

DINER JOURNAL



ISSUE No
TWENTY-NINE
NO ADS \$18

FATHER VOICE

They teach us that we're objects, not subjects. That we're facts, not magical. But if it were true that we never trapped a rhino, how could we endure school, make friends for life, figure out how fast the universe is expanding, create art, fall in love, become the riders on the storm? I don't know if there's a god, but I lived in paradise and trapped a rhino. I am the lighthouse that invites the storm and lights it up.

CAN THE
FISHES
SEE IT'S
SNOWING?

DINER JOURNAL

85 Broadway
Brooklyn, NY 11249

Ad-free and three hole-punched since 2006

Andrew Tarlow	Publisher
Anna Dunn	Editor in Chief
Becky Johnson	Art Director
Scarlett Lindeman	Recipe Editor
Julia Gillard	Photo Editor
Leah Campbell	Deputy Editor
Millicent Souris	Editor at Large
Sarah Gaskins	Contributing Editor
Paul Zablocki	Contributing Editor
Emma Mannheimer	Media Editor
Lars Karlsson	Solutions Director
Evan Dunn	Relatability Editor
Sven Del Vecchio	Director of Sales

ISSUE No TWENTY-NINE

All photos by **Julia Gillard**

Excerpted text by **Dylan Thomas**

All recipes and musings inspired by
A Child's Christmas in Wales by **Dylan Thomas**

SUBSCRIPTIONS ARE 4 ISSUES
\$71 [DOMESTIC] \$101 [INTERNATIONAL]
[SHIPPING INCLUDED]

INTERESTED IN CARRYING ISSUES OF DINER JOURNAL?
FOR INFORMATION ON BECOMING A STOCKIST WRITE TO US AT
STOCKISTS@DINERNYC.COM

FOR ALL THINGS DINER JOURNAL INCLUDING BUT NOT LIMITED TO POETRY,
RECIPES, GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN AND TO PURCHASE THE COMPLETE
COLLECTION VISIT DINERJOURNAL.COM

PRINTED BY THE PROLIFIC GROUP IN WINNIPEG MB CANADA UNDER THE SUPERVISION
OF CHRIS YOUNG



ON GHOSTS AND MERMEN

by CARROLL & ANNA DUNN

DAUGHTER VOICE

Each year I feel glad listening to you read *A Child's Christmas in Wales*, like hearing Sam Cook on the radio and going, *Ah, yes this is a sound I love*. I remember thinking of you as the postman in the story, when that was one of your many jobs. Postman, filmmaker, actor, writer, advocate. What else have you been? I'm sure I missed some odd jobs along the way. Oh, teacher. Accomplice, alibi, guru, stargazer, bird caller. And on Christmas, Dylan Thomas. Remember the postman in Wales? How he loved walking and Christmas and dogs and snow? How enlightened he must be to cherish that which thwarts him. Also that time Jesse pulled the fire alarm at Easter dinner at the Harraseeket Inn, and you, my Buddhist father, got into a fight with a fireman because Mom was feeding him misinformation (wrong address, wrong age), and I couldn't stop laughing, and I kept on waiting for Mrs. Prothero to appear and offer the firemen a book. And the two young men in the poem who walk before dinner to their death and into the forlorn Irish Sea. I've been imagining Dylan Thomas as one of them (or both—there is a certain duality of self running through the poem), and this poem his glorious and inextinguishable briar.

FATHER VOICE

How do you know the pipe guys don't come out on the beach at Normandy? Or Coney Island? Actually, I was trying to remember a phrase from the poem to describe the mind, and I found it, just after the Prothero fire, when the poet is telling the kid about the snows of yesteryear, which "was like a dumb, numb thunderstorm of white torn Christmas cards." Alas, the terrors of entropy. How can I find a good word among a sky (or skull?) full of storming card remnants? That's why I told Jesse the other day, when he asked why our garage is filled with partially assembled telescopes, which I picked up at Goodwill, that I now consider myself to be an astronomer. Although I've never managed to get a star to cross the various dusty lenses that are presumably somewhere in the garage.

There may be a certain fortuitousness at your asking me this weekend. Every year, I wonder why I keep on with my Halloween installation. After all, I don't have any more children at home, you could say. But there seems to be something irreversible about this macabre business, because, every year, at the very last minute, I find myself spinning around like Donald Duck in that terrible movie about the automaton brooms that are taking over the world; only in my case, it's scurvy pirates hanging themselves from the window, above the front door, and doomed virgins maneuvering themselves into coffins in the driveway. Why, oh why? A desperate need to get a wicked chuckle out of the mailman, which I did, or craven fear of an unruly mob of bitter children pounding on my door? The crazy thing is that I've become morbidly sensitive to the peccadilloes of the little tricksters. I've weeded out all the blood-soaked ghouls because they are too conventional, unaesthetic, and scary in the wrong way. Now, I go for a more upscale hoodoo-conjuring-sorcery effect. Actually, I just rearrange a lot of your mother's knickknacks, icons, and art objects into the front hall, and throw in a few Tibetan demons, silly toys, and artful skeleton folk. You practically have to have a Ph.D in medieval art to be scared.

Unless you're a kid. Your asking me about the poem caused me to realize something I'd long forgotten. Children are different kinds of beings than adults. They are mad with dreams. They have unfathomable depth. They lead heroic lives. Their pure imagination unites them with the source of being. They know love. And there's a sad fatality to how we end up repressing our childhood. Every once in a while, a great poet succeeds in cutting through all the nostalgia and the tensions of family history and, through the power of his images and the beauty of his reverie, brings us back to that threshold of life.

I remember, last month, thinking of you and me at Holland Pond. For some reason, there was a slight crack in my adulthood, and I was struck by the fact that we were both lonely and a little melancholy (or else you wouldn't have wanted to stay in the pond forever), and that you possessed an extraordinary amount of nobility and seriousness, for someone who was only two or three feet tall.

Anyway, then Halloween ended, and I went to my room and mumbled a few words, slept, and woke up to snow shawling around in the sky. Tell me about the two Dylan Thomases.



DAUGHTER VOICE

The pond. I never wanted to leave the pond. I remember one afternoon, thunderclouds rolling in. How could I get out? Who doesn't want to see the lightning doubled? Joy and wonder and fearlessness, spontaneity? And a death wish mixed in, if you listen to my mother. *Our people die in boats. Sailing is coded as catastrophe in our genes. We stay on land. Except for this one*, she always says and refers to me.

The boy with the whistle and the black eye in the poem, is he some mirror of the protagonist's boyhood self? Our narrator longs to act the way the lonely boy acts and is driven home, jealous and startled, by his spontaneity. And the beat-up boy is alone again, dissolving into snow. And what of the child who doesn't hear bells ringing inside him, only thunder? There I am in the pond again, you on the shore warning and threatening and finally leaving and returning. How does one convince anyone of anything these days?

And good point about the pipe men in the sea. "*Seas covered with eels / And mermen and whales,*" and "*Seas gliding with swans / In the seal-barking moon,*" Thomas would write later in *Under Milk Wood*. Or before? He wrote that play his entire life—well, adult life. Started when he was seventeen, finished backstage while the audience awaited its debut, and delivered in full to the BBC just two months before he died. *Rage, rage, against the dying of the light*. And yet he's gone just shy of forty. Was he made of language?

Mom, or Fireball Roberts as you've so lovingly dubbed her, sent me a picture of you in costume, ensconced in your spooky landscape. It occurred to me you kind of created that list of useless presents Thomas rattles off: a lamp in the shape of a striking cobra, a death mask, is that a butter dish?, the grotesque painting of Evan as a toddler, the piano, a zebra for petting or numbering stripes or invoking incarceration, a face-shaped vase with purple wild flowers bought from Shop 'n Save, a raven, a sugar jar, a mausoleum, a cat. Which reminds me of the holiday mangers you make every year featuring Mary and Joseph and the wise men, but also Darth Vader, a stuffed bat, a downbound train. Which makes me wonder: don't our myths deserve a little company?

FATHER VOICE

Did I ever tell you about Costa Rica? Our first afternoon on the coast, your mom, Jesse, Evan, and I followed a path through stirring palms and eucalyptus trees filled with parakeets and monkeys, onto what was surely the nicest beach in the world. The sand was a sweeping, pearly crescent, the blue air soft and breezy. Everything was aglow. We sparkled at each other and ran into the waves. They were bigger than they appeared. They came in volleys and gave themselves up in sublime heaves before sucking themselves back out to sea. We jumped into them, let them knock us over, climbed on their backs, and rode them into shore. You thought you'd achieved escape velocity and would float right over the resort into outer space. Evan and Jesse were ecstatic. Your mother had her lopsided smile on and was trying to do the crawl. We were all having a blast, curving around one another, going round and round, tossed by wind and waves in a swirling blur of joy. Even me.

Until I got knocked a little silly by the waves, staggered backwards, and took a little rest like a cowboy in a saloon brawl. I noticed a change. The sun was gone, the wind was whipping the crests off the waves, and the air made a noise like a chainsaw. The kids were half-zonked and still happily pinwheeling around, but the surf was faster, more intense, angry, and I remembered reading something earlier in the week about "the offshore directional compensation flow in the lower section of the water column," and the shrine to lost surfers at Vanishing Point Cay. Your mother was at my side now. Sheet-white and wave-battered. We stood together as one. Foaming flux and destruction lay square before us. She calmly ordered them out of the water with remarkable authority. I called out to the "Eternal Father, Strong to Save" and saw the children's lives running backwards before my eyes. I tried to breach the relentless tower of turbulence, but they swam farther out. They thought we were crazy and laughed. Your mother continued to give orders. I begged and pleaded, yelling things like, "No one has to die," and, "Swim towards the tangent opposite the hypotenuse of the water column."

How does one convince anyone about anything anymore? Words and imagination.

Nevertheless, I think Evan noticed he was swimming in one direction, and his body was going in another, and they both came in. Back at the blanket, we discovered that all our stuff had been taken by sea robbers.

I remember standing in my usual position, one day at Holland Pond, and seeing two huge green turtles catapult into the sky and then crash back down into the water. Who knew turtles have such passion? Did you see this? You were usually underwater or facing back toward shore. Do you remember how friendly the fishermen always were? Or the time I took you and Hugh to Popham Beach, and when I put the blanket down, you ran toward the water, and he ran back to the parking lot, and I didn't know who to chase and lost my keys in the sand, to boot. We sometimes inherited driftwood forts, and sometimes built them, and flew kites, and when the kites got so high up, turning from postcard to stamp, to particle, it became scary, as if that tiny particle we were flying, so high up in the sky, might catch a solar wind and lift us up and away. I always felt relieved when I tethered the kite string to the fort. Kites only flew when you were there. Otherwise, they flapped about a foot over my left shoulder and dived at the first inviting target.

I'm afraid that the drowning genes and the death wish wander together. My grandparents came from an island where the men periodically went out and drowned themselves. You'd expect that living on an island and fishing all your life, you would learn basic survival lessons, such as not going out fishing in a hurricane. And yet that is precisely what they did, repeatedly, in boats about as big as a kitchen table. There's evidence that they were aware of the treacherous incoming weather, and additional evidence that, once the storm began, they had a chance to return to shore. We know this because some did come back, but most of them went on to check their nets and to do whatever else fishermen do in a typhoon. Of course, they were poor and the catch was vital for them, but I suspect that more than anything else, they were curious about what it would be like to sail on a wave as big as a small mountain.

