

RIBOLLITA ♦ LETTERS ♦ EMPATHY ♦ ODES Nº10 WINTER 2008

# DINER JOURNAL

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# DINER JOURNAL WINTER 2008

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## NOTES FROM THE PANTRY

by Andrew Tarlow and Anna Dunn

*"Next a deep drawer was full of flour, and smaller ones held graham flour and corn meal. You could stand at the window shelf and mix up anything without stirring a step. Outside the window was the great, blue sky and leafy little trees." -LAURA INGALLS WILDER*

There seem to be two extremes in the way we learn or read about food. One tradition is nuanced, reverent, masterful and possibly archaic. The other trend seems young, empty, brazen and obtainable within 30 minutes. The meal vs. the slice of pizza, mayo in a tube vs. cooking over the embers. As made obvious in our practices we undoubtedly revere food writers such as Elizabeth David, Patience Grey and Paul Bertolli that evoke a certain timelessness as well as tradition. There is romance alive in those early eras' philosophies and mindfulness. And it's quite unmistakable that we wake up every morning here in Brooklyn searching for that romance.

It is possibly a dated notion that cooking is an art you must master. It takes time and work, concentration and meditation. And I realize this may not be food's common culture anymore. Food in this day and age can be, as the dishes pile up, a utilitarian and mundane ordeal. It now seems to be about a close likeness of the thing. A cartoon instead of a drawing, elevator music instead of an orchestra. So in a way, the entirety of this Journal is a lament. Here we eulogize the days spent cooking, the working pantry, the homemade stock. When taste was celebrated and diverse, and recipes encouraged brightness in their freedom instead of uniformity in their haste.

Reading food writing has always been unique experience because it is language that directly informs action. Initially, the action was to cook, to feed your loved ones. To take what you have at hand and make a meal. That simple act of care is no longer enough. I have said it before, I shall say it again: The story that needs to be told about food now is the social, political and cultural effects it has on our lives. The action indeed needs to be as essential and complex as the prompt.

I hold fast to the belief that recipes are our most ubiquitous prompts. They still and always will say the most about us. Narrative in their quality and giving in their nature recipes, like this winter Journal, mimic life itself. The ingredients are our protagonists. The grand difference, the most poignant parable, in the way we cook now vs. the way our heros did before us, is choice. Much more is now at hand both literally and figuratively. We choose local, we choose from scratch, we choose the deliberate and complex over the simple and mundane. And what do we hope to gain? As with all great journeys we hope to gain understanding of ourselves, our context, our peers, our world. That is to say the great value in our kind of simplicity is complexity, that technique once mastered is simple, but the mastery everyday will be difficult. And technique should not be applied here only to chopping and pounding but more integrally to philosophy, thought, action and change.

And as we fight for our commitment to being present, to speaking our language and remaining reverent I still need those true and timeless guidelines. Now when I'm in the kitchen it is a pretty clean and simple affair. The one thing, however, I can never remember, the one thing I always have to leaf through those eternal pages for, is how to make only enough food for two people. Possibly this is a mental block of mine. Possibly some part of me wants everyone to come to the table.



Grant Cornett

# Dear Anna

by Carroll Dunn

This first section is a rambling excuse for not having gotten back to you sooner. It's probably worth skipping.

Sorry. I started to respond to this a couple of weeks ago, but then I got this job tutoring a kid in advanced algebra II, which I know nothing about. Someone I know asked me to tutor him because he got kicked out of school and his family was at a loss. So I said I would, but when I met with him he was using an online course to get credits and the only thing he needed help in was advanced algebra. Since I already agreed, I said I'd tutor him—how complicated can  $2x + 3 = 9$  be? And I sort of remember liking parabolas at some point in my life.

The answer is infinitely complex. That seems to be the entire meaning of mathematics—take simple ideas and make them infinitely complex. So I've been staying up all night recently working my way through equations, radicals, roots, exponents, crazy problems about selling six types of tickets to an event on two trains running in opposite directions with a wind current of . . .

I'm too embarrassed and would feel like both an imbecile and con man to go and say to them, I don't have any idea how this stuff works. So I desperately try to figure out huge sections of the math book before each of our meetings. In a way I like it because it's just about impossible for me to figure it all out—and I have to do it. And ironically it has its moments—last week he got about ten pages of bizarre algebraic hieroglyphics homework and tests to do. I spent several days and nights concentrating on figuring it out. When I met with him and asked him if he was able to do the homework, he said, "I don't know anything at all about polynomials." So I went through all the stuff I'd spent days trying to learn, and at the end, he said, "I see now that it's really kind of simple." That might have been the best teaching session I've ever had— and the reason he could learn it so clearly was that I had stayed up all night making all these little charts and three step procedures for doing every problem so that I could teach the stuff to a third grader—myself.

How weird is it to find yourself caught up in a minor but nonetheless scary existential drama that consists of explaining quadratics and the binomial theorem to someone—and having no idea if what your saying makes any sense at all? The funny thing is that Western Civilization has a fundamental belief that mathematics ties in precisely with reality and explains the world. Our whole theory of the cosmos --the big bang etc.-- is all built out of the implications of mathematical measurements and calculations, and the truth is that the measurements are accidental, the fit is uncertain and the whole thing is arbitrary and not true. That became obvious to me from the stock market crash. Over the past twenty or thirty years, the financial sector of the American economy has taken in something like 70% of all profits and gains in the American economy. As a result, Wall Street has not only hired the top graduates from business schools, but also the best mathematicians and physicists in the nation, who have engaged in a kind of mathematical Manhattan Project to design all the new products and derivatives in a way that would produce staggering profits with zero risk. The whole thing was based on complicated but supposedly rock solid mathematical formulas and models --- to the extent that the entire operation of the largest, most traditional and trusted investment and banking institutions in the world were based on these "true" models and formulas. And now we see they were completely wrong! Luckily our models of the universe can't cause it to crash!!

END of EXCUSE

And now on to the Lobsters!

The minute I bought them, the lobsters became pets. Walking around Shaw's, I started to worry about them. I bought two (the counter guy called them "chickens") because I thought they might be social beings and how would it be to be dropped off alone in the middle, or the edge to be more precise, of the

Atlantic Ocean all by yourself? In the past, when I released mice I'd caught out in the woods, it seemed to me that I was dropping a child off in a remote forest. And I've heard, that many of the dead squirrels you see by the road were squirrel adventurers who had wandered across the road into another squirrel's territory and were driven back out into the road and their doom. These are among the qualms that kept me from rescuing lobsters earlier on. I think I'd been going to Shaw's for years thinking "I'll rescue a lobster, today," and then chickening out. My initial impulse probably came from Buddhist sources-- the aghast expression on Geshela's face when he first heard what happens to a lobster-- and from Hugh's reaction on seeing mom eating a lobster when we were out with the relatives at the Westugo inn--"Mom! What are you doing? Put him back together!"

At any rate, I was always too anxious to actually do it. I was worried that the guy behind the counter might look suspiciously at me and ask, "Sir, what are your intentions toward this lobster? I don't think you even know how to eat a lobster." It's the same trepidation I always have when I bring my car in and imagine the mechanic shaking his head and saying, "A guy like you shouldn't be allowed to own a vehicle." And I also worried about the lobster--remember the scene in Annie Hall when the lobster escapes in the kitchen and Woody Allen fends him off with a broom? When I actually bought the lobsters, the counter man had a little broom which he used to kind of sweep them around in the tank, while he was picking the "chicks." I wanted smaller ones thinking they were younger and had longer to live, but I wasn't sure that such economics of life should be considered. I think "chicks" means female and that they are smaller. I don't know if males are Tom's, cocks, roosters or what?

So anyway, I'm walking around the store, the lobsters are in a bag, which I've gently placed in the shopping cart, and as I start to pick up a few other things, I find myself explaining to the lobsters that "I just need to get a few things for dinner and the kids need drinks and we'll be on our way in just a couple of minutes." I'm actually talking to my groceries. And nestling cans of soda and vegetables in the cart so as not to disturb the lobsters--I don't want them to die in an avalanche of Polar seltzer cans or to be battered by a bag of potatoes. Because I'm still a little anxious, I have to go to the bathroom. I remember bending down into my grocery cart and saying, "I'll be right back," before ducking into the bathroom. At the check-out counter the girl grabbed the bag, and I couldn't help blurting out, "Be careful with the little guys." She gave me the oddest look, and I tried to recover by saying something like, "I just wondered what they were thinking while you were turning them upside down and scanning them." We shared a nervous laugh and I exited the store quickly.

Two things stood out. The first was how quickly I became attached to them and identified with them. When they came to the forefront of my attention, they became human, or whatever it is that we call that commonality that causes us to respect, love and identify with one another. Certainly their ragged brown claws were no more alienating to me than the woman I heard on the radio yesterday, who said she wasn't going to vote for Obama because she didn't believe he was American. And thinking about her long enough to put her in a sentence, I start to feel sympathy. I think that compassion is always present in the simple act of attention. Not that you try to pay attention to be compassionate, but as we say in algebrish, love is a function of attention.

The second thing I noticed was the feeling that I was doing something illicit. It's almost as if there is a gravity field as powerful as the earth's around the norms of society and to do something as simple as buying a lobster to free instead of to eat is as if you're breaking through the narrow band of what's acceptable into the risky stratosphere.

So driving with lobsters, my head wavers with silliness. On the one hand, I hear them rustling around in the back seat like cats do in their carriers. I wonder if they can tip over the bag and hide somewhere in the car. The turtle almost pulled a Houdini one day by sneaking around the front seat and wedging himself in up behind the radio, and I once was transporting some captured mice who made a commando-like-escape through a hole in the top of the cardboard box I had them in. They managed to make their way into the engine of the Volkswagon where they built a nest out of some hay I had swiped from a field for the garden. I didn't know the mice were in the car until the mechanic working on the engine said he had the curious feeling all the while that he was being watched. I have fantasies of the lobsters hanging around the house like the dog and cat and scuttling up to the door and flipping themselves in the air when I come home. I actually think I can hear them making a kind of very high-pitched meow in the back seat, and I see their antennae or whatever they are as particularly long and attractive whiskers.

I'm worried about the release. What if I get stopped and caught red handed with two lobsters by the Harbor Master, or the Maine Guides, or the Coast Guard? Are they going to believe I'm freeing them and not a lobster rustler even if I have a Tibetan monk with me? Or will I be charged with illegally harvesting shellfish? Are they going to give me horrible lectures about how introducing a strange lobster can upset the delicate ecology of the northern fisheries and wreck havoc in the rainforest to boot? Geshela is beaming as usual and saying "om mani padme hum." This is a kind of Ariadne's thread that will

enable the lobsters not only to find their way around Casco Bay, but to negotiate the swirling currents of the Bardo and infinite future lives as well. All of the 88,000 sets of the Buddha's teachings on love and wisdom are miniaturized and woven into six syllables with the power to enchant, edify, delight and inspire even the most wayward crustacean. The theory of karma suggests that somewhere in the long chain of their lives, the lobsters became fearful and obsessed with defending themselves, and as a result were born with great claws and hard shells which make it difficult to move around and almost impossible to caress one another. Geshela is reminding them to take it easy, that everything is ok, and that there is a path from the floor of Casco Bay to Buddhahood.

Geshela reassures me as well. For no reason that I can ever understand he seems to be invariably successful in what he does. He really is a simple monk. He doesn't have any followers, organization, or groups giving him donations. He lived for years on a dollar a day, in the US, and he managed to save enough money to create a school for kids in Ladak. First, he built one room and hired one teacher. Then he planted some trees, and made another room, and then hired another teacher and now there is a school all the way through high school.

One time I arranged for him to go to Northern Maine to give refuge vows to some people I met at an event. We traveled for six hours, only to discover when we got there, that I had brought the wrong address and number with me. It was still early in the morning when we got to Ellsworth, but time was going by, and I was frantically making calls in a phone booth in the middle of the town square trying to figure out where we were supposed to be and picturing a roomful of would be Buddhist refugees slowly getting up from their cushions and dejectedly trudging back out into samsara. Finally, Geshela said, "Give me the sheet and some quarters." This should be good, I thought—he had never met and had no idea who the people waiting for us were, I knew the number on the sheet was wrong, and he really couldn't speak English at all, even though he thought he could. I felt sorry for bringing him all this way for nothing. In a couple of minutes, he came back to the car and gave me the directions to get the person's house where everyone was waiting. I never found out how he managed it because he couldn't speak English enough to explain it. A few years ago, a friend of mine in Amherst put Geshela up in his attic for a couple of months. The friend was hesitant because the attic was cold, just a big unfinished area. While he was up there, Geshela managed to build two or three bedrooms and a big shrine room for meditating in the attic. Apparently he got a hammer and some wood on his own and just started building. Over the past decade, we've spent thousands of dollars and had crews working on making a

few rooms and a meditation area in the attic in the barn, and it still looks exactly as it did when we started. Geshela just goes along smiling and nodding his head, and things somehow work out.

