wrapping up the initial renovations on the Revolution, we could focus on the food and beverage aspect. It felt like a vacation to taste an array of New England beer from back home, strategizing the bitters component to our cocktails, and putting together a sipping rum list. We'd serve lobster rolls, chowder, comfort food made with only the best ingredients. It felt like we had crossed the finish line and could finally show people that we had made something great out of their investment in us. That, though Sue and I are running the ship, The Water Table is everyone's place. Since our community helped us buy the boat and supported us non-stop along the way, we feel that everyone has some ownership in it. A project started by the community is now a small company trying to give back to that same community.

Owning a seventy year old wooden boat is an ungodly amount of work. You have to love it and not be afraid of working physically anywhere from 8-20 hours a day. But old boats have a spirit and integrity that you feel when you're on them. You want to take care of them. It's a relationship. Before our launch we dry-docked the boat to give the hull some new paint. I scraped the entire 62 x 18 foot mahogany hull myself with a three-inch paint scraper. There were live oysters and mussels from Boston harbor living in the wood. It was incredible and backbreaking at the same time. Even out of the water, the boat felt alive. I wondered, as the layers of old bottom paint stripped away how many experiences the boat had been through in its decades of service. It was on our watch now and that responsibility felt huge. All of the hours of quiet I just kept thinking, "You be good to me and I'll be good to you." Somewhere in the exhaustion and delirium of hours scaping away in the blistering sun, the boat and I made a deal.



PHOTO by Beth Flatley

COUNTRY WINE

Taylor Cocalis Suarez

And so they were calling. And I obliged.

Anyone can appreciate a warm breeze or the lush green of new leaves, but after six months of waist-deep snow Vermont residents feel the coming of spring in every single cell of their bodies. The grey haze finally parts and I can hop out onto the lawn at Barr Hill and see for sixty plus miles to snow capped Stratton, over to Camel's Hump, and down to Killington peak.

Everything is finally alive, and radiant, and my desire to bottle up that feeling, to ask it to last me through the winter, feels inevitable. The name country wine doesn't do this product justice. The qualifier cheapens it in a way, lowering your expectations. It's not real wine, but just an imitation, made from a less noble start than the holy *vitis vinifera*.

Dandelions are my medium of choice. Not dandelions as most folks know them, the nuisance peppering your otherwise pristine lawn. But a lush carpet of dandelions blanketing the earth's surface. Dandelions that contribute a yellow to green grass ratio of 3:1. A coat of flowers so fluffy that you might mistake them for a down feather bed during mid-day outdoor naps.

But in those spring months one can see the bounty of the warm weather all over, and wherever you turn there's likely something alive, wild, and calling to be preserved. While the most obvious ingredients are things like apples and berries, please don't hold back. I've seen

country wine from pumpkins, rhubarb, beets, and hickory bark. Fruits, herbs, and flowers can all contribute subtlety and depth of flavor.

Dandelions are most wide open at midday. The first step in this process consists of maintaining an uncomfortable crouched position over the flowers. Under ordinary circumstances you might mind being hunched over for a few hours, but you are so deprived of sun that you consider even a burn a welcome byproduct of the process. As you methodically collect the golden petals, take great care to not include any of the bitter matter from the white oozing glue-like sap from the green stem. Side note: You actually can use it as glue.

You are looking for a 3:5 petals-to-liquid ratio, which means that each hour picking will yield about two bottles of finished product. Budget accordingly. You will appreciate the process so much more if you consider it a welcome break from staring at a screen, an opportunity to chat with a helpful friend, or an investment for a healthy supply of liquid sunshine.

After hours of practice I came up with a system as follows: plop down on the ground. Don't worry about crushing any flowers; there are far more than you could ever collect even during their fleeting





DANDELION WINE

fermentation crock [2 gal]

dandelion petals

[enough to fill half the crock]

1 gallon water [boiling]

2 # sugar

2 qt water [cool]

3 lemons [zest + juice]

1 grapefruit [zest + juice]

1½ # golden raisins

1 packet dried yeast

[champagne or white wine]

Pour the gallon of boiling water over petals and sugar until sugar dissolves. Add remaining cool water, citrus juice and zest, and raisins. Ensure entire portion is only warm to the touch. You want to cool it down enough so that it doesn't kill the yeast. Add yeast. Stir. Cover with cheesecloth and a rubber band so it can breathe but is not totally open to the elements.

In 24 hours the mixture should be bubbling. The fermentation will create a thick cap of petals and other ingredients at the top. Don't worry if it browns. Feel free to stir every day or two to mix it all up.