I think I also may have inadvertently nourished your storm-loving exuberance. This is odd, because I consider myself a kindred spirit to J. Alfred Prufrock: calm, sensible, with a gift for cool speculation, foresight, and effective worrying. In other words, I'm cowardly and proud of it. But I've always been mesmerized by a good storm. Whenever there was a hurricane when you and Hugh were kids, and your mother was out doctoring, I would load you in the car and we would head to the harbor to watch some boats get wrecked, or to Portland Head Light, where we would hold onto the rail while the water flew up over the rocks and sprayed us. I love the way that boundaries disappear in a wild storm: fields and meadows turn into ponds and lakes, roads and streams become one limitless river, and houses become islands in the stream.

It makes no sense at all to race the inexplicable rush and speed of a flood. I sometimes really can't believe my own past. It's not that I was reckless, back then, and have become more circumspect. It's that we're always dual. We're the narrator and the child he recollects, the beat-up kid and the whistler, the kid who hears thunder and the one who hears bells. Alfred Prufrock and Fireball Roberts. We're the poet and the reader who dreams along with him. We're the poem and reality. And there is duality within the duality. The kid who loses, stays on the corner, alone, but he goes home and dreams of trapping rhinos in Lapland. And he becomes braver, renewed, resilient. We're taught that the psychology is real, the bad feelings and the black eye are real, and that we never trapped a rhino. But that's completely backward. They teach us that we're objects, not subjects. That we're facts, not magical. But if it were true that we never trapped a rhino, how could we endure school, make friends for life, figure out how fast the universe is expanding, create art, fall in love, become the riders on the storm? I don't know if there's a god, but I lived in paradise and trapped a rhino. I am the lighthouse that invites the storm and lights it up.



Honey Butterscotch

2 cups white sugar
½ cup packed light brown sugar
¾ cup water
½ cup light corn syrup

8 T unsalted butter
¼ cup honey
1 t kosher salt
½ t vanilla extract

Candies

NEALE HOLLIDAY

Cut a piece of parchment to fit a ¼ baking sheet, about 9½ × 13 inches, and spray with cooking spray. Cook sugar, brown sugar, water, and corn syrup over medium heat without stirring until candy thermometer reaches 270 degrees. At this point, stir in butter, honey, and salt, stirring constantly until candy thermometer reaches 300 degrees. Remove from heat and stir in vanilla. Pour in baking dish and let set for about 15 to 20 minutes. Turn the candy out on a cutting board and peel the parchment off candy. Cut candy into ¾ × ¾ inch squares and let set completely. Store in an airtight container in a cool place.

2 cups white sugar
½ cup light corn syrup
½ cup water

2 t lemon juice
1 T peppermint extract
10 drops red food coloring

Peppermint Candies

NEALE HOLLIDAY

Get a baking sheet prepped with clean Silpats (nonstick baking mat) sprayed with cooking spray and set aside. In a pot, combine sugar, corn syrup, and water and cook until candy thermometer reads 305 degrees. Remove from heat and stir in lemon juice and peppermint extract. Pour sugar onto a Silpat and let mixture cool just until the bubbles subside. Take a bench scraper sprayed with cooking spray and fold sugar with bench scraper until mixture turns into a doughlike solid. Wearing 2 layers of rubber gloves, separate ½ the sugar, put food coloring in the middle of the sugar, pull candy, and fold on itself over and over until food coloring is fully incorporated. Set aside. With a new 2 layers of gloves, fold the remaining candy over and over until it whitens in color. Stretch both the white and red pieces a little at a time until they are each about ¼-inch thick. Twist the two pieces together and cut to desired length. Repeat until all the candy is gone. Make sure you are working quickly or the candy will begin to set. If the candy does start to harden before you twist it, quickly heat it in a 350-degree oven to warm it up a little. Let twisted candies set completely and store in a dry, covered, and cool area.

Currant Scones

CAROLINE

Scones. Have you ever had a good one? A flaky but not cakey one? Buttery and raisiny? Turns out that dried currants are not currants at all but rather tiny raisins. You can call them Zante currants

6 cups flour	1 cup dried currants
1 cup sugar	6 eggs
1½ t salt	1½ cups cream, plus more for finishing
2 T + 2 t baking powder	turbinado sugar
6 oz. butter [cold and diced]	

or Corinthian raisins. Confusing but still delicious.

Mix dry ingredients together in a large bowl. Add the cold butter and cut in with a pastry knife, or with your fingers, to resemble coarse meal. Add currants. Whisk together the eggs and cream, and add to the dry mixture. Mix until combined, but don't over mix. Dump mixture onto a flat surface and spread out mixture into a large rectangle, using your fingers, about ½-inch thick. Cut scones into rounds using a pastry cutter or into triangles using a knife. Brush with cream and sprinkle with turbinado sugar. Bake at 350 degrees until the scones start to turn golden.

SCARLETT

I'm confused. Dried currants are not currants, dried? This is perplexing. Is this a dried plums are prunes issue? Whatever, nomenclature aside, I'll take any dried fruit I can get. Nuts too.

CAROLINE

At least a prune is not borrowing the name of another fruit that already has a personality and applications. Dried currants are not currants. I don't think there are enough real currants in the world to cover the demand for tiny raisins, and then we would have no kir.

DYLAN THOMAS

All the Christmases roll down towards the two-tongued sea, like a cold and headlong moon bundling down the sky that was our street; and they stop at the rim of the ice-edged, fish-freezing waves, and I plunge my hands in the snow and bring out whatever I can find. In goes my hand into that wool-white bell-tongued ball of holidays resting at the rim of the carol-singing sea, and out come Mrs. Prothero and the firemen.

Candied Quince

4 quinces
2 cups sugar
1 cinnamon stick

CAROLINE

Preheat the oven to 250 degrees. Wash the quinces well to remove the downy fuzz. Peel, and cut into quarters. Cut out the core and slice the fruit into 1-inch pieces. Put the quinces into a roasting pan and toss with sugar. Nestle the cinnamon stick among the quinces. Cover the pan with aluminum foil and roast until the quinces starts to steam and soften. Once the quinces are soft, remove the foil and continue roasting until the fruit turns deep red and becomes jammy and concentrated. Check periodically and stir around with a rubber spatula so that the quinces don't burn on the sides. Once the quinces are garnet and no longer liquidy, remove them from the oven and let cool. Remove the cinnamon stick and puree the quinces in the food processor until smooth. Spread the quince mixture on a baking sheet to set, and refrigerate. Cut the set quince into small squares or rectangles and toss with granulated sugar to make jellied candies.

MILLICENT

You are aware that some legend has it that quince was the original fruit of sin, not the apple. Which is confusing because you can't really bite into it. It's another one of those mysterious foods that when you finally understand how to utilize it (hello kohlrabi, we are all looking at you), it is not only a triumph of the spirit but also a culinary one. Quince is loaded with pectin, so it is some seriously thick stuff.

CAROLINE

I am aware that the quince is the purported apple of Eden, and certainly the intoxication beheld in that fruit could make one who doesn't know any better do some regrettable things. Based on its scent one would believe that it might be worth the risk, but alas the shock: astringent and dry, unyielding and mean. So sorry, Eve. In that way it is pure evil.

AND THEN, AT TEA THE
RECOVERED UNCIES WOULD
BE JOIY; AND THE ICE CAKE
LOOMED IN THE CENTER
OF THE TABLE LIKE A
MARBLE GRAVE. AUNT
HANNAH FACED HER TEA
WITH RUM, BECAUSE
IT WAS ONLY ONCE A
YEAR.

"PERHAPS IT WAS A
GHOST," JIM SAID.





Poppy Seed Buns

BRIOCHE

¼ cup whole milk
4 large eggs + 1 for egg wash
2 t dry active yeast
2½ cups + 2 T all-purpose flour
plus more flour for dusting
¼ cup sugar
1 t salt
9 T butter [softened]
turbinado sugar

POPPY SEED FILLING

1½ cups dried currants
1½ cups milk
1 cup poppy seeds
1 vanilla bean
4 T butter
½ t sea salt
½ cup sugar

CAROLINE

Make the brioche first. Heat the milk in a saucepan to the point just before it begins to scald. Break one of the eggs into a bowl and slowly whisk in the hot milk, tempering the egg. Add the yeast and ¼ cup of the flour. Whisk to combine. Sprinkle another ¼ cup of the flour evenly over the top of the yeast and flour mixture. Don't mix the flour in; just let it sit on top of the yeast mixture. Let the dough rise in a warm place for 1 hour. Transfer the dough to the bowl of a stand mixer. Using the paddle attachment, beat in the sugar, salt, remaining 3 eggs, and remaining 1 cup plus 2 tablespoons flour. Once everything is well blended, start adding in the butter, 1 tablespoon at a time, until incorporated. Place the brioche dough in a plastic container with a tight fitting lid or a plastic zippered bag (it needs plenty of room to expand). Refrigerate the dough to proof overnight.

To make the filling, cook everything over low heat until fairly dry. Remove the vanilla bean and let cool. Puree in food processor to a consistent paste.

To make the buns, preheat the oven to 325 degrees and line a large baking sheet with parchment paper. Remove the brioche dough from the refrigerator and turn it out onto a well-floured work surface. Divide the dough into 2 pieces and with your hands roll each piece into a log about 2 inches in diameter. Cut each log crosswise into 6 pieces. Place the cut dough rounds cut-side down, and flatten each brioche with your fingertips into a disk about 4 inches in diameter. Scoop a generous tablespoon or two of poppy seed mixture into the center of each circle of dough. Pull the dough up and around the poppy seed mixture and pinch to seal. Arrange the brioche, seam side down, on the prepared sheet, leaving room for the dough to double in size. Cover the brioche with plastic wrap and put in a warm place to rise until the dough softens and swells. Make an egg wash by whisking an egg in a small bowl. Brush the brioche with the egg wash and sprinkle with turbinado sugar. Bake until just golden brown, about 10 minutes.

SCARLETT

These were so satisfying to make. I've always loved poppy seeds, but I had a realization when I was cooking down the poppy seeds, currants, and milk to a dry paste. It smelled almost like malt! A malted milk, dark and earthy and sweet. I could eat this paste by the spoonful, but I guess stuffing little buns with it is good too.

CAROLINE

I'm with you on being able to eat that paste by the spoonful. You could also roll these buns into pinwheels if you want a better poppy seed-to-brioche ratio.

Sherried Walnuts

CAROLINE

In my family there is no fall/winter holiday, birthday party, or celebration without a bowl of nuts and nutcrackers. There are those who can sit and eat piles of nuts after the turkey and before the pie. I can never participate, but I love seeing the piles of empty shells on paper plates. I've had more than one boyfriend visit at the holidays and made crazy by the nuts. For those whose families have lived in America for generations, there is deep frustration with what all we Italians (or Greeks or others of that stripe) have come to accept: that a holiday meal lasts the entire day and night. No one leaves the table. The nuts symbolize the inescapability of the past. These nuts however are more of a starter nut, a drinking nut. Not a nut of duty and tradition.

1½ cups sugar
½ cup sherry
pinch sea salt

½ t cinnamon or other spice
4 cups walnuts [shelled]

Dissolve the sugar, sherry, and salt over low heat until the temperature reads 236 degrees on a candy thermometer. Remove from heat and add cinnamon and walnuts. Pour onto parchment paper and separate the nuts so that they don't stick together as they cool. Optionally you can sprinkle some sea salt on the walnuts for a salty, sweet treat.

SCARLETT

The smell of sherry, sugar, and cinnamon boiling away on the stove is stunning.

MILLICENT

Behold any food you can make and let sit for days or weeks and pull out at a moment's notice. I always associate nuts with the holidays and this time of year, whether it's the chestnuts sold from carts or the big bowl of nuts with the nutcracker put out at holiday parties. Those nuts used to keep us all busy shelling, especially as children, since we didn't have drinks or cigarettes to hold. Also, did you guys have the nutpick alongside of the cracker? I think our histories are hidden in these two archaic devices. The nutpick is a pen-size, sturdy, tapered metal point—quite dangerous if you think about it—that most people probably use to pick gunk out from under their nails and that nut eaters use to excavate the meat from the shell. My Oma and Opa had both tools next to the nut bowl. Sipping sherry and nibbling nuts next to a crackling fire sounds like a lovely childhood memory that I, for better or worse, do not have. They lived in Florida and had an alligator named Charlie in the backyard.