Geshela and Hugh have always hit it off, literally. Poor Hugh suffered through too many spiritual journeys and trips to the New Age Bookstore while he was a little kid. Alas, I fear that early exposure to so many sad cases and absolute fools inspired a healthy contempt for spiritual endeavor, nature, trees, flowers, daylight, the moon, etc. in Hugh as well as informing his future career as a villain. But he and Geshela really liked sword fighting with sticks. I remember looking out in the backyard one day and there they were: Geshela hopping about with his monk's robes streaming behind him like Dartanian's scarlet cloak, and Hugh trying to take him out at the ankles with roundhouse sweeps of the stick. As a matter of fact, I was a little afraid Hugh might take a whack or two at my lobsters. When we played fetch the stick with Sammy in the Royal River Park I could never tell if he was throwing the stick at the dog or not.

I had two important thoughts on the way to the water. I was surprised because I never think of details, but I stopped at Rite Aide to get a small pair of scissors. I really didn't want to be trying to wrestle the rubber band off the second claw while the lobster diced my fingers with the recently freed first claw. I also thought it might be nice to leave them off in the Royal River or in the estuary at the Falmouth Audabon sanctuary. Maybe they'd like a change of scenery from both Shaw's and the ocean, and enjoy the company of the groundhogs, turkeys and kingfishers at the sanctuary. But before I went to the water, I stopped in and asked the naturalist if there were any lobsters in the estuary. He said no that they couldn't tolerate any fresh water at all.

So we went out to Mackworth Island or somewhere like that. I was still filled with apprehension. I thought of stopping along the causeway on the way out, but there were no parking signs and I didn't want to get nabbed by sea rangers or local cops. I remember going by the guy at the gate like I was going through checkpoint Charlie. Geshela's still mumbling mantras and Hugh's arguing that we should bring them home. I picture him walking the lobsters over to Handy Andy's on leashes.

A lady in the parking lot has a baby in one arm but can't get her door open because the button has gone down inside the door. So I'm trying to help her. She's got her baby in one arm and I've got a bag of live lobsters in mine. I want to invite her to come down the beach so the baby can see the lobsters run into the water, but I don't know how crazy that will seem. I want to tell people so they will think how nice we are; but the first group we run into doesn't look too receptive. There's a pale grizzly looking lady and massive black guy with a dog that looks

like a mix of a pit bull with elk. It's huge and the guy's having trouble with it. They look like they've been living on the beach and maybe would like a lobster dinner. The dogs ears go up and I think he's scented the creatures, so I practically break into a run, picturing myself holding the lobsters over my head and trying to kick box the guy and the beast while Geshela smiles and says mantras and Hugh joins in and tries to whack me with a stick.

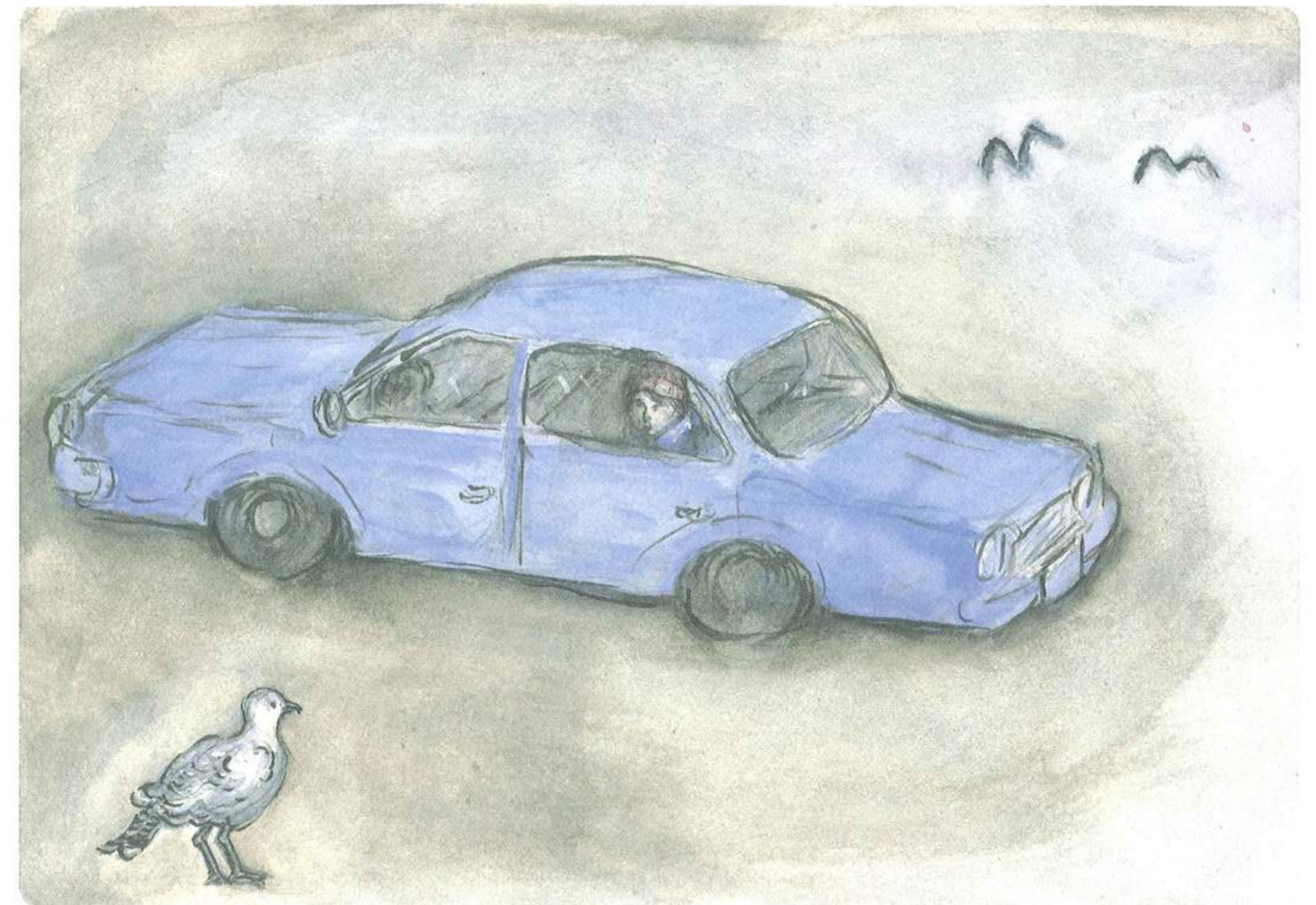
Then there's just empty beach and I start to relax a bit. I'm still on the lookout for herons and egrets which I usually think of as beautiful, but now I see as stone cold killers. As we walk on just where I pictured releasing the guys, there seems to be someone sitting on a log completely still. What's this? The Guardian at the Gates of Dawn or some other mythical figure? Maybe they really exist. Or a Maine Guide or something like that who got word somehow that we were tampering with nature? Or just a homeless guy who's dead or frozen or something? And

then with a little squinting he turned into the strangest natural driftwood sculpture I've ever seen.

I take the lobsters out of the bag and we skirmish. I manage to cut off one of the rubber bands, and while I'm trying to get the next one, he's trying to hook me with the free one. And then—put them down, aim them toward the water and let them go on their own? Or throw them back? I throw them, afraid a squadron of herons will come if I let them down on the beach. One of them bobs on the surface upside down for a minute, and I'm afraid I'm going to have to go in and rescue him again, but he straightens out. The sun is shining and the water gleams endlessly. I feel very good and make a vow to do this every week, and soon forget until you've reminded me by asking for this.

Hope this helps, I've got to go. Jesse says hello.

DAD



Elizabeth Schula



BY CAROLINE FIDANZA

# RIBOLLITA

THE METICULOUS RECIPE AND THE  
GHOST OF ELIZABETH DAVID

Grant Cornett with Karen Evans

"Good cooking is honest, sincere and simple, and by this I do not mean to imply that you will find in this, or indeed any other book, the secret of turning out first-class food in a few minutes with no trouble. Good food is always trouble and its preparation should be regarded as a labour of love..."

ELIZABETH DAVID INTRODUCTION TO FRENCH COUNTRY COOKING

If Elizabeth David were writing this recipe it would be short indeed because in many ways it is a short recipe with a long cooking time. But this is a long recipe. Elizabeth David would not be amused. This is a simple recipe, one that doesn't require any advanced culinary skill, but it is, as is any recipe, one that could suffer from making a few bad, or even just uninformed decisions. In the end, cooking well, like writing and like life, is about making the right decisions. And the right decisions are about ingredients and about knowing what a dish is asking for.

Marcella Hazan wrote a piece for *Saveur* magazine years ago about two qualities that the Italians use to describe readiness; *insaporire* and *arrosolare*. She describes *insaporire* as the moment when a dish "opens up to and swells" with the other flavors it has been cooking with. This is a real moment and her description of it is accurate: the dish will let you know when it has arrived and will point you in the direction of what to do next. *Arrosolare* refers to the hue of the thing you are cooking (derived from the word *rosa*, rose), the color informs us of the correctness of our procedure and also lets us know when to move on. Of course, we have no exact English translation but what she is describing is the idea of building flavor, listening to and observing the cooking process to know when and what to do next.

In fact it is essential to use one's senses in making decisions about the cooking process. How brown is brown? Is it burning and getting dry or is it golden and oily and smelling good? There are a lot of factors at play that determine flavor and it is hard to relay them exactly in a recipe; the amount of fat in the form of oil or butter or animal fat, the heat of the pan, the type of pan. These things require observation and an ability to respond to what is happening. It is essential to recognize the moment of transition between one part of the process and the next. If the onion is golden the next step builds on top of it. If the onion is watery and bland the next step is built on a flavorless foundation. Coaxing flavor is your job. And it is a good job.

The first time I read Elizabeth David I was thrilled to have discovered a woman writing in the 1950's in such a contemporary way about food. I loved her recipes and her voice. She was smart, opinionated, matter of fact and completely irreverent. Her books are so totally un-politically

correct they are positively subversive. David was a prolific writer. In addition to her cookbooks she wrote a regular column for the *London Sunday Times*. In this she wrote on a breadth of subjects, from the famed omelette of Madame Poulard to undervalued Italian wines, the importance of lemons and the beloved English syllabub. She reminds us that there was a time when food writing was not about creating or responding to trend but an opportunity to pass on information, maybe even to make the reader think about the world around and beyond them. The information was reasonably new and her voice one of the first to break the news to England, and by extension the US, that the winds of change were being summoned to the kitchen.

In her revised introduction to the second edition of *Mediterranean Food*, David talks about the fact that much of the food in the recipes would have been unavailable shortly after the end of the war. Her book was meant not only as a literal cookbook to inspire the reader to cook but also remedy to the shortages, the rations and the lines. Still she allows the reader to dream of the warm, bright flavors of the south.

Noble as her mission may have been, David was not sentimental or romantic. She could be curt or impatient with the shortcomings of her countrywomen, imploring them not to use the powdered mixes and processed foods coming into the post war market. But at the same time she's not going to spell it out. She shuns the American style recipe writers that rely too heavily on exact measurements noting that they would give you measurements for "one-half cup or one-quarter teaspoon of everything but the washing-up water." She's no-nonsense, tough and much of the time defiantly unhelpful. (I can't imagine that she had an editor for her work.) I marvel at her inexact measurements; a teacup or a wine glass to measure liquids. Her instructions for how to cut an onion or a link of sausage never venture much beyond chop or dice as if to say, use what you have and develop your own system of measurement. If a recipe calls for boning out a quail and stuffing it with foie gras, that's all the instruction you'll get. No direction on how to bone the bird, no instruction on where to obtain or how to handle foie gras. She either assumed that you knew nothing or everything or, most likely, that you would figure it out. No one was going to foul up a recipe on her account. David was

like the aunt who would take you out to a proper lunch in a fine restaurant and let you order whatever you want along with a glass of wine and maybe even a cigarette at the end of it. I scoured for an original printing of her Elizabeth David Classics (which includes: Mediterranean Food, French Country Cooking and Summer Cooking) and proudly displayed it on my bookcase.

Alas, this is a long recipe attempting to explain all of the decisions and observations and instructions that go into one recipe which can then be applied universally to other dishes. This is the opposite of Elizabeth David and even myself. It is always my tendency to write recipes with very little in the way of instruction. This is not meant to be difficult, I just find it pointless to measure out the amount of oil, wine, lemon or salt in a recipe when it usually comes down to the question of how much does it need? How can I ever answer that question for you? Worse, when will something be done? The answer is, when it's done. The truth is cooking defies instruction (this is not true for baking). So why do we insist upon having exact measurements and procedures? Mostly all I can attribute this to is fear. Fear of cooking in the first place and fear of screwing it up if we do. If we have measurements there is a paper trail and someone to blame. We have lost our culinary instincts and now must rely on books and pictures to tell us what to do. Books like David's left room for the cook to imagine their own version of the dish, to develop their instincts. David provided only the ghost of a framework. So this long recipe seeks to address everything that comes up in the process of making a dish, from where to procure the ingredients to what to look for in the cooking process to know when things are done.