After a week or so strain the liquid off of the solids. Discard the solids and move the liquid to a large glass jar fit with an airlock. Keep it here for one to three months while the fermentation finishes up (bubbling stops) and you can bottle without the danger of it exploding. Don't dare open it prior to six months, and if you can wait longer it should remain good for at least another two to three.

three-week season. Cut all of the good-looking specimens within arm's reach. Feel free to cut them at the stem. Then take your pile and snip them one by one into your bucket. Once you have exhausted your pile, get up, move a few feet over (double the length of your arm's reach), and repeat. You'll be quite pleased with your progress until you shift your bucket and the bountiful petal pile settles to nearly a third of its original volume. Managed expectations are everything, so I dutifully alert you in advance.

At the heart of this potion you have the petals, the sugar which is food for the yeast in the form of granulated, golden raisins, dates, or the like, citrus juice and zest of your choosing. I prefer a mix of lemons and grapefruit, optional other flavors are great such as grated ginger. It will also call for water, and champagne or white wine yeast.

While the intoxicating aromas, redolent of mimosa, lure you in during the first few days of fermenting, the thick cap of wet brown-petals may make you nervous that you've been led astray at some point. Just wait. Nature has a way of calming your urges.

A week's worth of restraint and you are ready to move the liquid into a proper fermentation vessel, where it will likely release gas until the one month mark. Although you might be ready to enjoy it right away, it behoves you to wait. 'Bottle me up', it implores, 'and forget I exist. Once the first frost hits I'll reward your patience and persistence.'

So you do. And it does. It transitions to a light, bright, dry sherry-like palate. In color and taste it is more brilliant and nuanced than your favorite white wine, and the pleasure of knowing that you crafted it makes savoring the beverage that much sweeter. It gives you faith that the two feet of snow outside will melt again one day soon. Under the white blanket are pockets of green and gold, and with them come the warm sun, color to your skin, and the sweat that will go into next year's batch of wine.

PAINTINGS by **Kimia Ferdowsi Kline**

TITLE by **Lizzie Swift**



WHAT TO DO WHEN YOU'VE MIXED OYSTERS WITH BANANAS

by Scarlett Lindeman

PAINTING BY ERIC MAEST

Do you like fernet? This may be the wrong question. It is not a question of like, so much as a question of involvement. I'm not sure that I like fernet... but I think you can be enamored with things that don't necessarily please you. I don't like Fernet like how I like roller coasters or mangos but I appreciate how it rattles the senses. I appreciate its clashing flavors, its dark, aggressive bitterness. With habitual use, I've become accustomed to fernet like a child's first taste of coffee, pushing through the discomfort towards appreciation.

Fernet is a digestivo, a concentrated herbaceous liquor meant to settle the stomach. The slender green bottle with the eagle logo, Fernet Branca, may be the most well-known but there are many versions, though all are black, thick, sweet, and acerbic enough to prompt an immediate grimace on those with virgin palates. They contain a cornucopia of botanicals; roots, spices, barks, herbs, and flowers and even though most fernet recipes are closely guarded proprietary secrets, mint, chamomile, saffron, aloe, rhubarb, and myrrh are certainly included. As nice and calming as that sounds the spirit is caustic, complex as a Mexican mole, and more bitter than an improperly drawn bodega espresso.

But bitterness is underrated. We've come a long way from our ancestors, who avoided toxic, bitter plants that could end a life early, shirking twigs and leaves as survival mechanism. After millennium of figuring out what can kill us, bitterness has become an asset, a salutary flavor that balances sweet and salty, cleanses the body, and stimulates the metabolism. Think grapefruit pith, dandelion greens, spears of radicchio, coffee, cocoa beans; their health benefits tend to lie in the bitterness. Of all the tastes that our palettes can detect, bitter may be the most challenging but avoiding it would be as misconceived as a pitcher eschewing the curve ball.

In legion of digestivos, aperitivos, and amargos, fernet was perfected and popularized by the Italians. It emerged as a distinct spirit, distilled from grapes and colored with caramel, from Milan in 1845 as a cure-all; a tincture to smooth over everything from hangovers to unstable stomachs. In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, it was more medicine than drink. The practice of having a fernet after an expansive meal spread, slowly. Wherever Italians migrated, so did their after dinner drinks. Branca spawned knockoffs, imitations valuable in their own right: Mexican fernet with a bright orange label; batches of Tunisian flowers macerated into fernet in Tabarka; infiltrating the United States in the late 1800s. In 1962, in the American magazine *Suburbia Today*, an article recommended fernet

for "overeating, flatulence, hangovers, gas pains, (and) lifting yourself off the floor when you've mixed oysters and bananas."