CAROLINE

Yep, we had the nutpick, and the nut bowl was carved out of an actual walnut tree. I think we could begin a tradition of sipping sherry and nibbling nuts, but it would have to be an afternoon thing.

MILLICENT

I'm sure that nutpick was the weapon in some lesser family fights.

CAROLINE

It certainly looks like a bit of a dare there in the nut bowl—like, seriously, you put a miniature weapon in there?



Eccles Cakes

CAROLINE

I believe that Eccles cakes are essentially little mince pies. Whatever mince is.

1½ sticks butter	1 T ground cloves
½ cup brown sugar	1 T ground nutmeg
1½ cups currants [tiny raisins]	1 T lemon zest
1 T ground ginger	1 shot whiskey
1 T ground cinnamon	

Melt the butter in a small saucepan. Add the brown sugar, currants, spices, lemon zest, and whiskey to the butter. Cook over very low heat, stirring frequently until the sugar is dissolved and the mixture has come together. Remove from heat and let cool. This mixture will keep for at least a month in the refrigerator.

FOR THE CAKES

flour	1 egg
Pâte Brisée [see below]	turbinado sugar [for sprinkling]

On a well-floured work surface, roll out pâte brisée to a thickness of about 1/8 inch. Using a 4-inch ring mold, cookie cutter, or plastic quart-size container as a template, cut the dough into 4-inch circles. Spoon out 2 tablespoons of Eccles filling and form into a round, flat patty. Place the patty in the center of each circle of dough. Bring the dough up and around the filling, pinching it closed. Place the cakes, seam-side down, on a baking sheet lined with parchment. Flatten the cakes with the palm of your hand. Whisk the egg with a fork and brush the cakes with the egg wash. Sprinkle the cake with turbinado sugar. Cut 3 slits through the top of the brisée with a paring knife, being careful only to cut the dough. Bake in a preheated 350-degree oven until deep golden brown. Cool.

Pâte Brisée

2½ cups flour	3 T sugar
3 t coarse grey sea salt [lightly crushed with a mortar & pestle]	8 oz. cold butter [diced]
	¼ cup ice water

CAROLINE

This recipe can easily be made by hand, or in a stand mixer. If you haven't had a lot of experience making pie dough, I would suggest making it by hand until you have a feel for it. Whisk the flour, salt, and sugar in a bowl. Add very cold, diced butter. It should be diced small, about the size of a large bean. Using your hands, crumble the butter into the flour until the mixture has the look of coarse meal, with some small lumps of butter. Add a tablespoon or two of ice water and mix lightly. Continue to add water until the dough just comes together, enough so that the dough is no longer crumbly, but not so much that the dough feels slimy or wet. Too much water will make the dough tough, not enough and it is impossible to work with. As this dough sits, it will absorb the water and become more malleable. I never use a measurement for the water, but estimate the amount to be somewhere around ¼ cup. Refrigerate for at least thirty minutes before using.

Sticky Coffee Pudding

CAROLINE

Rebecca Collerton and I have been making this recipe for going on a decade. I clipped it from the *New York Times* and I remember the two of us being amused by the fact that the recipe had no author. It was anonymous. This is one of those memories that plays tricks—was it really anonymous or was that just a joke between the two of us? Why did we even find that funny? Regardless of who authored it, this treat is a perfect marriage of cake and sauce. Neither is that alluring on its own, but together they are quite charming. Perhaps the same could be said for Rebecca and I..

PUDDING

24 oz. dates	4 t baking powder
4 t baking soda	4 t ground ginger
16 T butter	2 t cinnamon
3 cups sugar	1 t clove
8 eggs	2 t salt
5 cups flour	4 t vanilla

First, make the puddings. Combine the dates with 5 cups water in a saucepan. Simmer until soft. Add the baking soda and mix well. In a stand mixer, cream the butter with the sugar, then add in the eggs one by one. Separately, whisk together the dry ingredients, then add to the date mixture. Mix, then slowly incorporate into the butter-egg mixture. Divide into ramekins and place ramekins in a deep pan. Pour hot water into the pan until it comes up ½ of the sides of the ramekins, cover the pan tightly with foil, and bake at 350 degrees, until risen and just firm in the centers, about 35 minutes. Remove from the oven and uncover.

SAUCE

3 cups sugar
12 oz. butter
4 cups cream

For the toffee sauce, in a tall saucepan, cook ½ cup of the sugar until it starts to turn light brown. Add remaining sugar ¼ cup at a time. Cook until it turns dark amber then add butter and cream; it will bubble up violently. Let it blow off some steam, then stir until smooth. Keep warm until ready to serve with the pudding.

Hazelnut, Chocolate & Orange Corte

aka Torta Regina [credit to Emily Luchetti]

5½ oz. hazelnuts [toasted and skinned]	2 t orange zest
5½ oz. bittersweet chocolate [chopped]	6 large eggs [separated]
1 t lemon zest	½ cup sugar

CAROLINE

Put the hazelnuts, chocolate, lemon and orange zests in the bowl of a food processor and finely grind. Put the egg yolks and ¼ cup of the sugar in the bowl of a stand mixer and whisk at high speed until pale yellow and increased in volume. Turn the mixer down to low and add in the nut-and-chocolate mixture. Transfer mixture to a large bowl. Clean out the mixer bowl to re-use and add the egg whites. Whip on high speed until soft peaks form. Add the remaining ¼ cup sugar and whip until stiff peaks form. Fold half of the egg whites into the batter and then lightly fold in the remaining half. Pour batter into a buttered and parchment-lined 9"-round pan. Bake at 350 degrees until a skewer comes out clean, about half an hour. Cool and unmold onto a plate.

SCARLETT

Caroline, I was surprised at how light and eggy this was. I thought it was going to be a dense, granola bar-type thing, but it was almost fluffy.

CAROLINE

Magical, right? So light you could eat the whole thing.

MILLICENT

I pretty much did while recipe testing. Two pieces and I kinda dug out the chocolate centralized in the middle, like a squirrel.

DYLAN THOMAS

It was on the afternoon of the day of Christmas Eve, and I was in Mrs. Prothero's garden, waiting for cats, with her son Jim. It was snowing. It was always snowing at Christmas. December, in my memory, is white as Lapland, although there were no reindeers. But there were cats. Patient, cold and callous, our hands wrapped in socks, we waited to snowball the cats. Sleek and long as jaguars and horrible-whiskered, spitting and snarling, they would slide and sidle over the white back-garden walls, and the lynx-eyed hunters, Jim and I, fur-capped and moccasined trappers from Hudson Bay, off Mumbles Road, would hurl our deadly snowballs at the green of their eyes.

The wise cats never appeared. We were so still, Eskimo-footed arctic marksmen in the muffling silence of the eternal snows—eternal, ever since Wednesday—that we never heard Mrs. Prothero's first cry from her igloo at the bottom of the garden. Or, if we heard it at all, it was, to us, like the far-off challenge of our enemy and prey, the neighbor's polar cat. But soon the voice grew louder. "Fire!" cried Mrs. Prothero, and she beat the dinner-gong.



SHE SAID THE RIGHT
THING, ALWAYS.

SHE LOOKED AT THE
THREE TAIL FIREMAN
IN THEIR SHINING
HELMETS, STANDING
AMONG THE SMOKE
AND CINDERS AND
DISSOLVING SNOWBALLS,
AND SHE SAID:

"WOULD YOU LIKE
ANYTHING TO READ?"



Mince Pie

SCARLETT

Everything about mince seems puzzling. Oatmeal in meat? Meat that's actually fruit? What alchemy is going on here? Mince is mysterious. My historical background with mince is nonexistent, though I can say that I've always wanted to eat it, preferably with someone who knows all the ways with mince. She probably has a well-used, worn pipe and wears tweed and lots of thick, scratchy sweaters. Without such a sage, I have been browsing mince recipes for a good month or so trying to figure it out. There are sweet and savory versions, ones with meat and ones with lots of dark, dried fruit minced to mimic crumbled meat. The recipe below pulls a bit from Fergus Henderson's cookbook *The Complete Nose to Tail*. He uses oats as a binder.

This recipe has it all: ginger and dried chiles, wine and molasses. It's about as sweet as savory can be without clashing. The apples and prunes help the meatiness lean into sweetness. Maybe it's a wee bit unorthodox, but mince never was.

1 glog olive oil	12 oz. can crushed tomato
1 leek [sliced and rinsed of grit]	½ cup oats
1 onion [thinly sliced]	1 apple [chopped]
1 carrot [peeled and diced]	⅓ cup prunes [chopped]
4 cloves of garlic [finely chopped]	1 T blackstrap molasses
1¾ # ground beef	salt
1 T fresh ginger [minced]	pepper
½ t cloves	2 rounds pâte brisée [see page 18]
1 cinnamon stick	egg wash
1 dried Chile de árbol [crumbled]	[1 egg beaten with a splash of water]
1 cup red wine	

In a pot, heat the olive oil over medium heat. Add the leek, onion, carrot, and garlic; season well with salt and pepper. Cook until the vegetables begin to soften. Add in the ground beef, breaking it up with a wooden spoon. Add in the ginger, clove, cinnamon stick, Chile de árbol, and red wine, stirring to combine. Let most of the wine evaporate, then add in the tomato and oats. Cook over medium-low heat, for about an hour, stirring occasionally. Add the apple, prunes, and molasses. Continue to cook for another hour until the mince is fairly dry. Let cool, taste, and season with more salt and pepper, if necessary. Refrigerate until ready to use.

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Roll out one round of the pie crust for the bottom and place in pie tin. Pour the mince into the pie. (There may be a little extra. Eat it warm with boiled potatoes, on another day.) Roll out the other round for the top. Cover the pie with the top, crimp the edges firmly, and brush with egg wash. Prick the top for the release of steam. Bake until deep golden brown, about an hour and fifteen minutes. Let cool before slicing.

MILLICENT

Mince, or mincemeat probably comes from the moment when England colonized everyone, especially India, and just took everything and put it together in a pie. I can't even imagine how the minds of English people were blown by the spices and fruit. I'd like us to go back in time to see their reaction to raw ginger for the first time.

You can make mincemeat and keep it forever, which is exciting and curious. My friend Caitlin makes a mincemeat pie that is delicious; she visited me once and had a pot of mincemeat going for the afternoon. In what feels like a theme in my life, I, and everyone else in the house, secretly put a glug of booze in the pot.

Mince is a word that sounds like it feels. Everything in this recipe feels like the tug of the food in it, the chew, the bite, the tooth. The meat, the apple, the prune. Other recipes have dried fruit—everyone knows that pull of dried fruit. Maybe it's the closest the English get to eating rib tips, which have a pull of their own.

Full Disclosure: I just ate rib tips in the parking lot of Lem's Bar-B-Q on the south side of Chicago. I mean, I just opened the bag and started eating them in my rental car. Rib tips and mince aren't all that different: they have a toothsome texture, a chew that encourages gnawing, and they are both hell-bent on making the most out of the least, in completely different manners.

CAROLINE

Angela Johnson has a sourdough started from her grandfather's youth. She makes her kids pancakes with it every weekend.