Ribollita is a dish that is all about building flavor. It is a dish that should be a pleasure to make. It is a conversation between you and your dinner and it will give back what you give to it. To me dishes like this are all about love and belief in the idea that a dish can make one feel connected to something wonderful and basic, huge and intimate. That a dish can make you feel grounded in who you are and where you came from and what you want to think about and where you are right now. Dinner can do all of this.

## BATTERIE de CUISINE

It's certainly not going to come as anything newsworthy to learn that I am under the firm belief that one's kitchen must be stocked with some basic wares not only in order to produce good meals at home but also to provide an opportunity to develop some skills. Many better cookbooks, especially the classics, will offer a list of these collectibles to build a well-stocked kitchen. For the purposes of this recipe I am going to include an ideal equipment list for best results.

## KNIVES

The only knife my mother ever uses in the kitchen is a supermarket serrated steak knife. It is a little blade maybe 4 inches long by ½ inch wide with a brown molded plastic handle that veers off in unpredictable directions. I can't cut a pat of butter with that knife let alone prepare dinner. I'm sure that my mother is not the only person who cooks with such a stunningly inefficient knife, happily, with no desire for anything more, no sense that there is any better way or even other way to slice, dice, chop or fillet. She can make dinner for 20 with that one little knife. I am paralyzed by it. I think that a lot of what paralyzes anyone in the kitchen is a certain amount of discomfort either with their lack of kitchen tools and equipment or their inability to choose and use those tools and equipment well. My mother is very comfortable with her impossible little knife and able to actually produce food with it. She also happens to have a nicely stocked kitchen in every other way so it is not a symptom of a bigger problem, just a quirk of hers.

The number one question I am asked by home cooks is what kind of a knife they should buy. Fortunately buying a knife is easy and you don't need, or want to buy a full German collection in 6 different sizes that fits neatly into a wooden block on your counter top. What you need are 3 basic knives: a vegetable/chopping knife, a paring knife and a large serrated knife (for slicing bread and tomatoes). If you cook a lot of meat at home you would also want to invest in a boning knife and maybe a slicing knife, but not for this recipe. Your all-purpose, slicing, chopping, dicing knife should be some sort of a Japanese carbon steel or carbon/stainless steel knife. These knives have become very popular and are therefore easy enough to find. They are generally around 6-7 ½ inches long with a straight, flat cutting blade, a curved top, and a riveted wooden handle. Don't buy one of those "Global" knives. Yes they are Japanese, but they are all wrong. Why a Japanese knife with a carbon steel component? Because the carbon steel means that you will always have a sharp knife in your drawer and you won't have to have any real skill about keeping it sharp. You will also find that Japanese knives are light, versatile, precise and can work hard and well for decades.

Second, a paring knife. I love a good paring knife and am lost without one. There are certain things that I just can't do with any other knife, like peel garlic. There are cheap paring knives and there are expensive paring knives. I'm not a big fan of sharpening my paring knife on a stone so I tend to buy the cheap ones and when they get really dull replace them. These knives are generally around \$10 at a kitchen supply store. A nicer paring knife will last a long time but will require some skill to keep sharp.

Third, the large serrated knife. This is just a fancy way of saying a bread knife. You can buy an offset serrated knife or a straight edged serrated knife. I like the flat one better for bread but the offset is more versatile. If you're only buying one, buy the offset. It's great for slicing things like pies or tarts.

In addition to knives you will need a sharpening steel and depending on the knives you have, a sharpening stone. I've had a Japanese knife for 10 years and have never sharpened it on a stone, only on a steel, hence my affection for these knives. Again, most people don't know how to or particularly want to use a wet stone to sharpen knives at home. I would buy one only if I got to the point where I wanted one and was willing to do the work.

## COOKWARE

Fortunately for this recipe only one piece of cookware is required. I'm really not being pretentious when I say that you will need a Le Creuset (or similarly fashioned) 5 ½ quart or larger, enamel finished, cast iron pot. You could use a good stainless steel pot, of course you could, but we're talking about the ideal conditions. The Le Creuset name or style pot is the champion of any long-cooked dish that is either prepared stovetop or in the oven. Pots like these are expensive and heavy to lug home on the subway but they are a life-long investment. You will use this pot again and again and marvel at its ability to outperform other pots both in conductivity, functionality and insaporire. This pot will make you believe that the right cooking vessel really does improve the flavor of food and beyond that, that certain cooking vessels are made for certain tasks. Consider all of the pots and pans in the French kitchen, they are there for a reason. The Le Creuset comes closest to an all-purpose pot that does not come up short on producing flavor.

## WOOD

I have an obsession with wooden kitchen wares; whether they be spoons, bowls or boards. I am attracted to them again and again and have a little bit of a problem saying no when I see a good quality piece of wooden gear.

## SPOONS

In addition to your 3 knives you should also have 2-3 nice wooden spoons. A wooden spoon, much like the paring knife is another one of those things that I can't function without. Buy a big one with a round end and another one that is more paddle shaped with a flat, angled top and a third of your choosing.



Adam John Ward

## BOWL

If you are eating a salad with your Ribollita, or ever, you will need a good wooden salad bowl. Wooden bowls are generally expensive. I went to Kua'i, Hawaii a couple of years ago and at all of the local craft-style markets there were salad bowls that were made out of native mango trees. They were burned on the outside to create a dark finish or to accentuate the natural design of the wood. As a result the bowls have the residual smell of campfire. I bought two of these bowls and had to cut myself off at that. They were inexpensive for their beauty and craft. I am now convinced that they actually have magical powers and make everything taste better. I eat almost every meal at home out of the smaller bowl. It has improved my quality of life and makes me enormously happy. I'm not kidding. Buy a bowl to love.

## CUTTING BOARD

Never use a plastic cutting board at home. You just don't have to. You, your knives, and whatever you are prepping will feel gross. The only time I don't mind a plastic cutting board is if I am working with meat, poultry or fish.

## PRODUCE

### BEANS

Beans are among the most satisfying things to eat. The ideal bean should hold its shape and integrity yet be completely creamy. Cooking beans perfectly is not a hard task but it takes some practice. The worst thing you can do to a bean is undercook it. I think that often in an attempt not to overcook a bean, this error is made. Know that it is fairly difficult to overcook a bean. As with anything there is a perfect moment. All you have to do is be there to identify it.

Dried beans can be challenging. You never know how long they have been sitting in the bag or bulk bin or whether they are going to taste good or not when cooked. There are 2 prescriptions for finding the perfect bean. The first, buy fresh shell beans in the fall (preferably cranberry beans, which when dried and Italian become *barlotti* beans), as many as you can get your hands on, shuck them and freeze them. You now have the best beans available for making *ribollita* or any other bean dish. You will be surprised at how fresh they taste in the cold of winter. The second best bean scenario is either go to California to get them yourself or mail order Phipp's ranch beans from Pescadero, California.



If you are traveling to buy your beans there's a real treat in store for you. Assuming you are coming from San Francisco you have the perfect day trip on your hands. Drive south about an hour on route A1A to Pescadero; beautiful views of the coast, cool fresh air, you can stop and go to the beach. Pull into the tiny town of Pescadero (population can't be more than 100) and go have lunch at Duarte's, the best fish restaurant you will probably ever go to besides Swann Oyster Depot on Polk street. Eat lunch and then drive over to Phipp's and buy the beans that they grow there. They sell others that they don't grow but only choose theirs. Ideally

choose a *barlotti* or *cranberry*, but if they don't have them take a *cannellini*. Buy at least a pound but it's worth it to stock up on a few varieties for the season.

If neither option seems viable, go to a store like Kalustyan's on Lexington and 29th street. Make this into an outing as well. If you haven't been to Kalustyan's you're really missing out. People rave about Sahadi's but Kalustyan's is what Sahadi's would be if it were actually good and not just what people imagine as some kind of authentic New York shop. The shops next to Sahadi's like the Damascus *pita* place are superior. Anyway, go to Kalustyan's and go prepared to want to buy everything in the store and with the understanding that you are going to commit to learning how to make the best curry ever for the rest of your life on the spot. Don't worry, this feeling won't last past lunch. Buy your beans there along with some *fenugreek*, black mustard seed and *oily dal*. Then go to Curry in a Hurry for lunch and hug your heavy bags home.

### EXTRA VIRGIN OLIVE OIL

If you can't find a more interesting commercial olive oil than Colavita, buy Colavita. Otherwise, shop around (though not at the supermarket), but know the difference between cooking oils and finishing oils. There are many oils out there that can stand up to being heated yet are tasty enough to be used as a finishing oil. It's also worth it to buy something special to use as a finishing oil so that you can taste the different qualities that are present and decide what you like in unrefined, unfiltered, cold-pressed oils. So, ideally have an extra virgin that can be used for cooking and an extra virgin for finishing. For an all-purpose oil I use Trianna, Illiada, Fantoia, or Collucchio.

### GARLIC

Most garlic available in US supermarkets, bodegas or Korean deli's is from China. I have come to view these cloves as completely sinister. Not because I have any real concern about products coming out of China. Toys with lead paint, poison toothpaste, tainted baby formula are not items that will soon turn up in my shopping basket. But here again is a perfect example of just how completely out of order our food supply is and how important it is to know what you are eating. Of course everyone knows what the next statement is going to be; buy your garlic from someone you know. There is one potentially prohibitive factor here though. It's cheaper to buy garlic grown across the world from a country whose general practices are constantly scrutinized by our own than to buy it from a farmer less than 100 miles from home. Local garlic is quite expensive but these are the prices we have to be willing to pay.

### CABBAGE

Cabbage is one of my favorite vegetables to cut. I love its shape, I love the crinkly leaves, the way it ribbons as you cut it, the fact that it's fast and easy to prep yet yields so much. When I would cut red cabbage as a young cook I would quarter it and then cut out the quartered core on an angle. I would then line them up on the shelf above my prep station like purple Christmas trees where I could look at them for the rest of the night. I am often struck by the beauty and oddities of produce during this part of the process. Carrots that would intertwine in the ground, an eggplant sprouting a nose. Those peculiarities were always salvaged. But more often than marveling at the oddities I would marvel at the exquisite beauty of the thing I was working with. A perfect bunch of radishes is almost too pretty to eat. A freshly cured head of garlic is a world apart from a dry Chinese clove. A leek split in half along its length. I believe that this moment, recognizing the beauty and curiosity of what is before you ready to be cooked is an essential part of the cooking process. It's also why it becomes harder and harder to eat conventionally grown food. In addition to being questionably grown and nutritionally inferior, it is positively unremarkable.

### CAVOLO NERO

Cavolo nero, also known as Tuscan kale, is a dark green, flat-but-crinkly-leaved variety of kale. Much less tough and unyielding than other varieties, cavolo nero can even be eaten as a salad green. Most farmers markets will have it. If you can't find cavolo nero I wouldn't substitute regular green kale, it's too tough and bitter. There are often other varieties of kale that can be used, we used a tender young purple kale in the recipe we tested. You can also use swiss chard.

### BREAD

My favorite Italian loaf in NY is Sullivan Street Bakery's *Filone*. It's black on the outside with an airy, chewy, wheaty interior. I don't like to use French style breads like *baguette* for Italian recipes. It just doesn't make sense to me. If you can't find Sullivan Street, find an Italian loaf similar to the description. Most *Ribollita* recipes call for removing the crust from the bread before adding it to the soup. I think that the crust is the best part and would absolutely leave it on.

### TOMATOES

Like the beans, if you had the foresight to freeze or can some tomatoes at the end of the season you will now have the opportunity to pat yourself on the back. Otherwise buy canned. There are plenty of good quality canned tomatoes



Adam John Ward

and plenty of not so good canned tomatoes. I just have to say this to prevent anyone from making the mistake: those Muir Glen organic tomatoes from California are the absolute worst canned tomatoes available. Buy an Italian import, even if it's something like *Scalfani*. And of course you know what I'm going to say next, ideally buy San Marzano tomatoes, either *La Bella San Marzano* or *Strianese*.

### INSTRUCTIONS

Before we get into the meat of this process I thought I might offer an example of a typical Elizabeth David recipe as a point of reference or comparison. Here is her recipe for "*Pebromata de Boeuf* (a Corsican ragout)":

"The beef is cut into dice and browned in olive oil. Add white wine, all kinds of herbs and seasonings, and simmer very slowly. When it is nearly cooked add the following *peperonata* sauce: a thick tomato puree to which you have added pimentos, onions, garlic, thyme, parsley, pounded juniper berries and red wine."