You don't drink fernet. You sip it. You shoot it. You slug it from the bottle. I first tasted the spirit after a long shift on the line. All the cooks changed out of their soiled whites, headed towards the bar to unwind after service. The bartender passed out Budweiser and queried, "Fernet?" I nodded in affirmation. We were given short glasses of a dark liquid, clinked, and threw back the shot. I swallowed unsuspectingly. It was like a slap in the face. My eyes watered; I hid a gasp. My mind flashed with: Spice cabinets. Listerine. Bitter dregs. A katzenjammer of flavors rumbled over my palette, an electric storm passed through body and mind, settling deep in the chest. I was reset. We drank more. I winced at every swallow but was giddy for new experiences, new flavors. I felt sturdy and settled. Another round of fernet; a joyful numbness bloomed late into the night.

Fernet is still not universally loved. It never will be. Its influence has captured a select few. Batman's butler Alfred, a distinguished fellow, enjoys a pour when in Florence. Fitzgerald's jet-setters in *Tender is the Night* order the spirit. A cult drink among chefs and bartenders of San Francisco since before Prohibition, today the Bay Area accounts for over one-fourth of US consumption. I have backed shots of fernet with ginger ale in The Mission. In Buenos Aires, I've guzzled fernet y cokas with teenagers in rockera bars. In Baltimore, on tap. If you are in a strange city and you need to find the right kind of watering hole, just ask around where you can get a fernet.

In this way, fernet is a kind of calling card. When a stranger at the bar orders one, I feel like I know a little bit about them. They're a bartender, or they've worked in a restaurant before, maybe they have Italian parents, but they know what they're in for. They've embraced the darkness. Fernet is stiff magic. To drink it signals that you've accepted the full spectrum of taste and revel in both the good and the bad. Behind the bar, we look for comrades, we look for converts. The only warning I give the uninitiated before pouring out dark streams of the liquid into rocks glasses, is a smile and a "Fernet?" Nudge the glass forward. It is a divisive moment; some will follow the path, some will turn away, but all will hate it for the first sip. Join us.

CONTRIBUTORS



LOUISE INGALLS STURGES is a photographer and mixed-media painter. She lives and works in the West Village with her husband, Tyler, and cat, Sharice. Louise has been taking photographs since 1995 and has art degrees from The College of Santa Fe and The International Center of Photography. Her work has been shown in galleries from Brooklyn to Japan and has been featured in numerous publications, including NYLON and Marie Claire. Louise has a predilection for light and color, and is exuberant about documentation. She feeds off casual rainbows, gets jazzed on nice people, and has a deep fantasy of living in Hawaii, even though she's never been. Follow her on instagram @besosyfotos



ERIC W MAST (aka E*Rock) is an artist and electronic musician living and working in Portland, OR. He runs the Audio Dregs record label and co-runs Dreem Street street wear ("Everything you love and more! ...some things you hate.") www.e-rock.com



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JEFF HANSEN has tended bar in neighborhood staples and fine dining havens; dive bars and cocktail dens. West coast, mid-coast, East coast for 14 years. It has affected him in many ways. Now he is trying to write too, to affect you.



When **LARS G. KARLSSON** was a kid in Gothenburg, Sweden, he could do a perfect impersonation of Hannibal Heyes from the Western tv series, Alias Smith and Jones, using only two real words in English, "Hands up!" larsgkarlsson.tumblr.com



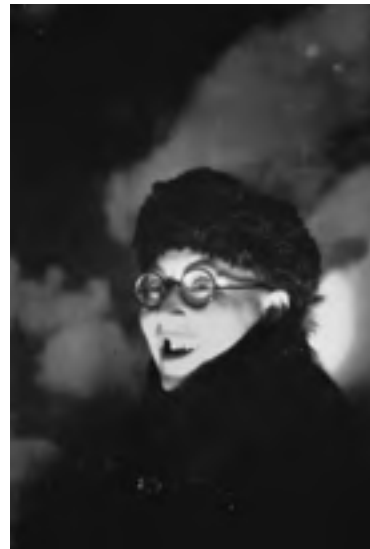
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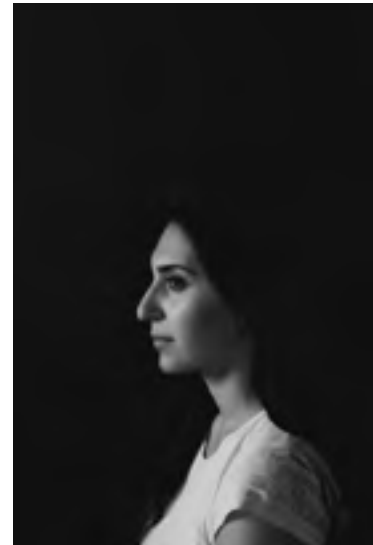
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If you point at any piece of furniture in **SUSAN THOMPSON'S** house she's probably made it herself. She manages Roman's most days and tigers most nights. Ask her how many push-ups she can do.