SCARLETT

Foods that go on forever. I'm so into this. Mince that keeps forever. Potted rillettes with a thick fat cap that sits in a cellar for years. (Didn't they find some old honey in an urn in Egypt that was dated from, like, 300 BC that was still edible?) Master stocks to which you keep adding. Vinegar mothers that are decades old. Enrique Olvera does a mole that is 370 days old, or something like that, plated with a fresh batch of mole, so what you are tasting is age and evolution contrasted with newness. Kaboom! My. Mind. Just. Exploded.

Duck Heart is Not a Metaphor

SCARLETT

It is a true engine, and a lean, smooth muscle that sears quickly, is tender, and holds none of the funk associated with offal. You can get hearts, duck or chicken, from your local butcher. If hearts are not something they regularly offer, they should be able to special order them, or you could ask them to sequester the hearts from the birds they already have. This is also something you can do yourself if you often buy whole chickens to roast at home. Steal the heart from the cavity and freeze it, adding hearts to your collection until you have enough to roast. This kind of morbidity is delicious.

1 # duck hearts	4 sprigs rosemary
1 cup port	salt
1 T honey	pepper
2 cloves garlic [smashed to a paste]	1 lemon [cut into wedges]

In a bowl, marinate the hearts with port, honey, garlic, rosemary, salt, and pepper. Refrigerate overnight. When ready to cook, remove hearts from the marinade and skewer on metal or soaked wooden skewers. Heat a grill pan over high heat. When it's hot, grill hearts until charred, about 2 minutes per side. Don't crowd the pan. Transfer to a plate to rest as the others cook. Season with a salt and pepper, to taste. Serve with lemon wedges.

CAROLINE

Seems like stockpiling things in the freezer or the freezer is one of the lessons of this *Journal*.

SCARLETT

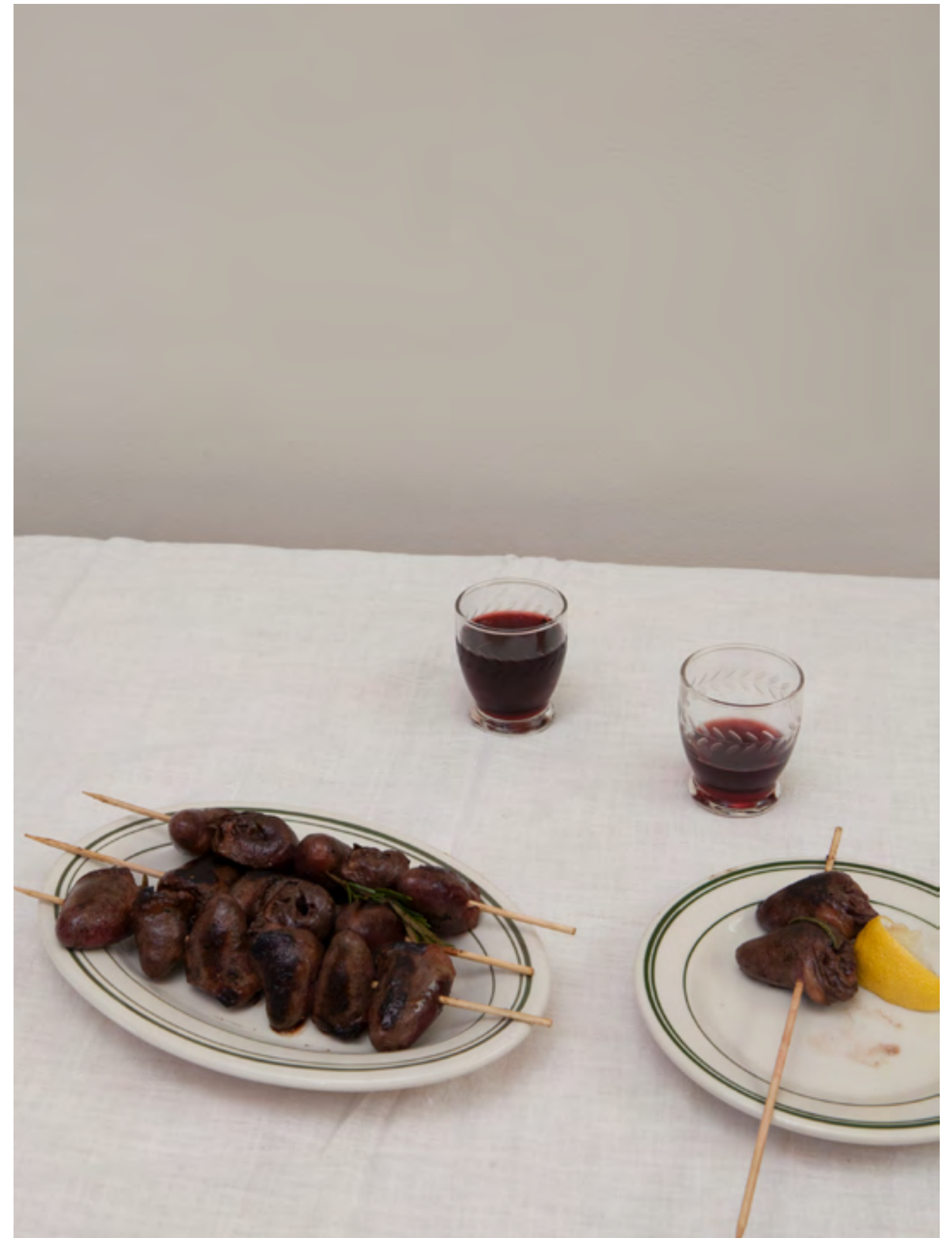
You can't say *crisper* and not be British. I knew you had an English heart...

CAROLINE

Once I thought I had an English heart and then I went to London and realized that there's truly nothing English-leaning about me except my affection for English expats, humor, food writers, and rock stars. By *crisper* I meant that drawer in the fridge. Not the whole fridge. I also dressed up as Mrs. Curry for Halloween last night and found that there's also nothing Indian about me.

MILLICENT

Elizabeth David is the patron saint of this issue.





Mashed with Brown Butter

2 # butternut squash, acorn squash, or red pumpkin
[peeled, seeds removed, and roughly chopped]
2 cups chicken stock or water
1 T honey

pepper
salt
5 T butter

SCARLETT

In a medium saucepan, combine the squash, stock, and honey, and season with salt and pepper. Bring the stock to a simmer and steam until the squash is tender. With a potato masher, mash the squash to form a rough puree. Let the squash continue to cook until the stock evaporates, and is fairly dry. Taste the squash and adjust the seasoning if necessary. Meanwhile, in a small saucepan on the wrong side of town, I mean, on the other side of the stove, (Don't recipes sometimes sound like noir? Did you know there is a movie called *Private Detective 62* that came out in the thirties? It's about a detective named Free, who falls for the lady luck he's supposed to frame for murder. Why are detectives the most romantic characters?) heat the butter over medium heat until fragrant, nutty, and browned, about 5 to 8 minutes. Set aside. Pile the squash into a serving bowl and pour the warm brown butter over the top. Let it pool, then serve.

CAROLINE

I think you just called the *Diner Journal* noir. I'd also enjoy this if it were a rutabaga.

MILLICENT

This is what you do to all things from the ground after the chill comes. I could eat some turnips like this too. Detectives are romantic. They like to pretend they're not, but they are chock full of weakness through all those hard-boiled moments. Those weaknesses, in no particular order: damsels in distress, lady trouble, brown liquid, cigarettes.

DYLAN THOMAS

Years and years ago, when I was a boy, when there were wolves in Wales, and birds the color of red-flannel petticoats whisked past the harp-shaped hills, when we sang and wallowed all night and day in caves that smelt like Sunday afternoons in damp front farmhouse parlors, and we chased, with the jawbones of deacons, the English and the bears, before the motor car, before the wheel, before the duchess-faced horse, when we rode the daft and happy hills bareback, it snowed and it snowed. But here a small boy says: "It snowed last year, too. I made a snowman and my brother knocked it down and I knocked my brother down and then we had tea."



Savory Black Pepper Flan

SCARLETT

Blazing Pudding was the original title for this dish. Black pepper is so ubiquitous that we rarely take the time to reflect on its actual flavor, which is dusty and slow burning, and blazing. The

2 T butter, plus more for greasing
2 T flour
1 t black pepper
½ t salt

2 cups milk
1 cup parmesan cheese [grated]
2 large eggs, plus 2 yolks

clean creaminess of dairy carries the flavor of black pepper in this savory custard.

Preheat the oven to 350 degrees. Grease 8 ramekins well with butter. In a small saucepan, heat the butter over medium-low heat. Add in the flour, black pepper, and salt, whisking to combine. Cook the flour, stirring constantly, for a minute or two. Whisk in the milk to make a smooth béchamel. Remove the saucepan from the heat and add the Parmesan, eggs, and yolks, whisking to combine. Pour the mixture into the prepared ramekins, transfer to a pan filled with a ½ inch of water, and cover tightly with foil. Bake until the flans are just set, 30 to 45 minutes. Remove from the oven, then remove the foil and let rest 15 minutes before serving. Flans can be removed from the ramekins by running a paring knife around the edges and inverting.

CAROLINE

Custard gives us the opportunity to really understand flavor. Ice cream is the perfect example of this. It is one of the few mediums through which you can coax flavor in a way that holds onto the original essence of the thing while making it deliciously consumable. Making a tea or stock doesn't steep the flavor of herbs and spices nearly as well as custard.

Vermouth Clams

SCARLETT

Vermouth clams sound good, don't they? Everyone uses white wine to cook clams and less frequently, Pernod. White wine, fennel and shellfish match naturally. Vermouth is the dark horse: a dry, fortified wine, it's the odd man out, the stepsister that steals the show. Remember the *Alice In Wonderland* animated film? Wasn't there a clam dancing around smoking a cigarette on the

olive oil	4 dozen cherrystone or littleneck clams
1 onion [thinly sliced]	[cleaned and scrubbed]
1 bulb fennel [thinly sliced]	parsley [chopped]
4 cloves garlic [smashed]	juice of 1 lemon
1 t dried marjoram	salt
1 cup dry vermouth	pepper

beach? This recipe is kind of like that.

In a medium pot, heat a couple of glugs of olive oil over medium heat. Add the onion, fennel, and garlic. Season well with salt and pepper; and cook, stirring occasionally, until the vegetables are slightly softened. Add in the marjoram and vermouth and bring to a simmer. Add the clams and cook, covered, shaking the pot from time to time, until the clams open. Discard any unopened clams. Add the parsley, the lemon juice, and another *glug* of olive oil. Taste the liquid and season with salt and pepper, if necessary. Serve with crusty bread.

CAROLINE

I've made clams with sherry and they were some of the best ever. I cooked and ate a lot of clams this summer and they made me immensely happy. In fact, aside from tomatoes and peaches and avocados they were kind of all I wanted. Clams and a fish sandwich are two things I'm always on the lookout for, but unlike the fish sandwich, clams are always better if you make them yourself.

SCARLETT

Clam sandwich is my safe word.

CAROLINE

I hope that's true.

MILLICENT

My mother and her mother always had a great debate about how to cook soft shell crabs. One was on the vermouth side and the other with white wine. Neither had it straight in her head. It was just a debate for the sake of difference. Shellfish likes alcohol, brine mixes well with it. Veer away from the dark alcohol; the browns and red don't go with shellfish, but the clears and whites run like gangbusters.