This is a recipe that just could not and would not be published in our day of over-explanation. She doesn't even include a cut or weight on the beef (although, if we know anything, we can tell that it's stew meat), unthinkable today, yet positively liberating and thrilling.



Now to the beans:

**1 pound dried cranberry, borlotti or cannellini beans**  
**12 cups water**  
**1 small bunch thyme**  
**1 small bunch sage**  
**1 head garlic**  
**6 bay leaves**  
**¼ cup extra virgin olive oil**  
**sea salt**

Soak the beans overnight in plenty of water. If you have the time it's even better if you can soak them for 2 days. Just make sure they're in the refrigerator for the second day. Strain and rinse the beans through a colander. Place the beans in a large pot, ideally one that is wide rather than tall. Add 12 cups fresh water and bring the beans up to a boil. If necessary, skim any scum that rises to the surface with a ladle. Tie the thyme and sage together with twine and add to the pot along with the bay leaves. Peel the head of garlic and slice the cloves in half lengthwise, add to the beans. Add ¼ cup of extra virgin olive oil and simmer until the beans are tender. This time will vary based on the soaking time and general freshness of the bean. Once the beans start to swell begin tasting them and when they taste exactly as you would want them to if you were going to eat them right then, add salt and then cook a little longer. Salt will cause the beans to harden up a little again and if you salt them and take them off the heat they will be less cooked than when you originally tasted them, so you must account for its effects in the cooking process. This is also why you don't add salt to the beans as they cook. It will cause them to harden and take much longer for them to cook. They will soak up the seasoned liquid as they cool.

Note: Really cook these beans at a simmer. You don't want them banging together as they cook, you more want them floating around.

For the soup:

**½ cup extra virgin olive oil**  
**2 Spanish onions, diced**  
**8 cloves garlic, sliced**  
**2 large carrots, diced**  
**6 ribs celery, diced**  
**1 bunch parsley, washed and roughly chopped**  
**1 small head savoy cabbage (about 4 cups)**  
**1 bunch cavolo nero**  
**2, 28oz cans tomatoes**  
**1 loaf crusty italian bread, large cubes (about 8 cups)**  
**sea salt**

Heat the olive oil in a large enamel coated cast iron pot. Add the onions and garlic and a good sprinkle of sea salt.

Saute on high heat until the onions begin to release their liquid. Add the carrots and celery along with another sprinkle of sea salt and continue to saute on medium heat. If at any point this mixture starts to look dry add a little more olive oil. You want this to be moving around in the pot very well. Stir the vegetables regularly, you don't want them to stick to the pan or cook unevenly. When the vegetables seem to have softened a bit and are starting to really come together, maybe even gotten a little golden, (this will take about ½ hour) add the parsley and cook for another 5 minutes.

Open the 2 cans of tomatoes. Stick your hand inside the can and grab a handful of tomato. Crush the tomatoes into the pot with your hands then add the juice from the cans to the pot. Add more salt and cook the tomato and vegetable mixture at a simmer for ½ hour. Again, stirring regularly.

Add the cabbage and the cavolo nero to the pot with the tomatoes. Add 2 cups of water, season and stir. Cook for ½ hour.

Add ⅔ of the cooked borlotti beans to the soup and then puree the rest of the beans and add them to the soup. Stir the beans in well and add 4 cups of water to the pot. Make sure the heat is low and simmer for 2 hours, be careful to check that the beans are not sticking to the bottom of the pot. The longer you can cook the ribollita at this point the deeper the flavor will become. One thing that is certain though is that you want to cook out the red color of the tomatoes and the bright green of the cabbage and kale. The soup will begin to take on an over-all rust color and that's when you know it is done. Check the seasoning again. Understand that this will seem to need a lot of salt. Don't feel uncomfortable as what you are essentially cooking is vegetables and water. Salt is required to make it taste like more than that. When the ribollita is done add the bread, stir it around well and let it absorb the liquid and begin to fall apart. Serve ribollita in bowls drizzled with a little extra virgin olive oil.

Elizabeth David is among of the first in the modern lineage of culinary Grande Dames. Equal parts MFK Fisher and Julia Child she occupies a unique place in the culinary cannon writing both recipe books and prose. She walked the trail for Julia Child, Patience Gray, Paula Wolfert, Patricia Wells, Marcella Hazan, Claudia Roden and Madeleine Kamman who in turn birthed subsequent generations of English and American chefs and writers like Alice Waters, Alan Davidson, Ruth Rogers and Rose Gray. She opened up the idea that there was an audience for cookbooks



written about Mediterranean food in England and the U.S. She along with a mere two or three of her peers identified the foods of the Mediterranean that would ultimately inform generations of home and professional cooks to seek out the wisdom and brilliance of the foods of this region. We continue to make pilgrimages to these places on her recommendation, to visit the home of our culinary soul.

Ribollita, which means "reboiled" is traditionally a soup that is made one day and then reheated or even baked the next day with bread to stretch it. This recipe is swayed toward being able to cook it and eat it in the same day but there will be leftovers to reheat at a later date and you will see how the flavors change.

Note: Ribollita traditionally has potatoes in it. This of course goes back to the origins of a dish like this, extending what little you have into a very big pot of food. Potatoes and bread have always played this role in rustic cooking (poor people's food.) However, as a matter of personal preference, I feel like beans and bread and potatoes all in one dish are a bit much in the starch department and will take the attention away from the other ingredients. And since we are not cooking this because it's all we have to eat, we can pick and choose a little bit about what we want to add and take away.

Certainly David speaks of an era. A time when traveling abroad was just being loosened as the exclusive privilege of the rich and refined. She is the liason between the past and the present. An educator on travel and manners, an informer both for the armchair traveler and the one planning her first trip to the continent Elizabeth David made it her work to open up the world of European culinary traditions. Her calling to her countrymen seemed both to welcome them to new experiences and to inspire them to remember their own traditions and keep them safe and alive.

It's interesting to note here that many of the women listed above found themselves accidental and circumstantial food writers. Many accompanied husbands on international assignments, ambassadors, foreign correspondents, only to find themselves the ambassadors to food and eating in France and Italy. It's a very specific type of woman in a very specific moment in history that communicated the ideas and philosophy of French and Italian cooking to an American audience. I feel very nostalgic about this time. Post WWII, when the notion of being cultured and refined meant something very specific. Women in smart dresses and gloves shopping at the market. The men cellaring Burgundies and Bordeauxs. It is they who we must thank when we eat a dish like ribollita.

## CHEESE

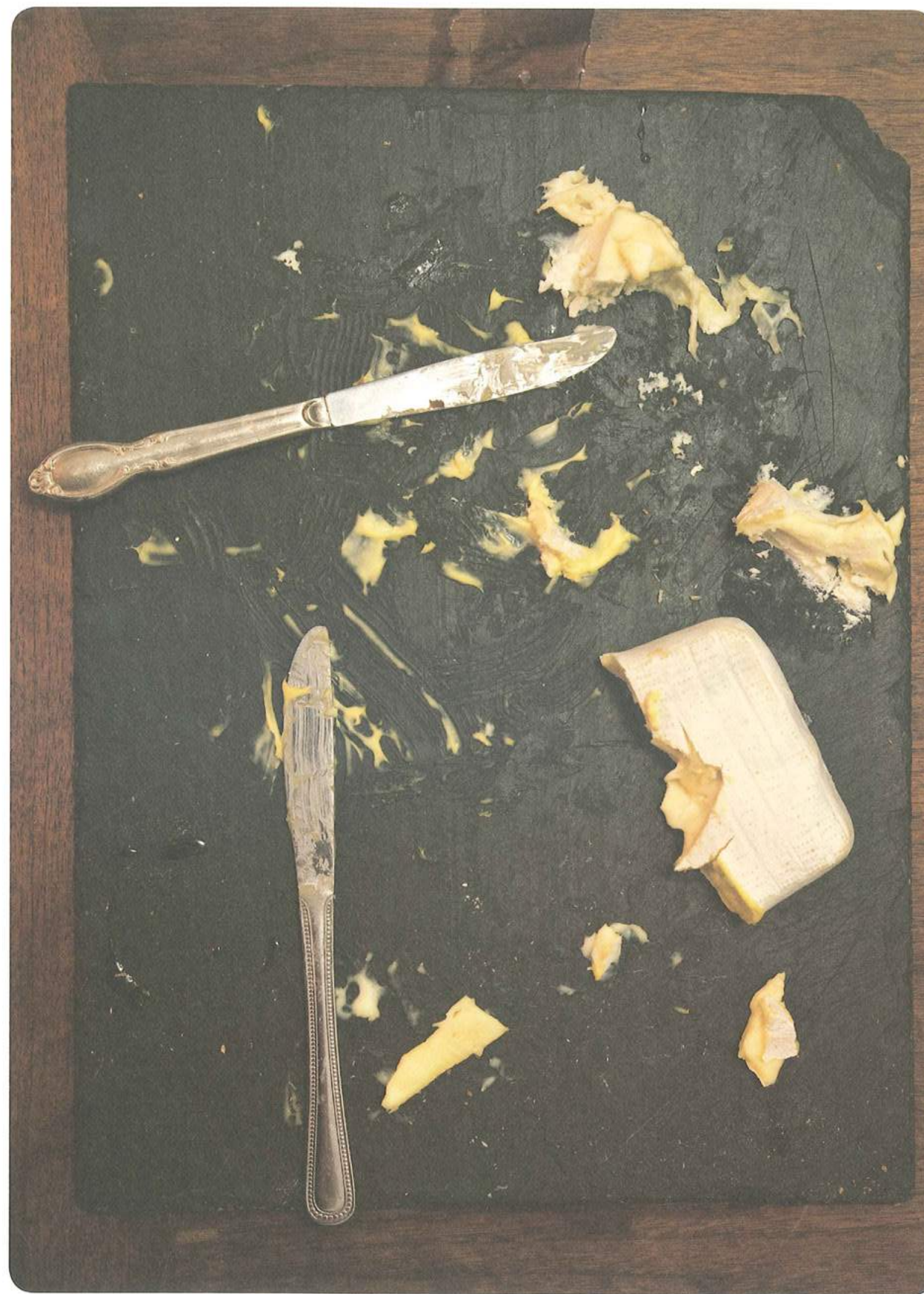
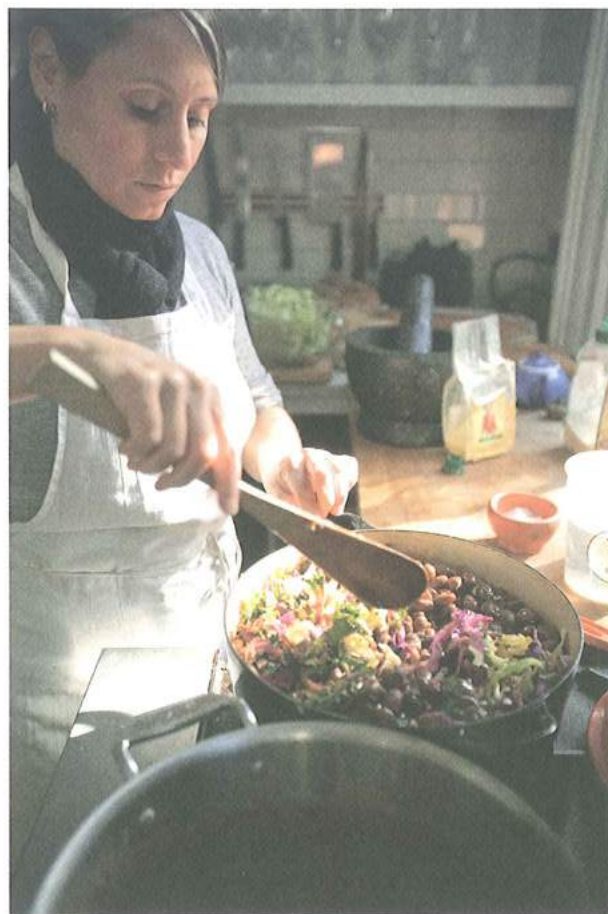
There is an Italian cheese producer in the Piedmont called Langa. They make a variety of different soft cheeses using cow, sheep and goat milks. My favorite of theirs is a cheese called La Tur. I'm sure I've mentioned it before but it really is one of the most beautifully crafted cheeses around. They also make others; Robiola Bosina, Langa Bonrus, etc. Include a couple of these cheeses to eat after the ribollita. If you want a domestic cheese I would recommend Sweet Grass Dairy's Greenhill, made in Georgia and alive with the flavor of grass and cream.

## SALAD

Make a simple salad of watercress or mustard greens dressed with olive oil, sea salt and lemon.

## DESSERT

It's nice to have a dessert, especially since this isn't an extravagant meal. We made polenta and almond cake from the River Cafe cookbook and served it with homemade apple butter, creme fraiche and honey.