DAM MARKSON. Living the dream.



FAYE PICHLER is an Aquarius living in Brooklyn. PHOTO by Julia Gillard



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PETER PAVIA is the author of DUTCH UNCLE, a novel, THE CUBA PROJECT, and is a co-author of THE OTHER HOLLYWOOD. His work has appeared in the New York Times, Post, GQ, and many other publications. He lives in New York City with his wife and daughter. PHOTO by Clay Patrick McBride



MARK MCCORMICK is a letter-drawing illustrator in Brooklyn, NY. He used to have his own tale of drunken debauchery, but left it in a cab last weekend. See what he does when he's not on the hooch at NakedFowl.com.



TAYLOR COCALIS SUAREZ co-founded Good Food Jobs in 2010. Her favorite part about her job is that it allows her to work from anywhere, which was the Northeast Kingdom of Vermont for the past three years., as well as have time to play in the kitchen and garden. goodfoodjobs.com



GRACE LEE is a Tokyo-based illustrator, originally from Sydney. Her work includes illustrations for Japanese department stores Isetan and Beams as well as magazines such as MADAME FIGARO, ELLE (JPN), FRAU, NUMERO, ANTHOLOGY, and THE RITZ-CARLTON MAGAZINE.



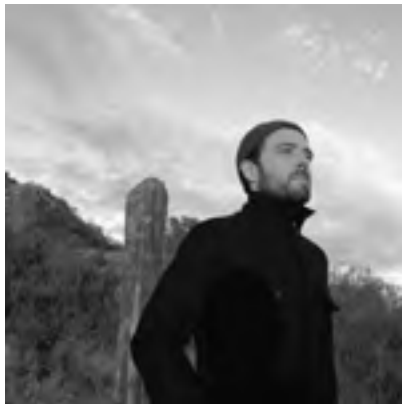
ASHLEY WHITMORE is the former Marlow pastry chef. She currently womans the Sullivan Street Bakery commissary kitchen. If the DOH permitted it, she would have a crate of kittens in the kitchen while making ice cream.



Captain **KELLI FARWELL** grew up in the woods of Northern Maine with an appreciation of home-cooked meals and the outdoors. She holds a 100GT Master Captain's license and has been immersed in the hospitality industry in New York City for the last 16 years. Her food and beverage resume includes fine dining service at Gramercy Tavern and Craft. She was the Wine Director for eateries such as Dressler, Dumont and Rye. She currently lives in Brooklyn with her wife and First Mate, Sue Walsh.



MARJORY SWEET grew up on the coast of Maine. She currently lives and farms in the Rio Grande Valley of Albuquerque, New Mexico. In addition to tending vegetable fields, Marjory is helping to establish a Southwest chapter of the National Young Farmer's Coalition. She looks forward to this year's growing season, which promises heirloom French rabbit meat, fermented summer vegetables, and elaborate, outdoor feasts. Marjory's writing has appeared in WILDER QUARTERLY and MODERN FARMER.



NOEL HENNESSY is an artist living in Los Angeles. He attended school at The Museum of Fine Arts in Boston and while living in Brooklyn started St. Helen Cafe and SAVED. Noel works on a variety of projects including set design, branding, and interiors. He is also working on launching a line of custom fabrics and wallpapers later this year inspired by his prints.



ADAM LUKENS was raised in Cleveland and moved to NY to make movies. He currently lives in Brooklyn with 3 skateboards, 8 Polaroids (6 working) and owing to a number of poor decisions, more roommates than he thinks a grown man should have.



In addition to her design, business and, management responsibilities at The Water Table, **SUE WALSH** is the Senior Designer at Milton Glaser Incorporated and also operates an independent design consultancy. She was born and raised in Oak Park, Illinois, a little town bordering the west side of Chicago. Sue has earned a BFA in Graphic Design from University of Illinois at Urbana Champaign and an MFA in Design from School of Visual Arts. She worked at THE NEW YORK TIMES and The Museum of Modern Art. Her work has been recognized by the AIGA, Graphis, Communication Arts, the Type Directors Club among others.



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