Rarely Braised Celery

SCARLETT

I don't like celery but I am open to change. That's why I always order celery dishes when I see them on restaurant menus. I want to be converted. Most people's connection to the stalks are *ants on a log* or sticking out of a Bloody Mary at brunch—raw, but rarely braised.

olive oil	1 bay leaf
2 strips of thick bacon [cut into lardons]	4 sprigs fresh oregano
1 white onion [thinly sliced]	¼ cup white wine
4 cloves of garlic [crushed]	12 oz. can crushed tomatoes
1 chile de árbol [crumbled]	2 # celery [cut into 4-inch segments]

Preheat the oven to 350 degrees. In a large sauté pan, cook the bacon in a glug of olive oil until almost crisp. Then add the onion, garlic, chile, bay leaf, and oregano, cooking over medium-high heat until the onion is softened. Season with salt and pepper, add in the wine, and let simmer until the liquid has almost evaporated. Add the tomatoes. Place the celery in a braising pot and pour the tomato mixture over the celery. Add a couple of glugs of olive oil, stir it once, and bake. Stir the pot after 45 minutes. Cook until the celery has softened but still retains its character, 20 or so additional minutes. Taste and adjust the seasoning before serving. This dish is good at room temperature, which is a spectrum of heat we often forget about. Why the extremes? So hot and cold. Room temperature is closer to body temperature, which may be why it is so pleasant when eating.

MILLICENT

Room temperature food generally offers the most flavor, you can taste everything. Think about it. Room temperature food is the essence of the flavor of the food itself.

CAROLINE

I've never understood people who don't like celery. It's not like cilantro, which I get. Celery is at worst harmless, not worth disliking, and at best so very good, crunchy, salty, lively, and toning like a cucumber. Try it juiced. Fantastic.

MILLICENT

I love celery. There's a time of year where it seems like the healthiest, most alive thing to put in your mouth. I always associate any braised vegetable you don't really want to eat with French food. It's like the less you think you want to eat it, the better it is.

CAROLINE

Braised vegetables occupy a strange territory. They're obviously dated yet so ready to be reimagined. Maybe they have been and I'm not aware of it. I don't claim to know what's going on.

Game Birds & Grape Gravy

SCARLETT

Squabs are pigeons. Eating pigeon might freak out some urban dwellers, but let's remember that pigeons are a type of dove and doves sound nicer to eat. They look striking with their head and feet still on, though you can remove them if guests object. Absent of heads and feet, they look like

2 squabs [head and feet on]	½ cup concord grapes
olive oil	1 cup stock
2 T butter	splash of red wine
small bunch sage	salt
1 shallot [minced]	pepper

little tiny Thanksgiving turkeys. They should be roasted until medium-rare, no more.

The day before cooking, season the squabs with lots of salt and pepper. Refrigerate uncovered to let the skin dry out as much as possible. Preheat oven to 500 degrees. Add olive oil to a large sauté pan and heat over high heat. Sear the squabs on all four sides. Slip a knob of butter and a leaf or two of sage into the cavity of each squab with. Transfer the pan to the oven and roast the squabs, breast side up, 8 to 10 minutes. Pull the pan from the oven and transfer the squabs to a plate to rest. Return the pan to the stove and melt another pad of butter in the pan. Add the shallot and cook for a minute. Then add in the grapes, stock, and a splash of wine, and let reduce for a minute or two. Taste and adjust the seasoning. Serve the birds with the gravy.

CAROLINE

I don't know about pigeons, but I do love the sound of concord grape sauce. Concord grapes might be the real heroes of this story.

SCARLETT

True. And, a little goes a long way. When you cook the grapes, the dark purple skins slip off and they have that glassy, translucent sheen and look like a small handful of marbles on the plate.

MILLICENT

Concord grapes are just as intense as their color; there's nothing better than getting them when they still have that must on the skin, that little mixture of condensation and...

CAROLINE

Concord grapes and quince are probably the two most heady fruits, from our region at least. The grapes are almost iridescent. That bloom that they both hold.





THERE ARE ALWAYS
UNCLES AT CHRISTMAS

MEN AND WOMEN
WADING, SCOOPING
BACK FROM CHAPEL,
WITH TAPROOM NOSES
AND WIND-BUSSED
CHEEKS, ALL ALBINOS,
HUDDIED THEIR STIFF
BLACK JARRING
FEATHERS AGAINST
THE IRRELIGIOUS SNOW



Hard-Boileds or Poached Russian Sturgeon with Pickled Eggs & Caviar

ANTON CHEKHOV

“The kulebiaka must make your mouth water; it must lie there before you, a shameless temptation! You cut off a sizable slice and let your fingers play over it. When you bite into it, the butter drips from it like tears, and the filling is fat, juicy, rich, with eggs, giblets, onions...” from *The Siren*

MILLICENT

Kulebiaka is a classic Russian Christmas dish using smoked sturgeon, rice, and pastry. There are many variations, but sturgeon is the constant. Sturgeon is a prehistoric fish. She doesn't have scales, she has armor. She's a beast who ingests her food with inhalations and can exist in any water. Of course something so sturdy, so built for survival, is Russian.

The last time I cooked sturgeon, I smoked it. I got a whole side from my fish guy. Its physicality astonished me. Solid, massive, marbled with fat and cartilage, with a spine for eating. I could see how this fish worked and lived, and, after butchering loads of white fish, I took notice of the sturgeon's density. Similar only to shark in the deeply satisfying feeling I don't often associate with holding fish. Rich.

Rather ironically or tragically, sturgeon is almost extinct and very difficult to find fresh. But what is the spirit of sturgeon? Shark is an excellent substitute and will deliver the same satisfaction. We ate a lot of shark growing up; it was always less expensive than the other fish.

Kulebiaka traditionally is sturgeon wrapped in pastry with rice cooked in the fish liquid, a common sense addition which adds starch and shape to this massive pie. It's a fish pie. Continuing variations include calf's brain and fish spine, because if less is more think how much more more is. It's not just enough to have this flavorful fish as the centerpiece; there's got to be brains and guts.

But I prefer dishes where everything is spread out, not wrapped all together. This recipe is inspired by the Russians because I often think of them, but it's all about what is boiled. Poached. Stolen from the Soviets, then poached or boiled. And I cannot think about hard-boiled without thinking about eggs. Caviar.

The first time I ate caviar I was six. My Yia Yia was sitting at her table at the bar; it was Friday, the only day she did such a thing. Friday afternoons and evenings at the bar were happy hour, a gathering of family and regulars who remembered the bar during its heyday. Only on Fridays did she sit and entertain people. Otherwise she was behind the bar or upstairs in her apartment.

She had crackers and jam out on the table, a beautiful deco burgundy and black round table. I put a big spoonful of the dark jam on the saltine and put it all in my mouth.

It wasn't jam. That was caviar. Pair this recipe with shots of frozen vodka. Don't forget, you can freeze a bottle of vodka in a block of ice.

Pickled Eggs

eggs
apple cider vinegar
salt

sugar
water
turmeric

MILLICENT

Bring a pot of water to boil and carefully put the eggs in. Have an ice bath ready. Pull the eggs out at 10 minutes for a firm, creamy yolk and place in the ice bath. Peel the eggs in the ice bath; tap the larger bottom of the egg to crack it and peel from there. Make sure there is no shell on the eggs.

Mix equal parts apple cider vinegar and water. Add sugar and salt to balance everything out, then add the turmeric for color. Put the eggs in the pickle mixture. Let sit overnight, but use up by the third day for sure. Cut in half and top with caviar.

Bathing Methuselah

white wine
tap water
leek tops
fennel fronds
parsley stems
dill
thyme
black peppercorns

chili flakes
whole coriander
lemons [cut in half]
celery stalks
head of garlic [sliced lengthwise]
salt
sturgeon or other fatty and dense fish

MILLICENT

Note: Whenever you cook something in water, the water leaches the flavor out. When poaching you are gently simmering the fish in the liquid, so make it the most flavorful liquid you can. Poaching requires a gentle hand and can elicit the best texture. Take all the little drops of white wine and champagne you don't finish before it turns or goes flat, or use some of your box white wine. You don't think it's possible, but if you keep all those little swallows of wine you don't consume (it happens, if it happens to me it happens to you) then you'll have it around for poaching and braising.

Add water to your poaching vessel. You only need enough liquid to cover the beast; you don't want it swimming. If you don't have leek tops, add onions. The best part of poaching is that you get to look through your cupboard, refrigerator, and freezer and clean them out. No leeks? You have scallions? Use those. Use that part of the celery, the flaccid, the coarse, the part you've never going to eat, and toss it in the pot. Saving parsley stems from a particularly ambitious herby evening? Use them here. Same with leek tops. Leeks are nature's rip-off if you're only using the bottom part. Save the fibrous tops and freeze them for this very moment! (Take that, you expensive vegetable.) Toss in whole black peppercorns, a pinch of chile flakes (why not), and some whole coriander seeds. Cut a few lemons in half, squeeze the lemons into the pot, and toss



in the rinds. Is that dried-out thyme or dill sitting in the crisper drawer? Use it. Add head of garlic.

Bring it to a boil. Skim the scum (And here Scarlett says, *Anyone want to get "skim the scum" tattoos?*), turn it down a bit, and let it simmer away, so it pulls all the flavor from every bit inside. Don't violently boil it or it'll become bitter and grassy. Add the wine, whatever you got, and let it all simmer away for 15 to 20 minutes.

Hey, put the fish in the court bouillon you've just made. Make sure it is submerged. Poach it until done. How long will that take? It depends on how big the fish is. The best way to check is to put a cake tester (no, really) in the thickest part of the fish, pull it out, and touch the end of the cake tester to the flesh right under your bottom lip. How does it feel? Is the metal warm? Is it hot? You are a solid 98.6 degrees, so if the metal feels warm then the fish is about medium-rare, probably somewhere around 115 to 120 degrees.

If it feels hot, like you feel a little jolt from the heat, the fish is done, probably about medium, 125 to 135 degrees. Remember that everything carries over, so it will cook a little more. Carefully pull

olive oil	handful parsley [chopped]
butter [unsalted]	¼ cup capers
4 shallots [small dice]	zest + juice of 3 lemons
2 cups poaching liquid [strained]	salt
2 cups heavy cream	fresh black pepper
1 cup white wine	

the side of fish out and place on a platter. Strain the poaching liquid for a sauce.

Heat a saucepan. Add a few glugs of olive oil and heat it over a medium-high flame. Then add a few knobs of butter. Once the butter bubbles over and melts, toss in the shallots. Sauté a bit, sweating them out. Salt them. Once they give, add the poaching liquid, heavy cream, and wine. Whisk everything together and let it cook for about 7 to 10 minutes over medium heat. The sauce should thicken up a bit, enough to lightly coat a spoon. Add the capers, lemons zest and juice, and parsley. Taste. Season. Taste. Adjust. Dress your fish.

Caviar, Champagne & Cigarettes

MILLICENT

Go to Russ & Daughters and buy caviar. Acme caviar is great and inexpensive. Naturally it is gold, or dyed black or coral. On your way home hit the wine store and the bodega.

CAROLINE

Reading this really drove home the idea of the caviar coming from the sturgeon. Only a fish like that, massive, fatty, muscular, could hold those black eggs inside of its yellow white flesh. Imagine discovering the egg sac inside one of them. Bejeweled. To me salmon is the only comparable fish to sturgeon in grandeur and razzle-dazzle. We've cheapened salmon by farming it in a way that we haven't done with sturgeon. Sturgeon we've just driven to near extinction. But remember how stunningly beautiful the real thing is when you are lucky enough to lay your eyes and hands on a fresh caught 12-pound salmon.

Breakfast Under the Balloons

STEPHANIE REAGOR

We are a people of nostalgia and forgetting. Of idealizing that which cannot be returned to. Of rosy retrospection and purposeful misremembering. This way we can connect and disconnect all at once. The people, places, and things we collect along the way can be both gone forever and enduringly present. We use our conveniently selected memories to gloss over the details of the past and rewrite our stories. In doing so, we can release ourselves from the dissatisfaction of our waking moments. A meal that was bland and heavy on the palate can become not only delicious, but nourishing, in hindsight. If we want to, we can reminisce about things we once despised.