FAIR TRADE  
Organic Soaps  
PEPPERMINT  
MILK SOAP  
ESSENTIAL OILS  
NO FOAMING AGENTS  
100% GUARANTEED SINCE 1946  
100% GALLON ON TUBS AT STORES ONLY

# MORE HEAT THAN LIGHT EMPATHY, NYQUIL & A TOMATO

BY ANNA DUNN



Elizabeth Schula lettering by Derrick Holt

The ocean was wild and hungry and, as it is on most December days, blanketed by a densely calm fog. The southern coast of Maine is rocky and beautiful and can be unforgivingly brutal. I sat in the car while my father, my little brother Hugh and a Tibetan monk named Geshela teetered their way toward the choppy deep. Geshela's large hands clasped my brother's little ones and seemed to gingerly hold him up in spite of the sand whipped wind. My father led the way, almost hopping over sand dunes with the determination if maybe not the grace of a wide receiver. In his hands was the mossy maroon sea creature.

Food is useful. Most of my life eating was an instinct. What pairs best with Budwieser. Am I near the good pizza shop? Can I afford ramen after a night like last night? Am I hungry now? It had no structure, no forethought, no desire. Simple existence. Simple function. For a time I stopped eating meat. I believe now that was an instinct also. How strange is it that an unhappy animal tastes bad? What a strange twist of fate. Gristle and suffering. Could have been mix of cost effectiveness and maybe a bad TGI Friday's burger. I often wonder if this happened to other people. Passive action. Unconscious inside unconsciousness.

I'm also not quite sure when I started thinking politically about how I eat. Like most things complexity makes a subject more appealing. After starting to edit this Journal I remember a meeting about the offing of the Hanger Steak.

"It's just not sustainable."

"People will have to eat something else."

"But sometimes you just want a steak at one am.

Or with eggs."

"Let them eat steak."

"Just a different kind of steak."

"I don't even really eat steak," I piped in.

"That's just because we've brainwashed you,"

Caroline pointed out.

And indeed I had been drinking the Kool Aid. I have never been to a farm where the animals are commodities. No doubt animals are industry but they are also breathing things. I have, however, watched an Amish farmer try to prop a five hour old calf who was wobbly as a virgin deck hand up on its four feet. She plopped down in her food trough again. How might this moment go if we weren't here? I imagine the wall of the barn vanishing, my colleagues disappear, the rolling Pennsylvania hills glow green. Does her mother help her? What does she eat? Does she fall prey to a wolf? The trembling of that being's newness illuminated for me a certain silent responsibility. And with a slow swoop the farmer, again, reached his thick arms under her belly and chest lifting the calf up into the thin new air.

Mostly I write about emotions and dubiously how I experience aliveness. Poetry for me is about less words, less bullshit. This ultimately has helped me as an editor. Poetry because of its form or slightness of form forces the author to choose carefully her tools. A word is a section of a sentence therefore it should be

considered as importantly as a conclusion, an intro, a climax, a brick in the side of a building. See the forest for the trees. The thing I find missing in most food writing is the writer's ability to break open the form, take the reader successfully somewhere else, somewhere new and important. Create a new context. I wonder if this is a function of writing about something that has been created? The problem with food as a subject of writing is that it often simply falls into critique. I would offer the challenge that to create is the only responsible way to critique. The art is the article. Words should burn through you and nourish like food does.

Succinctness and relevance: Poetry, industrial agriculture and Bob Seger. I was struck recently with the beauty of a green river in green trees. It reminded me of language and food. The simple imagination might be the most effective imagination. Why do people still say the sentence I love you? How can it possibly mean anything after being uttered so many times in one life-time? Working on mysteries without any clues. Why do we still want soup when we are sick? The night moves.

The problem with poetry is that it needs to be perfect to be successful. Each word must have meaning, exquisite meaning among its peers. Similar a beat in the midst of a song. Everyone can write. Every single person can write because every person has a story. Narrative is the only essential in penning and we have it built in from birth. What it comes down to is a discipline or practice of thought. Some of us, like myself, have to carry around a thought with me for a while, live with it until I know the most useful way to write it. Some people know exactly what to say and when to.

"Milk. Milk. Milk. Milk. Milk. Milk."

In March of 2003 we went to Iraq with war. This is when I started to value the instability of language. Erin and I were living in Boston that summer when she started saying Milk. We were sitting in a dark living room. The power had gone out. The rest of the city glowed like stars in a cluster. Structure of stars. A façade of light.

"Milk. Milk. Milk. Milk. Milk. Milk."

"ERIN? What are you doing?"

I was tempted to let her keep going. It freaked me out but was kind of funny.

"Well, when I was a kid and bored like on car rides I would just sit and say a word over and over until it didn't mean anything anymore. You know like Milk. Milk. Milk. Milk."

Erin rocks back and forth in her chair a little bit. In this moment I see two imaginary visions of her, one as a small child in the back seat on a summer day. The car has a red leather interior. She sports brown pig-tails and looks lazily out the window as the breeze blows through the car. She says, "Milk." Her well-meaning parents wear their high expectations in the expressions on their faces. Erin says, "Milk" again oblivious to her mother's rolling eyes. The second vision is of Erin older, her hair brown, dressed in all white, rocking back and forth as the orderlies place her feet into white slippers. She says very simply and clearly, "Milk."

"Try it," contemporary Erin interrupts.

"No."

"Come on."

I haven't told Erin but I keep wishing her trick would work. I had started hearing this inward voice, on the train, working at in the dressing room, walking through Harvard Square, running the cash register.

"We are going to war. We are going to war. We are going to war." A spiny mantra. Hoping that knowing it will make it go away and then, inevitably, I feel guilt. T.S. Elliot contemplates in the Four Quartets:

*"You must go through the way in which you are not.  
And what you do not know is the only thing you know  
And what you own is what you do not own  
And where you are is where you are not."*

War. Milk. Organic. Fundamental. Sustainable. Calorie. American. Conventional. Milk. Language is nimble and unstable. And that's what makes it alive.

I never liked honey until I met a bee. My interest in bees was first peeked by a poem by Jean Valentine. In the poem a man in pain is covered with bees.

#### BEES

for SANDRA McPHERSON

*A man whose arms and shoulders  
and hands and face and ears are covered with bees  
says, I have never known such pain.  
Another man comes over with bees  
all over his hands- only bees can get other bees off.  
The other man says again, I have never known such pain.  
The second man's bees begin to pluck  
the first grave bees off, one by one.*

The other man is also covered in bees but does not seem to be in pain. The poem ends in the conceit: only bees can get the other bees off. We can only relieve each other's suffering and quite possibly none of us suffer in the same way.

A bee spends her life concerned with the fate of the union. Early life includes cleaning, taking care of young, feeding the other bees and the queen. She dances. She carries the dead from the home. And they die. Bees make more honey than they need and bees keep the world aflower. Life is not singular, but community.

*"That which we experience within ourselves only at a  
time when our hearts develop love is actually the very  
same thing that is present as a substance in the entire  
beehive. The whole beehive is permeated with life based  
on love. In many ways the bees renounce love, and  
thereby this love develops within the entire beehive."*

RUDOLF STEINER

This quote evokes for me the phrase: I wear my hive on my sleeve. I start to imagine that instead of that utterly useless and goofy iconic illustration of the heart, you know the one you cut out of construction paper and imagine as an accurate depiction of your own throughout childhood, that instead we imagine the organ inside us is the shape of a hive. Not the man made box but the equally goofy cartoon drawing, triangled and lumpy, always being batted by a bear.

Andrew puts 20,000 bees on his roof in Spring. The rooftop air hums and booms with life. In the process of placing them in their new home, a cluster of bees fall out and start to stumble around under the hive, disoriented. Andrew tries frantically to pick the bees up with a wrench like tool and scrap them into the hive. Will they find their way in? Will they die out here? Do they know how to navigate the man made contraption? After some silence and some contention and when no one is particularly looking Kate reaches down with her bare hands and picks up the lost beings and as though they were sand and she, the sea, places them back into their new home.

The problem, if this is not to be considered a redundancy, with industrial agriculture is that in order to be successful it must create imperfections. The tasteless carrot, the durable but static and stable tomato. The misused and abused animal. The problem with food writing is that when it's perfect it's boring or worse, precious.

Reading Patience Grey much is lost on me although I don't think she is precious. Andrew claims it is because I'm not a cook. Fair enough. But were I to critique her writing as a formal review I might say things like her experiences are of interest and beauty but strikingly utilitarian. There seems to be an absence in her method. Perhaps this comes from living alone on a hillside. Again there seems to be here more determination and less joy. I decide

that instead of critiquing her words I might try to find poems in them. I spend a few hours scribbling out words, arranging words, erasure to no avail. I end up with a strange verse about tongues, memory and winter. Turning back to her now by comparison stunningly straightforward text I am struck by the simple aloofness of a sentence like, "As can be seen, all this chopping and pounding has much to do with health." There is humor in her reverence. But maybe not enough. That said, I choose to live in a city of nine million and last night I tried to cook tomato soup. And failed. Horribly. Almost as horribly as my eight year old attempts at meditation.

The mistake was not our own, unless you consider giving into the need to eat late at night just off the lonely state highway innately unwise. The seafood shack had live lobsters in the tank and my mother, the reluctant Buddhist, ordered one. What she didn't understand is that their children, or at least some percentage of them, listen to Dad when he handed down karmic doctrines. Don't step on the anthill. Don't slap at mosquitoes. Would you like it if someone slapped you and you DIED?

So you can imagine my seven year old brother Hugh's horror, both visceral and ephemeral, when after spending a good fifteen minutes tapping on the glass waiting room to crustation heaven, he finally plotted his way back to the table only to find one of his new friends boiled alive, splayed and garlanded by coleslaw on my mother's plate. Ralph he had named it. Actually he had named them all Ralph.

I can say right now I will never wring a chicken's neck or shoot a cow in the temple. I most likely will never go fishing in my lifetime and if I can avoid it I won't ride my bicycle over another anthill. I wasn't really paying attention when I agreed to travel to the slaughterhouse. What I knew was that we were cooking for a grass farmer's convention out in the slopes of Pennsylvania. Or rather Caroline and Andrew were cooking and I was along for moral support. I am helpless in the kitchen. But I was intrigued. Grass farming? Seems a little like a redundancy... I listened for half an hour on what kind of grass and climates and soil resiliencies one farmer might need in Texas vs. the northeast, how to move your animals in rotation to get the best grass eaten at the correct time, etc. It was pretty fascinating and there was something revolutionary about it all much to my dismay. I prefer some things to be boring so I don't have to think about them twice. I was kind of hoping to put grass farming behind me fairly quickly. I wasn't paying attention to much, still aswirl in carbon counting when I followed the group into the processing plant.

The eyes of a cow are constantly pleading. That's what I had to remember when looking into the angelic faces of two Jerseys in the waiting pen. Lucky for me the slaughterer, or butcher as he referred to himself, had the eyes and charm of Sinatra if shorter and stockier. He also donned a bright orange t-shirt that read Number One Dad! Standing on the kill floor he demonstrates on

his own forehead where exactly is the best place to shoot the cow so it dies quickly and easily. The farmers discuss what to do on the field in an emergency. Back of the head or temple. I stare at the hooks, the tubing, the rough cement of the floor. What the slaughter house feels like is a 1970s elementary school; tan, bright and squeaky clean. A vital institution.

Growing up my father was the cook and the reason I am able to even eat tomatoes. And take Nyquil. Aside from explaining to me that the most important thing in life is to be able to imagine what other's lives must feel like my father once interrogated me about the left over cherry tomatoes on my plate.

"You don't like those? How can you not like them?"

"What? Leave me alone. Can I have some more bread?"

"Anna, a tomato is like an explosion in your mouth."

"Whatever."

While trying to understand what it is exactly I would write in an article about food and food writing I asked my mother about what I ate as a child. She says all I remember is that you used to eat the butter packets at restaurants. A lie obviously. Not about the butter, but the remembering.

I remember her telling me once that I should remember that eating is just something you have to do. Peanut butter and jelly on fuzzy whole grain bread everyday for lunch. Maybe a cheese and cracker on the side. This is what sustains my mother. My love of nachos, beer and pizza was just another silent rebellion, second only to the hours that must have added up to years that I spent at the movie theater alone. My mother had thrown the television away when, as a smaller child, I became convinced that when I grew up I would BE Magnum P.I. The only reconciliation to the snatching away of my dreams I could dream up was to silently love Law and Order, listening to it broadcast on the radio late into the night, and enjoy eating as much as I could. There is something similar in the way both these consumptions make you feel. Full and empty at the same time. Like most moments in the teenage years, self-righteous and ultimately wrong.

Later, when at dinner with my friends I ate a cherry tomato and there it was. A POW or BLAM. Biting into the tomato was all of a sudden somehow like the cartoon pauses during battle in Batman and Robin TV programs. The Dark Knight Vs. Solanum Lycopersicum and her leotard wearing thugs. Late one night home from college for a few long days I am battling a ferocious cold. My father offers up original "urine and menthol" flavor Nyquil. There is nothing more grotesque to me in that moment.