This is how I see the full English breakfast. A national tradition. A barely adorned symbol of Britishness. Meat on starch on meat on starch. A hangover cure. Something to regret, to disagree upon, stand up for, and hold dear. Not because we enjoy it, but because we can misremember it as much as it serves our disconnected connection to our narrative, both personal and collective. Can one feel nostalgia for the memories of another? I reckon so.

I have never eaten, or craved for that matter, a full English breakfast. I have no tangible connection to the UK, maybe some Scottish blood somewhere back there, maybe. I've only actually ever been to London for two rainy and whiskey-laden days. But I am somehow warmed by blurred notions of Merry England with its country inns, Sunday roasts, and cups of tea. So I let myself make believe a little.

We're in Wales, right? Or Fort Greene. Either way. And we take ourselves seriously. In Wales, it's not just eggs and bacon and beans and burnt tomatoes and things fried twice. It's also cockles and seaweed and leeks. Or so I am told.

More for subsistence and less so for health, a traditional Welsh breakfast would include laverbread, which is a puree made by boiling fresh foraged seaweed into a paste. Or, alternately, purchased online in a can. Oats were cooked into the laverbread until just soft. This mixture was then formed into patties and fried in the day's bacon fat. In the fog of a cold and dark coastal morning, under the roof of a thatched cottage, when a pint cost only a penny. You see what I'm doing here.

My way of bringing myself there from Brooklyn was to cook nori from the bodega into a pulp, my mock laverbread. Then stone ground oats were added and simmered until they gave way to some of their starch. When it was finished and had sufficiently cooled down, I rolled the mixture into a torchon and sliced it into thick rounds. I rendered just enough fat from a few slices of bacon (not too much because in my mind British bacon is tender and this is my story) to be able to fry the seaweed oatcakes. The oats became crisp and golden on the exterior, and remained creamy yet toothsome inside, with an unmistakable briny flavor of seaweed.

And then we took pictures of it under the balloons, and I got rid of it because I mostly just liked the idea of it and not the thing itself. But then Scarlett dug it out of the trash and took it home. Because she liked it.

For me, the rest of the story doesn't matter anymore. I will reminisce on that detail, by and by, to indulge in a rich serving of sentimental longing and wistful affection.



Seaweed Oatcake

STEPHANIE REAGOR

This is the least authentic version of a traditional Welsh recipe. Somehow, it did the trick.

1 package nori sheets	juice from half a lemon
2 cups stone-ground oats	rendered bacon fat
1 quart water	salt and pepper [to taste]

Simmer the nori in a cup of water, stirring occasionally to encourage the seaweed to break down. Cook gently, adding water if the pulp seems too dry. Once the nori has turned into a soft-pulp consistency, add the remaining water and bring to a boil. Once it is boiling, stir in the oats. Bring the mixture up to a boil and then reduce to a simmer, stirring often until the oats are cooked through.

Cool the mixture down on a flat surface, so that it cools quickly. Add salt and pepper to the mixture to taste (the seaweed should provide some salinity as well). Form the oat and seaweed mixture into patties and chill them to allow them to set.

In a heavy-bottom skillet, heat the bacon fat until glistening and carefully add the oatcakes. Allow them to crisp over medium heat, carefully flipping them halfway through to crisp the other side. Remove from skillet and allow to drain briefly on a towel.

Sprinkle with lemon juice. Serve with an egg, bacon, leeks, cockles, burnt tomatoes, and things fried twice. Save some for Scarlett.

CAROLINE

Can we feel nostalgia for the memories of another? I believe yes, very much. I mostly feel nostalgia about things I've never experienced. The seventies (which I lived through but as a child), Dutch New York, Boston in the era of the Brahmans, fishing villages (in fact anything having to do with the sea), Southern California in the fifties through the sixties, the Chesapeake Bay, Long Island, Georgia, Nova Scotia, Mexico. England, and Wales. I may have found, sadly, that I don't have an English heart, but I still wish I was from a place so terribly beautiful and connected to its past.

SCARLETT

I did scavenge the laverbread from the trash. There was something haunting about it, its flavor and texture, that I wanted to experience again. It sat in my fridge and every morning I would slice a thick puck off the cylinder and fry it slowly in olive oil or butter. Once it was even bacon fat, an individual portion each time, perfect in the tiniest cast-iron pan that I have, the one that is almost too small to fry an egg in. I stack my cast-iron pans like Russian dolls, one nestled in the other, in the other, in the other. I found that the oatmeal bound with the seaweed to form a thick, delicious crust when slowly cooked. The inside stayed soft and yielding and the outside toasted golden. It tasted a bit like sushi, a kind of salutary starch-and-seaweed flavor.

CAROLINE

How could we not have known that seaweed is/was eaten widely in Wales? Given that, I must assume that other coastal locals around the world have been eating seaweed for millennia. It's interesting how narrow our idea of certain foods has become. We associate seaweed only with Japanese food. Maine produces seaweed commercially. I just ordered some seaweed from Maine through a company called Ironbound Island and its naturally harvested and dried product will change your notions of the stuff. The nori is not forced into sheets and tastes not of that silica packet but of the murky shore. Once hydrated it's almost as if it comes back to life. It's intense stuff and would do well tempered with some oats and fried in fat.

Dennis's Red Flannel Hash

DENNIS SPINA

This recipe originally caught my eye for reasons that are pretty obvious. I usually wear flannels. Sometimes red. And, yes, I do have a favorite. The hash traditionally includes corned beef, which I usually omit for the sake of most vegetarians and our staff at the Roebing Tea Room. Servers would inevitably have to modify at least 98 percent of the orders. I will include it, but feel free to leave it out. It is one of our biggest sellers, but I think people just like saying *hash*.

2 T butter	1 handful of kale
1 Idaho potato [peeled, cooked, and cut into cubes]	[ribs discarded, leaves chopped]
1 red beet [cooked and chopped]	1 garlic clove [minced]
1 handful corned beef [shredded]	2 eggs
1 onion [finely chopped]	salt
	pepper

Get a pan going until it is pretty hot. Add the butter and let it melt. Then add potato, beets, and corned beef. Season with salt. Press down on the mixture with a spatula until you start to see some color developing. Cook until golden brown and crispy. Add in the kale and garlic, stirring to combine. Continue to cook at a lower heat until the kale has wilted to your preference. (Some like kale crunchier than others; I like it pretty soft.) In a separate pan, get some eggs on to cook as you like. (Fried is obvious.) Plate the hash, put the eggs on top and season with salt and pepper.

DYLAN THOMAS

Not many those mornings trod the piling streets: an old man always, fawn-bowled, yellow-gloved and, at this time of year, with spats of snow, would take his constitutional to the white bowling green and back, as he would take it wet or fire on Christmas Day or Doomsday; sometimes two hale young men, with big pipes blazing, no overcoats and wind-blown scarfs, would trudge, unspeaking, down to the forlorn sea, to work up an appetite, to blow away the fumes, who knows, to walk into the waves until nothing of them was left but the two curling smoke clouds of their inextinguishable briars. Then I would be slap-dashing home, the gravy smell of the dinners of others, the bird smell, the brandy, the pudding and mince, coiling up to my nostrils, when out of a snow-clogged side lane would come a boy the spit of myself, with a pink-tipped cigarette and the violet past of a black eye, cocky as a bullfinch, leering all to himself.

I hated him on sight and sound, and would be about to put my dog whistle to my lips and blow him off the face of Christmas when suddenly he, with a violet wink, put his whistle to his lips and blew so stridently, so high, so exquisitely loud, that gobbling faces, their cheek bulged with goose, would press against their tinsled windows, the whole length of the white echoing street.



Jellies or Rabbit Aspic Terrine

MILLICENT

Caroline provided this recipe. I just thought jellies sounded like aspic. The only time I've been to Wales was in 1994 on break from school in London. My friends and I rented a car at the train station; they didn't seem concerned that the answer to "Do you know how to drive stick?" was "The last time I drove stick everyone else was too drunk." It was dark, about 9 or 10 p.m. We had no plan and no map, driving stick on the other side of the road in a country full of roundabouts. The driver steered and worked the pedals, and the passenger shifted for the first hour. Then there was some rolling-down-a-hill madness, where the timing was off, so I just figured it out. Wrong side of the road, left hand shifting, a new reality.

We followed the signs to a place named Fishguard, because we liked the name. It was on the coast. We slept in a construction site since nothing was open when we arrived. In the morning we piled out of the car, stretching and yawning by the construction workers, pretending like nothing was strange.

Fishguard is a beautiful, weird little town. I think that *let's leave it to chance and road signs* victory has influenced every subsequent travel situation for me. I'm a coin flipper, not a planner. We had one of those magical moments where, for thirty-two hours, all three of us were on the same page, a rare occurrence. We packed back into the car and drove through the Welsh countryside in the early morning. It was dark and dewy. And there were rabbits everywhere. We hit and hopefully killed at least two. The driver felt guilt. I felt it was equalizing. There was literally not enough room in Wales to house that many rabbits.

1 rabbit [2 to 3 #]	½ cup parsley
2 carrots [finely diced]	3 T Pommery mustard
1 Spanish onion [finely diced]	chicken stock
4 oz. bacon [cut into small lardons]	1 pork hock
1 cup white wine	salt
8 sprigs thyme [tied in a bouquet]	pepper
3 bay leaves	

Season the rabbit well on all sides with salt and pepper. Heat a large sauté pan and brown the rabbit on all sides. Remove the rabbit from the pan and place in a braising dish with a tight-fitting lid. In a separate pan brown the bacon, remove, and strain. Sauté the onions and carrots in the remaining bacon fat. When the vegetables are soft, deglaze the pan with white wine, reduce a little, then pour over the rabbit. Add the bacon to the rabbit pan along with the thyme and bay leaves. Cover ⅔ of the way with chicken stock and then cover with the lid or aluminum foil. Braise the rabbit at 350 degrees until it falls off the bone.

While the rabbit is braising, place the hock in a pot and cover with water. Simmer the hock with aromatics until meat falls off the bone. Strain the pork from its liquid, and reserve liquid.

Allow the rabbit to cool in the braising liquid and then remove it from the pan and pick off all of the meat from the bones. Strain the braising liquid and save the solids, discarding the bay leaves and thyme. Add the solids to the pulled rabbit meat. Skim any fat off of the braising liquid and put it in a pot with 1 cup of the pork stock. Reduce everything to 2 cups. Pour the reduced liquid over the meat and stir in the mustard. Season well with salt and pepper, keeping in mind that the terrine will be less salty when chilled. Add the parsley and chill in a terrine mold or a deep bowl. Refrigerate overnight before serving.

SCARLETT

In Mexico they call roundabouts *glorietas*. Isn't that the cutest thing?

CAROLINE

There's a road with a series of roundabouts in Poughkeepsie. I think this is the only example of the roundabout in the city. As a result no one really knows how to use it. It's by Vassar College and they just put it in a few years ago. The road used to be straight and dumpy. It's a very obvious attempt at a *glorietafication* of a crappy place. With or without the roundabouts it still only takes you to downtown Poughkeepsie. I curse them every time. They symbolize everything I hate: making something look superficially nice without addressing the real problem, which is hopelessness. When things are nice, they're nice because people care and have taken care of them. You can't just slap on some roundabouts and think you've solved a problem. Plus, they're confusing. Also, I stole this recipe from Sean Rembold.