"Anna you do shots of whiskey right? Pretend it's a shot."

Is this a trick? I'm 19? I look into my father's marble blue eyes and know he's not kidding. And so with the thick elixir sliding down my throat I start to understand the power of perspective, the importance of the ability to imagine and to re-imagine.



I find it interesting this idea that taste alone can change our food industry. After all in the word of Patience Grey herself, "equally, cooking is not to be regarded as a display of virtuosity, it is much more vital than that." It was the abandonment of taste that got us here in the first place and I think we as a people are suffering that loss. But I'm not sure that the way something tastes will necessarily lead to thoughtfulness. Money may but as the cost of real food soars and the American purse sinks not much is working in our favor. When I say the failing of food writing in general is relevance I mean this: food for me is political because it is about survival. Food is the fruit of our earth and our earth is dying and it follows therefore so are her people. Where will I find this urgency or exigency?

My father's penance was a trip to the smelly Shop n Save's seafood section the next day. I couldn't help feeling a certain

futility for the lobster and for ourselves as the seaward bug's claws were freed and the swirling and cacophonous ocean enveloped her, carrying her supposedly back to her home or more probably into the mouth of one more wooded trap. Much like my brother, father and Tibetan friend crawling back into the baby blue metal Buick, turning the key and asking the engine to issue us back inland and into the storm.

What is compelling about food? The great power in food is that we all need it but there is the enormous potential to enjoy it. And what's more interesting is that the more something tastes like what it is the better it tastes. The happy animal and the delicate fruit. What is compelling about language? The need and desire to communicate. To know we are all lights in constellation. Again, the simple imagination. Green trees. Green river. Snow still in a grey sky.



## a LITTLE FOOD in the BIG WOODS

My favorite memory, the happy place I reach for when I'm crushed into an armpit on a rush hour J train or have just buried a boning knife into my forearm, is lying on the couch with my father. With my head resting on his arm we would sit and watch episodes of Gunsmoke, Bonanza and in the evening, after the sun had set on our double-wide at the end of Golden Leaf Lane, we would watch Little House on the Prairie.

Little House was based on a series of books written by Laura Ingalls Wilder who chronicled her coming of age as a child of a frontiersman family in the 1800's. There were a lot of television shows on back in the late seventies we could have watched, cop shows like ChiP's or Barney Miller, social-realist family sitcoms like All in the Family or the Jeffersons, maybe even MASH and Taxi but we mostly watched westerns.

Perhaps it was because I spent my summer days running around shirtless and shoeless carrying only my Daisy Pal BB gun into the cougar-filled woods while my mother canned carrots and pickled watermelon rinds and my dad shot quail, that I felt I had more in common with Laura Wilder than Tony Danza. In the years that have passed since then I have forgotten that house and that summer. The house is gone, the land has been sold and my father has been dead twelve years. Whatever I remember about those fond months before the Reagan years is likely more fiction than truth.

It seems serendipitous that last year I started looking for something; something pretentious sounding. As I tried to explain my erratic collecting of old cookbooks and obsessive readings of the online indexes of 200-year-old cookbooks and rare menu collections I would grandly exclaim, "Oh, I'm trying to rediscover original American foodways." I would say this with a straight face.

What I did find during my pretense quest was not the Necronomicon of American cookery but someone else's memory of my own childhood. On the advice of my Girlfriend I picked up the first book of the Little House on the Prairie series and started to read. Wilder's Little House in the Big Woods simultaneously functioned as a love letter to her early childhood, a detailed document of rural American food and

a fever dream version of my pre-school days shooing rabbits from the garden.

One of the first scenes in the book is Pa salting venison and smoking it in a hollow tree using green hickory chips. Calling this tome a novel is wrong. It is, if anything, a narrative how-to book, like if someone made a musical out of the Boy Scout manual. Wilder describes the fire made from dry moss and twigs, the cutting of the holes in the meat so they can hang, the netting of fish and then salting them in barrels. There's even a rather lengthy account of killing the family pig.

The pig killing episode starts with Pa telling Laura that, "It doesn't hurt him Laura. We do it so quickly." Speaking to the slightly mushy moral ground on which a man kills another living thing. From there she joyfully describes the ritual undertaken in every pre-Industrial American home; transforming the animal from grunting, squealing family member to a winter's worth of food: Lard, hams, cracklings for flavoring Johnny cakes, headcheese, sausage and salt pork. The tail is roasted on a stick and the bladder is inflated to make a ball for the two oldest Ingalls girls.

The Dance at Grandpa's made me think of the hoedowns at our hillbilly neighbors a few miles away. They lived in a bunch of corrugated tin shacks and trailers by the river and a few times a year would have everyone over for a party: homemade country wines, metal trash cans full of ice and pull-tab Olympia Gold to accompany barbecued squirrel, rabbit and the occasional peacock they shot when it wandered over from the rich people who lived the on next property. While we waved away the yellow jackets from our plates and watched the hatchet throwing contest the bearded men without shirts talked by the motorcycles in the front yard and set a fire under a 55 gallon barrel filled with water to boil corn and crawfish.

As I lay in bed each night reading a few pages here and there I closed my eyes and remembered making fresh butter with my mother by shaking cream in a mason jar until it was as thick and yellow as the butter from the Ingalls' churn and as I slept I wondered if the smell of simmering sugar pumpkin was coming from their kitchen or the one at the end of Golden Leaf Lane.

by Tom Mylan

# OBITUARIES

## MUSINGS ON CULINARY LOSSES FROM RECENT TIMES



# DEAR DEPARTED HANGER STEAK

The hanger steak passed away recently, another victim of the global epidemic: Sustainability. The seemingly healthy hanger steak was an old time favorite gracing menus from Alaska to Arkansas but beneath its tender, juicy and flavorful surface was a deadly secret, one that finally put the nail in the proverbial coffin. Less than .003% percent of the animal after it has been bled, skinned, eviscerated, beheaded, and behided (hanging weight) is hanger steak.

The hanger began life in a feed lot in Texas, raised by underpaid immigrant workers, it was crammed into a pen with numerous other steer. Due to a poor diet of corn, disease and lack of exercise it became ill. Antibiotics were administered as well as hormones to help "beef" it up. After a brief struggle it was herded kicking and screaming into an abattoir and unceremoniously dispatched.

The hanger was then cryo-vaced and sent to a distribution center. As most restaurants buy hanger steak in 5lb bags, which yield about five to six orders, and could sell up to two hundred orders per week. Forty cows may die to supply a restaurant with a weeks worth of hanger steak. The location of the remainder of the cow is a mystery made harder to solve by the fact that generally all of the meat bought, packaged and distributed nationwide is labeled IBP (International Beef Product) which means that the hanger will then travel with other hanger steaks, not with the animal that it came from to its final destination, a case of hanger steak please for delivery

next day. This also makes the chance of tracing contaminated meat extremely difficult. But I digress.

Since the sad departure of our old friend, and after an appropriate period of mourning... restaurants have been using whole animals, coming from such far flung and exotic places as Pennsylvania, the Catskills and even Columbia (County). Ribeye and delmonico steaks, huge t-bones, tacos de lengue, bone marrow toast, oxtail soup, brisket, flank, skirt, filet mignon, flat iron, pot-au-feu, albondigas, tacos de rez and carne asada all fight for a spot on the menus.

It is a sad reflection on our agricultural progression that "conventionally raised" means hormones, antibiotics, feedlots and a less than painless death. When I first heard the term, I had in mind a cow ambling lazily around a meadow, swatting at flies with its tail, occasionally watching the bull chase a red sweated schoolboy and one day when the time is right it walks around a haystack and gets tagged between the eyes. Bam! Bovine heaven for her and burger heaven for us. Alas.

The hanger is survived by ground beef, stew meat, chuckeye, short ribs, flatirons, teres major, brisket, skirt steak, flank steak, ribeye, delmonico, t-bone, porterhouse, tenderloin, New York strip, sirloin, tri-tip, top round, london broil, eye round, bottom round, sirloin tip, soup bones and dog bones. The king is dead, long live the king!

*by Mark Firth*

February 15, 2017 – (CHICAGO) The last known Kraft Singles in existence were consumed today at a benefit for the soon-to-be opened Museum of American Culinary Heritage. They were served toasted on white bread, with Campbell's tomato soup. Although the cheese served at the \$5,000 a plate gala was approximately two years old, the brand itself has been a supermarket staple for the past 52 years.

Kraft Singles were introduced to grocery store shelves in 1965 as part of the processed food revolution of the mid-twentieth century. Advertised as more nutritious than other dairy products, Kraft boasted that each ¾-ounce, individually wrapped slice of cheese contained the same amount of calcium as in 5 ounces of milk.

Renowned for their meltability and long shelf-life, Singles were pale orange with a sweet milky flavor and little to no cheddar bite. Along with their corporate cousin Velveeta, the processed cheese pioneers, early iterations of what came to be known as American cheese, a category marked by a soft texture, mild flavor and tangerine hue. Best loved by small children and convenience-loving cooks, Singles were an icon of twentieth-century advances in food science. Their identical, slightly glossy squares topped casseroles, wilted onto burger patties with perfect symmetry and marched to work in lock step with baloney, white bread and mayo each morning, in the brown bags and lunchboxes of million of Americans.

The ingredients list on a package of Singles read: MILK, WHEY, MILKFAT, MILK PROTEIN CONCENTRATE, SALT, CALCIUM PHOSPHATE, SODIUM CITRATE, WHEY PROTEIN CONCENTRATE, SODIUM PHOSPHATE, SORBIC ACID AS A PRESERVATIVE, APOCAROTENAL (COLOR), ANNATTO (COLOR), ENZYMES, VITAMIN D3, CHEESE CULTURE.

During the 1960s and 1970s Singles came to represent an increasingly industrialized food system in the United States. Rather than buying milk, cheese and butter from a local dairy, parents began to purchase an ever wider array of processed dairy products, the milk for which came from cows grazing hundreds and even thousands of miles away. As more families moved to the suburbs the pre-planned communities they populated came to resemble Singles – identical, individually wrapped and sold in a package.

Although they remained popular throughout the twentieth century, Singles' integrity were challenged several times over the brand's lifetime. In the 1980s, critics attacked the Kraft's calcium claims, charging false advertising. In 1987 the Federal Trade Commission stepped in and Kraft soon abandoned the campaign. By the early 2000s, consumers had begun to question the provenance of the milk in Singles, suspecting it was being imported from an under-regulated Chinese market, and that the whey solids and other dairy-based ingredients were byproducts from other food manufacturing processes.

The beginning of the end came for Singles in the 2010s during the Fluid Milk Revolution. Dairy farmers across the U.S. formed a union, later nicknamed the Coalition of the Milking, to protest low fluid milk prices. They refused to sell their milk below the cost of a living wage and stopped selling to large food processors altogether. Kraft was forced to halt production on Singles by 2015, at the peak of the revolution. Velveeta, Philadelphia Cream Cheese and Cheez Whiz also disappeared from shelves at this time.

In response to the dramatic changes taking place on supermarket shelves a subculture of processed food collectors emerged. Like antique dealers at an estate sale, these connoisseurs bought up all the remaining stock and started selling Singles at auction and on eBay, with the highest recorded price reaching \$423 for a 16-ounce package of 24 Singles in 2016.

Despite the collection frenzy, most Americans supported the Coalition of the Milking. The price of milk nearly tripled over the two-year period from 2014 to 2016. Small farm cheese production around the country boomed as families looked for new ways to get their calcium while paying dairy farmers a fair wage.

In 2016, an anonymous private investor purchased a Kraft plant in Winnetka, Illinois that had been shut down after production of Singles and Kraft's other cheese food products ceased the previous year. The investor, known in farm and food circles as The Big Cheese, also created an endowment earmarked for creating the American Museum of Culinary Heritage in the former factory space, and left a stockpile of highly collectible convenience foods for exhibits and fundraising. Slated to open later this year, MACH will feature refrigerated exhibits displaying several of the last known packages of Velveeta and Philadelphia Cream Cheese.

*Kraft Singles are survived by Kraft Jet-Puffed Marshmallow Crème, Stove Top Stuffing and Capri Sun.*

*by Annaliese Griffin*

# THE CUTLET

A simple breaded chicken cutlet, pan fried and topped with a spoonful of tomato sauce loaded up with Parmesan cheese shaken out of that shiny green tube. I am certain that in my adult life I will never make, order, or accept this dish again. I live with the understanding that this dish is not inherently objectionable. In fact, with some minor modifications it could even achieve deliciousness. And yet I cringe at the sight of those lifeless, heavy, pink chicken flaps set on styrofoam trays at the meat counter. This is partly because we ate them too often. My middle class family bought into the 80's power diet with its backbone of boneless, skinless chicken breasts and broccoli. But my fear and loathing stems mostly from one single defining moment around my childhood kitchen table.

Growing up, many of our dinner meals were prepared by my father. A thankless job by all accounts and one that often left him in a mood prickly enough to set my sister and I on our best behavior. One night my mother walked in, sat in her chair and when she looked down at her plate her face shifted, her voice grew shrill and she shouted, "I told you I didn't want any fucking sauce on mine." The dull scrape of her fingernail across the dinner plate was followed by an abrupt, wet thwack as the chicken cutlet and sauce connected with the floor. A sharp aroma engulfed us. The silence that settled over the table was deafening, punctuated only by the tink and clack of silverware dropping onto the other plates around the table. An outburst like this had never happened before and, come to think of it, never happened at our table again.

The drama of this dish did not end that night. It followed our family for years to come. To this day

my sister and I both have a strong sensitivity to things that smell of, taste like, or remind us of throw up- which was precisely the scent that mutilated cutlet carried. Our cream-colored kitchen curtains were victims too, caught in the tomato sauce fray. The tomato stain was only the tip of the iceberg because, when washed, the curtains suffered an even worse fate. They shrunk, losing about six inches of height, and from that day on remained poised for a flood.

Of course there were tiffs and quips between my parents all the time but nothing that prepared me for the shock of watching my mother unhinge and hurtle anger at my already, seriously irritated father. The magnitude of her action didn't fit the situation at all, that much was clear to me even then, but whatever it did mean seemed awful. It never occurred to me until recently that this whole scene likely had nothing to do with the food on the table.

When I asked my parents what they remembered about the cutlet episode neither had anything beyond the mess on the floor and shrunken curtains. This is kind of unbelievable given the traumatic way the incident lives in my kid-brain memory. It is likely that whatever was beneath the surface that night was not a big deal, but I did not know that. The cutlet reminds me how frightening it can be when things happen that you do not understand- especially when the things involve people you love the most. Maybe this is why I've developed the habit of asking so many questions?

Ultimately there are casualties in every childhood, I consider myself fortunate that mine was only a sauced and breaded chicken cutlet.

*by Sasha Davies*



# CHIACCHIERE

## A LAMENT

There is something great about having to wait for things to come- at least that is my experience. Especially when I was a kid living in Italy. Seasons changed as they were supposed to then and with them came different vegetables, fruits and treats. We didn't have much imported from abroad. All was available because nature was making it there and then. I understood that, patiently waited and when the time came it was always a big moment. Many recipes followed these seasonal patterns and there is one in particular that still holds the power to affect my decision as to when to schedule my return home. The Chiacchiere.

Suddenly, one day in winter, every bakery would have a big tray of chiacchiere in their window. I never could remember which day. They celebrate Carnival, which is an Italian version of Halloween. Everybody gets dressed up and it's not about horror. You could choose between fried or baked- both were slim, jagged, covered with powdered sugar. Eating one of the little critters was a messy job at times as you ended up covered in white. You could always tell when someone had chiacchiere. The texture is sublime: you bite into it and this explosion of mild vanilla (sweet just enough) crumbles into your mouth. Then you remember, you finally remember, that taste that will soon abandon you near the end of February, and the moments of your life come flashing back and you say to yourself: Here is one more reason to move back.

Chiacchiere have different names in various parts of Italy. Chiacchiere is the name used in Lombardia in the area around Milano. In Toscana they are Cenci, in Emilia Romagna (Bologna) they are Frappe, Bugie in Piemonte and Crostoli in Veneto.

I attempted making chiacchiere in NY after I got the recipe from the "pasticcere" near my mom's home in Milano. I thought that if I could pull this off then maybe there was no need to ever move back. He was reluctant to share at first but then, after a little begging, he gave up and whispered it to me casually but in detail. You know- not a big deal, he makes them every year - kind of thing.

**400 gm flour**  
**60 gm sugar**  
**one teaspoon of vanilla extract**  
**2 eggs**  
**one glass dry white wine**  
**50 gm butter**  
**50 gm powdered sugar (approximately)**  
**one pinch of salt**  
**olive oil for frying**

*Put the flour, sugar and salt in a bowl or on a work surface. Stir to blend. Make a well in the center and add the eggs, wine and vanilla. With a fork or your fingertips, gradually incorporate the flour until a soft dough is formed. Knead the dough on a floured work surface for 8-10 minutes until it is smooth and elastic. Cover with a napkin and allow to rest for at least 1 hour. Roll out the dough on a lightly floured surface, beginning from the center, to a thickness of 0,3 cm (1/8 inch). You have to use a long pasta rolling pin for this. Using a chef's knife or a pasta wheel cut the dough into long strips 3-4 cm (1 1/2 inch) wide and then cut every strip into 10 cm (4 inch) rectangles. Make two vertical incisions in the center of every rectangle. Fry in olive oil. Scoop them out when they are nice and crisp and drain off the oil. Dust with powdered sugar.*

I immediately went to the supermarket and bought all that I needed and more. I thought: with the right ingredients I cannot possibly fail... Well, I can say that what came out of my NYC oven was the furthest thing from chiacchiere. More like hard cookies with a slightly correct taste. A lot of imagination was needed to find any resemblance and I never tried them again.

You would think I would be traumatized from the experience but on the contrary chiacchiere are still what they've always been for me: Uhhmmm! So if you happen to be in Italy during Carnival season, keep an eye out but be careful, timing is crucial. Chiacchiere are only around a week or two, just a precious short life, and then they disappear leaving no trace behind. You will go into bakery after bakery and hear the same response: You're too late.

To enhance this story please listen to some music preferably Albinoni's adagio.

by Simone Pace

# DEAD BREAD

While a case can be made for the merits of achieving a certain level of success by aping a winning characteristic or two off a crowd-pleasing benchmark, rarely does it behoove one to remain in the blinding light of a total eclipse, homerun, smash-hit food thing. In most mediums when one rabid fan extols the merits of a particular visual artist, musician or designer, another critic is waiting to remind the world of an even better albeit lesser known savant who is the real representative of an aesthetic or ideology. With few exceptions, this is not the case in the food world. Here, there is only one thing that epitomizes itself and nothing else will do. Why settle for the mere simulacra of a delicious thing? While entire careers are made of being in the shadow of success, the proliferation of a food stuff will never be achieved by being almost like something else. In this way, being stuck in such a rut, though maybe not quite food death, could hardly be considered flourishing. I like to call it imperceptibly existing.

The bialy inhabits this ghostly zone. Yes, there are a handful of enthusiasts, myself counted among them, but boutique niche eaters most often relegate a foodway to gastronomic purgatory vs. the intended culinary salvation. Without much contention the bialy will never be as perfect as the bagel, having proven its adaptability in Darwinian proportions. For instance, I recently had a corn bagel in Fort Mill, South Carolina with sweet butter. Conversely when asked if he had any bialys, the proprietor of a trendy Williamsburg bagelry quipped that "seven years ago these kids [his customers] didn't even know what a bagel was." While in some regards, such repartee is what Jewish food itself is made of, there also exists a profound sadness kneaded into each dish. Nothing exemplifies this as much as the bialy. Its matte dry and dusty finish is in sharp contrast to the bagels more appealing shiny coat. The bialy is only baked, it's not boiled and then baked like a bagel is. In this way, the disparity between the two recalls a story often told at Passover.

As it happened, the baby Moses reached for the Pharaoh's jewel-studded crown. It alarmed and alerted Pharaoh that Moses would eventually unseat his throne. To test his intentions, the baby was offered a choice of two equally sparkling things: a dish of the Pharaoh's jewels and a plate of burning embers. As Moses began to grab for the riches, an angel directed his hand towards the coals. Moses snatched a glowing coal and put his fingers to his lips, burning his tongue. This caused his famed lisp and stutter, which prevented him from being

the orator that his spiritual charge required of him. His brother Aaron would become his personal speaker and would conduct dealings for Moses. Here the bagel is Aaron; polished and known by many. Aarons' part though, was merely ministerial and not spiritual as was the part of Moses, the bialy. The bialy seems to capture the ideal character of a bagel without the too soft doughiness commonplace with today's bagels. They maintain a yeasty funkiness and a toothsome crunch. In this way they are more pure and concentrated than the widely distributed bagel.

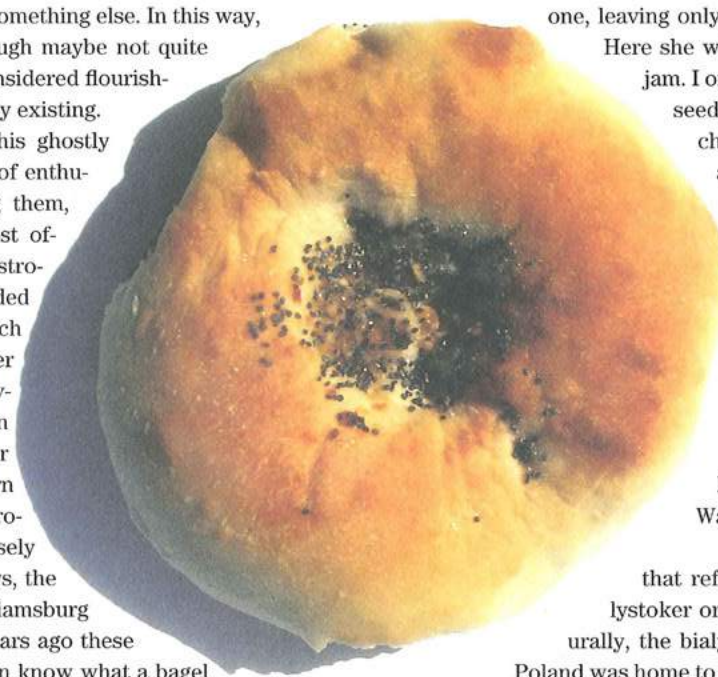
While the bagel's iconic shape and negative space helped define and popularize it, the bialy is admittedly unholy. The bialy baker begins to make a hole with her thumb, yet stops short of creating one, leaving only a depression in the center of the roll.

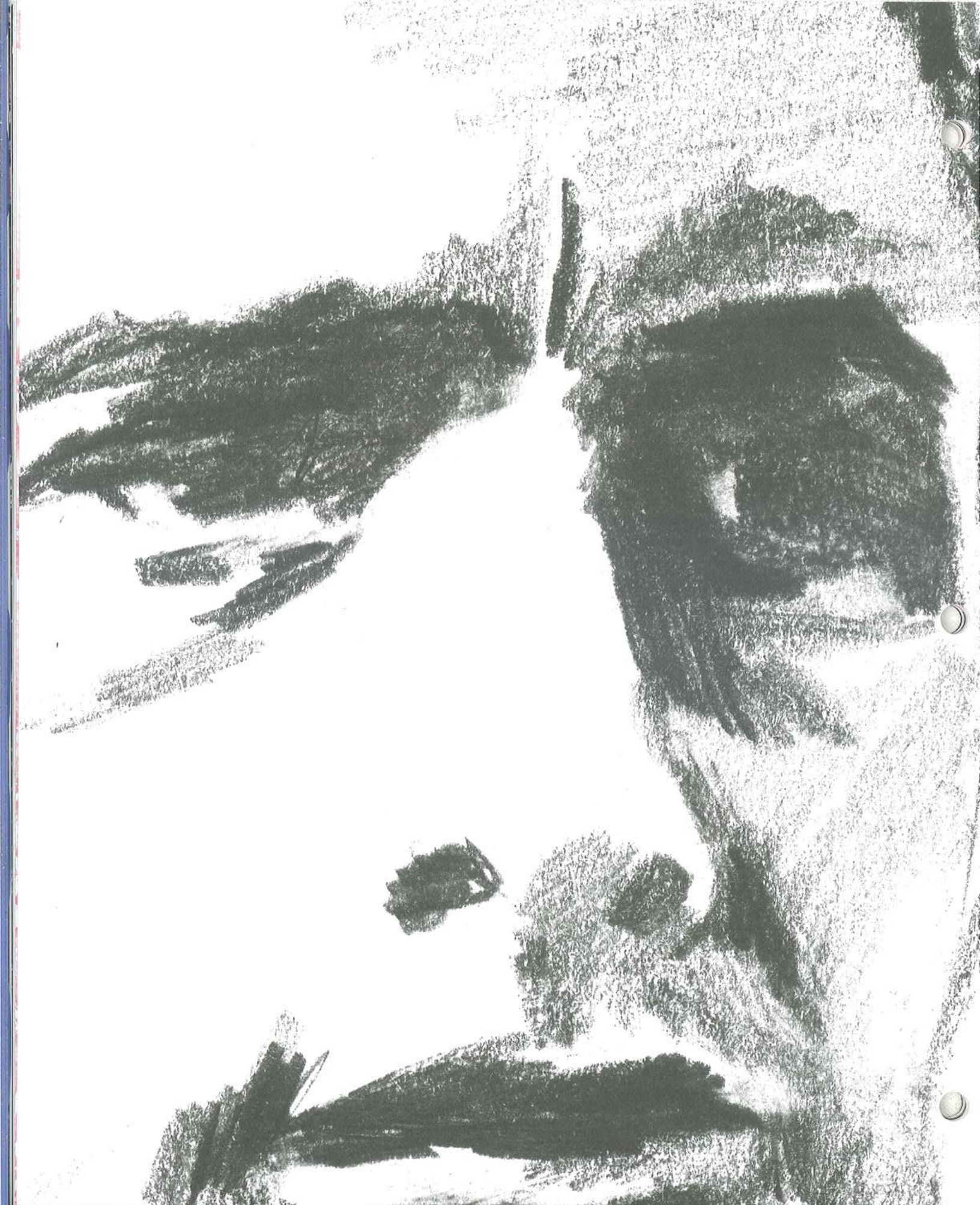
Here she will spoon diced onions, garlic or onion jam. I once had a bialy with some sort of poppy seed paste at a place in Atlanta called Boychick's. Purists will argue that to toast a fresh bagel is criminal (it's okay to toast a stale bagel), but many agree that toasting a bialy is totally fine. Some say they taste uncooked without a toast. Cream cheese would rarely make an appearance, as the only appropriate garnish would be lots of melty drippy butter to pool in the oniony depression. My father likes bialys better than bagels but says he's never seen one beyond the George Washington Bridge.