MILLICENT

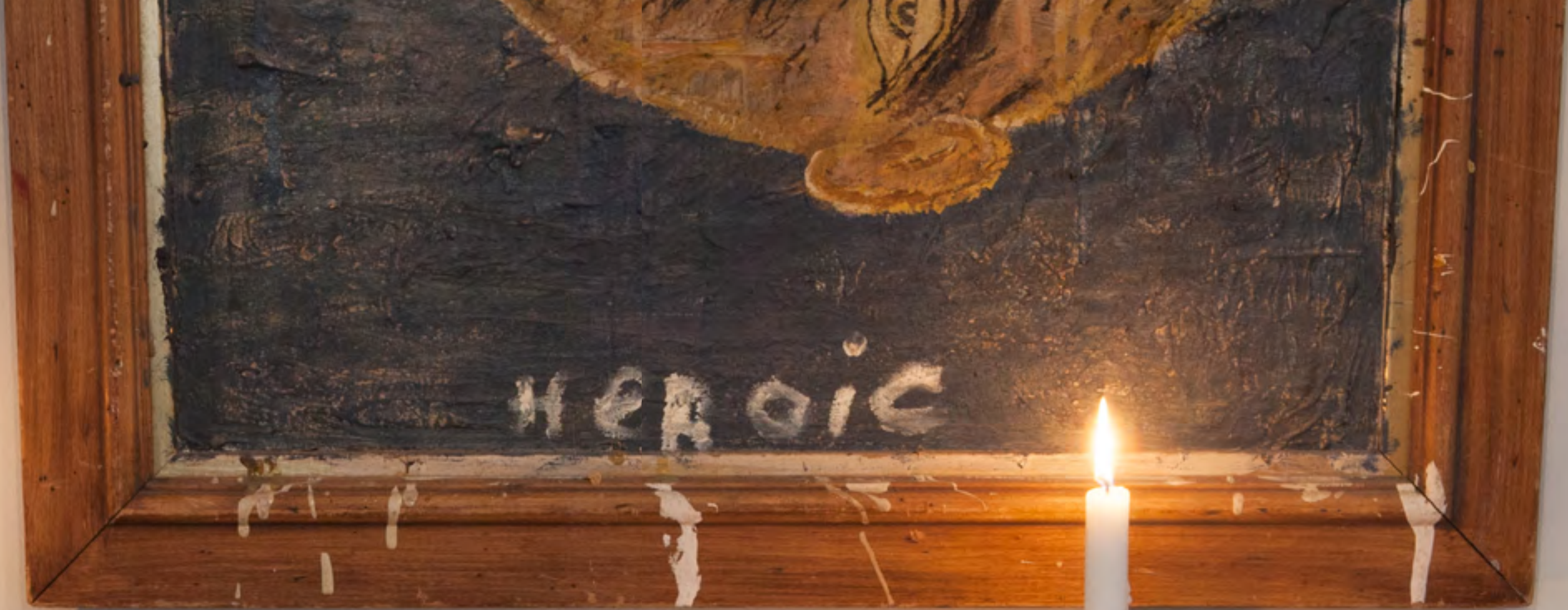
It was gonna get stolen from somewhere. Everything is.

SCARLETT

Let's hope.

DYLAN THOMAS

"There were the Useful Presents: engulfing mufflers of the old coach days, and mittens made for giant sloths; zebra scarfs of a substance like silky gum that could be tug-o'-warred down to the galoshes; blinding tam-o'-shanters like patchwork tea cozies and bunny-suited busbies and balaclavas for victims of head-shrinking tribes; from aunts who always wore wool next to the skin there were mustached and rasping vests that made you wonder why the aunts had any skin left at all; and once I had a little crocheted nose bag from an aunt now, alas, no longer whinnying with us. And pictureless books in which small boys, though warned with quotations not to, would skate on Farmer Giles's pond and did and drowned; and books that told me everything about the wasp, except why."



Glaciers

MILLICENT

Every Christmas Eve for years my mother had a party. A raucous affair. And every year Jackie Kraft made steak tartare, which is essentially ground beef with mustard, salt, pepper, and sliced white onions. And it just sat out. For hours. And as it slowly got eaten throughout the entire evening, my sister's friend calculated the time the meat was out at room temperature. Picking it out at Safeway, sitting in the grocery cart, checkout time during the holidays, traffic in the parking lot to get out to York Road, holiday traffic on York Road, finally brief refrigeration at Jackie's, then the long holiday traffic trek to my mother's house. Then it would sit on my mother's

100-lb. giant block of ice
chisel, blowtorch, or chainsaw
raw oysters
raw clams
raw scallops
raw uni
top round beef

sirloin of lamb or a piece from the leg
fine herbs
[fresh parsley, chives, tarragon, chervil]
some eggs
cocktail sauce
lemons
shuckers

dining room table as part of a buffet.

Nothing makes a party like a giant block of ice for serving food or alcohol. Or both. Look in the phone book for your local icehouse. It sells dry ice and giant blocks of ice. You want at least a fifty-pound block of ice, ideally a hundred. I've been in the presence of a five hundred-pound block of ice and it is a majestic beast. A real show stopper.

If you're making a luge, you need to sculpt a canal. You can use a chainsaw, a blowtorch, or a chisel. You can get a propane torch from the hardware store. You want to carve a canal down the side of the ice so you can pour alcohol down it. In an ideal world there are two canals, side by side, with enough room between them at the bottom for two human heads. No one likes to drink alone.

In the spirit of Jackie Kraft, this glacier is also ideal for food service. Nothing is more decadent than raw meat and seafood, and if you're going to invest in a massive block of ice, it might as well do double duty. At home you may freak out about serving raw meat and seafood, but actually it's easier than cooking. You just need to trust the person selling you the food.

Buy fresh oysters, shuck them, and serve them with lemons and cocktail sauce. Purchase scallops and slice them into thin pieces, serve them with grapefruit segments, thinly sliced chiles, and herbs. Get some lean red meat from your butcher, cut it into small pieces, season with sea salt and pepper, and toss with egg yolks.

Place everything on plates on the ice. You don't want the food to freeze to it, you just want to put it out and be an fleeting utilitarian spectacle.

SCARLETT

Until the party ends.

MILLICENT

Then you throw it off the fire escape.

CAROLINE

I love any recipe that calls for a blowtorch or chainsaw. Who wouldn't do this? If the chiseling and blowtorching is as easy as you make it sound, this is a totally interactive party. It's like a jungle gym for eating and drinking.

Couscous with Cauliflower

1¾ cup water
1 t za'atar
olive oil
salt
1 cup couscous
juice of one lemon

1 garlic clove [smashed to a paste]
zest of one orange
small bunch parsley [chopped]
¼ large cauliflower
4 oz. almonds [toasted and chopped]
2 oz. golden raisins

SCARLETT

Bring the water to boil in a medium saucepan. Add the za'atar, a glug of olive oil, and a pinch of salt. Add the couscous, stir well, remove from heat, and cover. Let sit for 10 minutes then fluff well with a fork. In a bowl, combine the lemon juice, a couple glugs of olive oil, the garlic paste, and orange zest, whisking to combine. On a mandoline, thinly slice the cauliflower into the bowl so it shreds into tiny segments about the size of the couscous grains. Toss to combine and season well with salt and pepper. Add the parsley, almonds, and raisins, tossing to combine. Taste and adjust the seasoning, if necessary.

MILLICENT

Have you ever read Paula Wolfert's Morocco cookbook? It has the traditional way to cook couscous, that involves a couscoussier (a pot with a strainer with wet paper towels tossed in flour to create a seal for the strainer). Essentially, couscous is so delicate that it doesn't need direct contact with water, if you are a Moroccan housewife or a crazy slightly obsessive person like me, you use water or stock or wine in the pot. Get it boiling. Seal the strainer with the paper-mache towels on top and make a pyramid out of half of the couscous and let it bloom for about 5 minutes. Then you add the rest. The steam cooks the couscous. After ten or fifteen minutes you take the couscous out and with oiled palms you rake it to fluff. It is said that a husband can tell the temper of his wife according to the fluffiness of her couscous.

SCARLETT

I have read that book. And I often think about the melding of time, obsession, and technique in a couscoussier. When in the market, I get a little crestfallen seeing the boxes of seasoning packet-enhanced couscous. I want the real deal. We have a long way to go.

MILLICENT

This was either the most fascinating thing you read all day or the most boring thing you read all day. That said, there is no in-between.

CAROLINE

Boring, only because I don't like couscous. It's my celery. I can't picture you making couscous, Millicent.

SCARLETT

Millicent, you have a couscoussier? I imagine you store it next to your bamboo steamers, tamale pot, and potato ricer.

MILLICENT

For the record, I do not own a couscoussier, or an iron. But I have made couscous in this fashion. What? It's not like it's knitting.

Humbugs or Bodega Sandwich & a High Life

MILLICENT

The first Christmas I didn't spend with my family was in 2001 in Portland, Oregon. I was alone in the house with a pit bull, a classic mutt, and a six-toed cat. I hosted Christmas day for all the orphans in town. I worked in the kitchen in the Shanghai Tunnel; the orphans were all cooks, bartenders, and door guys. I tried to go grocery shopping on Christmas Eve on my way to work but the grocery store was closed when I got there. So I spent my grocery money on records, and

roll
iceberg lettuce
[cut it into inch thick wedges]
pepper jack cheese

mayo and/or
whole grain mustard
hot pickled pepper slices
High Life [in a bottle]

went to 7-Eleven the next day for food.

7-Eleven on Christmas is an oasis for Dads. A bunch of fellas were just hanging out talking to each other; everybody had a beer in a brown paper bag. One man was purchasing mayonnaise. Man, I get it. Escape the family. Pick up some smokes, a Corona, say hey to someone who doesn't expect anything from you. I bought hot dogs. Years later, on another Christmas I was gloriously alone. I worked the night before and the day after, so there was no point in punching the family obligation clock. Being alone on Christmas is like a snow day. Complete freedom. I watched *The Wire*, drank High Life, and got a bodega sandwich. That sandwich tasted like freedom. And several different kinds of pickles. I knew I went overboard with the sliced hot cherry peppers, and jalapenos, but still, it tasted of briny spicy freedom.

SCARLETT

Yes! Retreat to the deli to get a little break from family time, to buy cigarettes, a sole beer for yourself, and a sandwich, all while the snow falls. A little breather from your South Carolina cousins, siblings, and Dad. The first Christmas/Hanukkah/Thanksgiving/Birthday alone is momentous. I think it's something that everyone should experience, even if it dredges up lots of uncomfortable feelings. Like going to a movie alone or going through a terrible breakup. Unpleasant, but necessary.



Nougat

CAROLINE

I love confections like nougat and meringues made with egg whites. There's something so grand about the process of whipping the whites, which are so malleable and surprisingly stable and therefore a vehicle for culinary flourish. These nougats are pressed, but I think you could form them into great shapes and leave them to dry and set. However, nougats are not decadent. They almost seem healthy. They're the kind of sweet you imagine people ate before sugar became endemic. They boast qualities not entirely in line with the modern palette, yet they persist.

1 T vegetable oil
2 cups sugar
1½ cup honey
¼ cup water
2 egg whites [room temp]
½ t salt
1 t almond extract

2 t vanilla extract
1 t orange blossom water
4 T soft butter
¾ cup hazelnuts [lightly toasted]
¾ cup almonds [lightly toasted]
¾ cup pistachios [lightly toasted]

Tradition. I want them around even if I rarely want to eat them.

Oil a 9 x 13" sheet pan and line with parchment. Brush oil onto the top of the parchment. In a saucepan, heat the sugar, honey, and water until the sugar dissolves. Use a wet pastry brush to keep crystals from forming on the sides of the pan. Cook until a candy thermometer reads 252 degrees. In a stand mixer, beat egg whites to stiff peaks. Pour ¼ cup of hot syrup into egg whites while the mixer is running. Beat at high speed for 5 minutes, until firm. Meanwhile, continue cooking the sugar mixture to 315 degrees on a candy thermometer. Remove from heat. With the mixer running, pour the syrup into the egg whites and beat on high for 5 minutes, until the egg whites hold their shape. Add the almonds, vanilla, and orange blossom water. Then add the butter and mix until a ribbon forms. Stir in the nuts and pour into the greased sheet pan. Place an oiled sheet of parchment on top of the nougat and weigh it down with something heavy. Let set for an hour. Cut nougat with an oiled knife.

When I was a kid there were a lot of old people to visit. Strangely, there were a lot of single adults in my family. Maybe this is normal or maybe it explains a lot. Anyway, one of my old aunts, Sylvia, lived in Yonkers. She was the last in the lineage from the elders on my mother's side of the family, and I think she was a de facto mom to my mom. She kept her home beautifully neat and clean with plastic covers on the couch, and a Cabbage Patch Doll on the bed held in a plastic bag so it wouldn't get dusty. She decorated with hundreds of little miniatures at Christmas, angels and elves, and Santas, and snow-dusted houses and trees.

She was also a great cook. (I remember her eggplant Parmesan, in particular.) For Christmas she would always have some ricotta salata to snack on, which I loved but my mother didn't like, so we only had it at Aunt Sylvia's, and she always had those Torrone nougats. When you're a kid and you're at the house of an older person, you are bored out of your mind. Eating will only provide so much entertainment. I never understood why she didn't just buy M&M's or Hershey's Kisses. Those Torrone were so boring. But man, I could really go for one right now.

SCARLETT

So you're saying we're allowed to eat as much nougat as we like? I feel that way about bran muffins, muesli, dates, and sourdough bread. Their salutary properties outweigh any bad.

Fernet Balls

MILLICENT

I made these for a performance by former Diner server Katie Eastburn at an event organized by former Diner host Megan Auster-Rosen. It was an evening of performances coupled with food. I was paired with two performances: for the rocking Naked Heroes I made Frito Pie (And here Scarlett says, *I broke a 7-year vegetarianism with Frito Pie. My own, not another's.*), and for Katie's I made Fernet-Branca Balls. Katie is an incredible musician, singer, and performer. A rarified bird. I wanted to match her talent, vision, and intensity with a tiny extraordinary bite.

This recipe is based on a classic Bourbon Balls recipe. The first time I made Bourbon Balls, I worked in a record warehouse in Chicago. I made them for the staff for Christmas, and in the way that we sometimes get, I disrespected the recipe's amount of bourbon, because, you know, I imagined that I liked bourbon more than the person writing the recipe. Everything ended up too wet, so I couldn't form balls, but squares. And instead of a little pick-me-up with a cup of coffee, I ended up getting the staff pretty drunk before noon during a busy holiday season.

Lesson learned: Don't mess with the liquid amount; you need the balance here for the essential structure of the ball. The great part of this recipe is that you can make this in advance and store in an airtight container. They just get better with age. Also, I generally shy away from corn syrup. In

1 cup toasted pistachios [chopped]
2 cups vanilla wafer cookies
[finely crushed]
½ cup confectioners' sugar

1½ T light corn syrup
¼ cup Fernet-Branca
1 t vanilla extract
salt [pinch]

cases like this it is relevant for form.

Mix together the pistachios, vanilla wafers, and confectioners' sugar. Mix the Fernet, corn syrup, and vanilla separately. Add a pinch of salt. It can't hurt. Mix the dry and the wet ingredients. Taste it. Every flavor should be present. Chill for at least 30 minutes. This helps to form the balls. When chilled, if it seems like it can take more Fernet, then by all means add it. If it seems a little wet add more vanilla wafers. Form into balls. Sift confectioners' sugar on top. Never underestimate the importance of confectioners' sugar for visual illusion. Snow.

Are You Crazy? Homemade Vanilla Wafers

MILLICENT

Homemade vanilla wafers are what you make with extra egg whites or when you have tired of beating them. They freeze well.

1 stick unsalted butter [softened]	1 large egg white
¼ t salt	1 t vanilla extract
1 cup white sugar	1⅓ cup all-purpose flour
1 vanilla bean [seeds only]	1 t baking powder

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Cream the butter, salt, sugar, and vanilla bean seeds together until light in color. In another bowl, lightly beat the egg white and vanilla, then add to the butter and sugar mixture, mixing until well-incorporated. Add the flour and baking powder, scraping the bowl and mixing everything until well-incorporated.

Put the batter in a pastry bag. I don't use a tip. In fact, sometimes these wafers just spread out like crazy. I pretty much just use the wafers for balls, bourbon, and Fernet, since they only get crushed. In other words, I don't care. Chill the batter for at least 10 minutes. Pipe the batter on parchment paper. Bake for about 13 to 15 minutes.

DYLAN THOMAS

Always on Christmas night there was music. An uncle played the fiddle, a cousin sang "Cherry Ripe," and another uncle sang "Drake's Drum." It was very warm in the little house. Auntie Hannah, who had got on to the parsnip wine, sang a song about Bleeding Hearts and Death, and then another in which she said her heart was like a Bird's Nest; and then everybody laughed again; and then I went to bed. Looking through my bedroom window, out into the moonlight and the unending smoke-colored snow, I could see the lights in the windows of all the other houses on our hill and hear the music rising from them up the long, steadily falling night. I turned the gas down, I got into bed. I said some words to the close and holy darkness, and then I slept.



CONTRIBUTORS

Carroll Dunn

Carroll Dunn is a quantum physicist and underground astronomer who lives in an old farmhouse on the coast of Maine. A former grenadier, Carroll experienced a dramatic life change when he fortuitously bought a pencil, at a Goodwill store, once owned by Albert Einstein. It was the very same pencil Einstein held when he said, "My pencil and I are smarter than I am." The pencil had a similar effect on Dunn, who unexpectedly found himself capable of solving equations and Sudoku puzzles. In 2001, Dunn calculated that Rhino Tao neutrinos carry away most of the gravitational energy released by the collapse of massive Type II supernovae, which he later trapped in the Kamiokande II underground detector. Mr. Dunn was awarded the Duke of Colgate Prize for trapping the Rhino, which many physicists believe is the best candidate we have for the "dark matter" that makes up most of the known universe. Dunn and his daughter Anna hold the current world record for reading *A Child's Christmas in Wales* aloud. Dunn's book *Rhino or Tao Is Neither One nor the Other* was a surprise *New York Times* best seller in the pop science category, and his exhibit, *Wall of Rhinos*, opens in June at the Flagellen in Ossilobispo, Portugal.

Evan Dunn

According to *The Goetia: The Lesser Key of Solomon the King*, Evan Dunn is one of the Kings of Hell, more obedient to Lucifer than other kings are, and has two hundred (one hundred to other authors) legions of demons under his rule. Evan teaches all arts, philosophy and sciences, and secret things.

Evan is depicted as a man with an effeminate face (a strong man with a woman's face according to other authors), wearing a precious crown, and riding a dromedary. Before him often goes a host of demons with the shape of men, playing trumpets, cymbals, and any other sort of musical instruments.

Caroline Fidanza

Caroline Fidanza was the opening chef of Diner and Marlow & Sons. She has been living and cooking in New York for longer than she would have ever imagined (twenty years!) and has, for the past fifteen years, fed generations

of hipsters, gentrifiers, slummers, bridge and tunnelers, French and Japanese tourists and the occasional pioneering artist in Williamsburg, Brooklyn. She was also a founding member and contributor to *Diner Journal*. In 2009 she opened a sandwich shop and bakery called Saltie and is the author of *Saltie: A Cookbook*, published in 2012.

Julia Gillard

J. Gillard is a Midwest by Northeast gal, and her resemblance to Cary Grant does not stop there. Like Grant's, Gillard's hair has its own fan club, and she can refill a wine glass as if it belonged to David Niven in *The Bishop's Wife*. She shoots pictures mostly of people, oddly, and often pleasantly, framed. Her pictures have been published in the *New York Times*, the *Wall Street Journal* and *New York Magazine*.

Peter Milne Greiner

Peter Milne Greiner's first hero was a fictional naturalist; his second, a fictional geologist. As a young man in Massachusetts he studied, with little scientific rigor, glacial erratics, forestry, and noises from the earth. There, too, he practiced trumpet and witchcraft but mastered neither. He frequented those places where lightning had struck and captured his first pet salamander himself. He has stolen a one-hundred-pound statue of Buddha, a first-edition copy of Charles Darwin's *On the Origin of Species*, and a bayonet, and lost all of them in his carelessness. He has buried two time capsules, seen the world's largest chain, and touched Jane Goodall's hair.

Neale Holliday

Neale Holliday grew up in the Bay Area and was raised to hate New York, but then she got stir-crazy and moved across the country to Brooklyn. New York unexpectedly stole a piece of her heart. She went to college and majored in film communications. Nothing about school made her feel right, and after graduation she worked for her dad at his financial planning office and was miserable. It gave her time to think about what actually made her happy, and that is when she decided to go into a lot of debt by attending culinary school. It changed her life. Being a pastry chef is challenging, exhausting,

and exhilarating. The things she loves most are family, lazy rainy days, bad reality TV, comfort food, baking, big sweaters, blankets, autumn, Maui, all dogs (except small ones), and a sous chef named Ross.

Stephanie Reagor

Stephanie Reagor used to want to be a writer. After she graduated from UW-Madison with a BA in sociology, she moved to the California and took a job reviewing electronic music, about which she knew nothing at all. It was then that she decided she would prefer to write about something she knew how to do. Food seemed like a good choice, but first she needed to learn about that. She moved back to her home town of Chicago, Illinois and attended culinary school, after which she quickly got lured into the pirate life of line cooking. Upon moving to Brooklyn in 2010, she became the sous chef at Roman's in Fort Greene where she continued her pursuit of flipping pans and burning the shit out of herself regularly. You may have seen her there, cruising the dining room in her Bulls hat and tomato-saucy whites, just like she was asked not to do. This past summer, Stephanie stepped out of the kitchen to become the general manager of Marlow & Daughters. Her greatest passions are her poodle, the staff at the butcher shop, and mayonnaise-based sauces. She misses the kitchen, but her burns are healing nicely.

Millicent Souris

Millicent Souris is a cook, writer, and teacher. She wrote *How to Build a Better Pie: Sweet and Savory Recipes for Flaky Crusts, Toppers and the Things In Between* (Quarry Books, 2012) and serves as an editor-at-large for *Diner Journal*. Souris resides in Brooklyn, New York.

Dennis Spina

Dennis Spina works and mumbles in Brooklyn New York. He seems confused, but he's fine

Thank you, Lauren Coleman, Kate Huling, Erin Kanagy-Loux, John Hale, Daphne Fitzpatrick, Katy Porte, Faye Pichler, and Dylan Thomas.



RECIPE INDEX

Honey Butterscotch Candies.....	9
Peppermint Candies.....	9
Currant Scones.....	10
Candied Quince.....	11
Poppy Seed Buns.....	15
Sherried Walnuts.....	16
Eccles Cakes.....	18
Pâte Brisée.....	18
Sticky Toffee Pudding.....	19
Hazelnut, Chocolate & Orange Torte.....	20
Mince Pie.....	24
Duck Hearts.....	26
Mashed with Brown Butter.....	29
Savory Black Pepper Flan.....	31
Vermouth Clams.....	32
Rarely Braised Celery.....	35
Game Birds & Grape Gravy.....	36
Poached Russian Sturgeon.....	41
Pickled Eggs & Caviar.....	42
Seaweed Oatcake.....	48
Dennis's Red Flannel Hash.....	49
Jellies or Rabbit Aspic Terrine.....	52
Glaciers.....	56
Couscous with Cauliflower.....	57
Bodega Sandwich & a High Life.....	58
Nougat.....	60
Fernet Balls.....	61
Homemade Vanilla Wafers.....	62