Even the bialy's name is one that references ghosts. Bialy is short for Bialystoker or one who is from Bialystok where naturally, the bialy was invented. The town in Northern Poland was home to a horrific episode in which some 50,000 people were extinguished in a few short years. About a mile from Diner, Willet Street runs underneath the Williamsburg Bridge and has been renamed Bialystoker Place. It intersects Grand St near Kossar's Bialy Bakery who still make what some consider to be the best, most authentic bialys in the world. Interestingly, across the street from Kossar's is Seward Park High School where the comedic genius and black-listed actor Zero Mostel once attended. I always associate Mostel with bialys due to his portrayal of Max Bialystok in Mel Brooks' "The Producers". He plays a Broadway producer so incompetent that when he attempts to rip off investors by staging a dud play, he inadvertently creates a hit.

The bialy is not dead...yet. However, being in the shadow of the bagel has caused immense emotional damage and incredibly low self-esteem. It's not surprising that the bialy has opted out of the life of self-promotion that its better-dressed, doughy brother couldn't resist. It also has full intention on keeping its stutter under wraps.

by Jason Schwartz





Paul Newman, God among Hollywood's leading men, food entrepreneur and philanthropist, died on September 26, 2008 at the age of 83. He was surrounded by family, including his wife, actress Joanne Woodward, in his Westport, Connecticut home at the end of a long battle with lung cancer. He is survived by Ms. Woodward, his brother, two grandchildren and his daughters Nell and Susan, as well as three daughters from a previous marriage, Stephanie, Melissa and Clea.

During his life, he was a man who followed his passions, which were many – acting on film and the stage, creating summer camps for children who live with serious illnesses, racecar driving and culinary endeavors among them. He left us with more than 65 movies and at least 14 kinds of tomato sauce.

In 1980, after decades of success in film, he tried bottling his own salad dressing to give as gifts to friends on Christmas. Out of the leftover dressing was born Newman's Own, the eponymous fine food company he founded with friend and writer A.E. Hotchner. We could trace the food in his films – the cattle industry shams of "Hud," the infamous eggs he ate as "Cool Hand Luke" – but let's just say that an array of lemonade, pasta sauce, salsa, Oreo knockoffs, anything with his face all over it, is its own stroke of genius. Put him in a sixteenth century ruff on the balsamic? Absolutely.

Yet Newman's Own does more than capitalize on the marketability of a famous face; the company sends all post-tax profits to charity, an estimated 250 million dollars over the years. Long before celebrity causes were de rigueur, Newman's non-profit saw the philanthropic possibilities in entering the booming food industry and waging, as their motto attests, "shameless exploitation in pursuit of the common good." In writing about him after his death, there is a marked effort to try to capture that there was something genuine about Paul Newman, the one who remained a star even as he denounced Hollywood for the simple life in Connecticut. There's a desire to affirm that all of the talk was true of this man, who was with us, in our cinematic imaginations and in our cabinets. It felt like we knew him, and I should know about that.

## PAUL NEWMAN, 83 ACTOR & CO-FOUNDER OF NEWMAN'S OWN, DIES

After all, I met the man. I was at the peak of puberty, a consummate geek with a growing deficit of social dexterity and conversational dynamism. I had just come out of swim practice in Westport, and my mother and I were picking up an early dinner at the Chef's Table, a small, sandwich place that advertised their locally renowned "twelve hot soups."

And just as we were leaving with our bagged dinners, he walked up the steps and in through the old storm door. My mother threw her right arm in front of me, reproducing exactly the motion when, driving, she would mimic a seat belt – and incidentally knock the wind out of me. "Do you know who that is?" she pulled me into her. I hadn't noticed. What did I know? She said his name with obvious relish, a tribute to vowels, Paul Newman.

"The popcorn guy?"

She sent me back in. "For what?" I asked her. For another napkin, to see the specials again, to get a drink, to do anything. Just go and take a good look at that man, because you're young and you should know now what the real deal is, she seemed to be saying.

I went back in. Sure enough, there, in front of all twelve, hot soups, stood Paul Newman. He looked old, and he looked good. I walked closer. I lifted my chin and the arches of my feet, pretending to be enthralled by the steaming bisques and chowders. I was suddenly aware that I reeked of chlorine and inexperience. But it was now or never. I turned just a little to the side, enough to solicit a glance from him. And then I saw his eyes, those blue eyes, looking up from under his brows. It had been too long already; I had to say something. I managed, "Mmm, matzo ball," and raised my eyebrows, smiling.

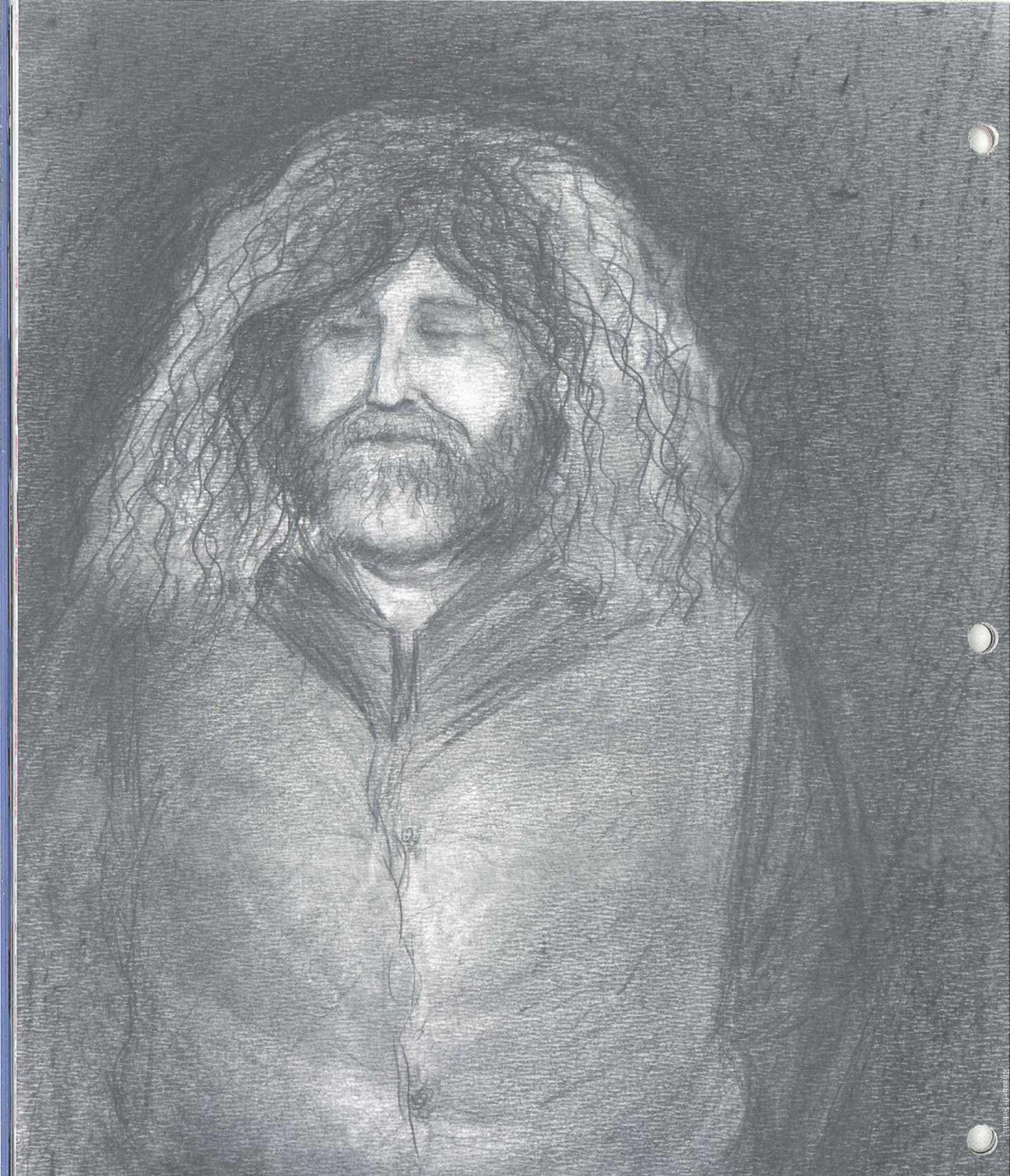
And he smiled back. There was that ineffable Paul Newman restraint! The pacing, the pause, like a well-timed hustler. It was all real. Too real. I ran, quickly, gracelessly, right out of there.

Since then, I sometimes think of Paul. He never fails to return me to the feverish anomie of being fourteen. Like our mothers before us, my roommates and I are still fascinated by him. And at the end of this summer, when he was ill, we felt it. We got Netflix and then cancelled it just to see "Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid" again. His picture, ripped from the pages of Vanity Fair, went up in a frame in the bathroom. It's 1956, and he's looking cool as ever, hands in his pockets, on the set of "Somebody Up There Likes Me." It figures.

Will I be a fool all my life for Paul? I turn to him as I'm washing my face one Saturday night. I think about going out, consider the benefits of human interaction, and then, once again, with the aplomb of true love, decide on fidelity. In his famous words, "I have steak at home; why go out for hamburger?"

Paul Leonard Newman, a kid from Ohio, the son of sporting goods store owner and a mother who loved the theater, rose to the pantheon of American cinema. He won an Academy Award in the category of best actor for his reprise of the role of Fast Eddie in the 1986 film "The Color of Money." He was nominated for best actor seven other times and once for best supporting actor. "Rachel, Rachel," a film he directed and produced for Ms. Woodward to star in, was nominated for best picture in 1968. Newman also garnered numerous awards for his work on the stage and lifetime achievements. In 2005, he opened a restaurant, Dressing Room, on the grounds of the Westport Country Playhouse, where he and Ms. Woodward were active members. He was to have directed a production of John Steinbeck's "Of Mice and Men" there this fall, but stepped down in May due to his failing health. For the last half century, he was our blue-eyed optimist and our no-good hero. To the memory of Paul Newman, we raise our glasses.

by Leah Campbell



# *DIDIER DAGUENEAU*

## *AN APPRECIATION*

It is easy to talk about Didier Dagueneau in bigger-than-life clichés. He had the presence, the provocative manner, the wit, the bravado, the cutting edge and the courage to take risks. There was never anyone else like him and no one will ever take his place. But all these clichés, no matter how true, miss what was essential about Dagueneau and the contribution he made to viticultural life.

We visited Didier Dagueneau this summer to taste the Silex 2007s and the bottled 2006s. Didier had recently renovated The Temple, an ancient chapel next to his home which had fallen into ruin. He had decided to turn the Temple into a cultural center and had mounted an exhibition of Jean-Marie Périer's photography for its inauguration that summer. Périer was the most famous French photographer of the 1960s and the Temple was filled with photos of celebrities from that epoch.

Didier took us on a tour and Denyse and I had to name each celebrity. Of course, even I know Claude François but only Denyse knew Dani, Sylvie Vartan and Sheila. I didn't recognize Françoise Hardy but I did recognize Jacques Dutronc, Dylan, the Rolling Stones and the Beatles.

It was obvious how proud and joyful Didier was of putting together such an art show. While we were in the Temple, Didier talked about how every year he organizes a lavish dinner called Les Anciens, where he invites all the older vigneronns of the area for a great meal, old bottles and good times. Didier was a provocateur and a rebel, but he had great respect and love for all these anciens, like Edmond Vatan and Claude Thomas, who had taught him his métier. He was a maverick in the grand sense, before Sarah Palin cheapened that word.

But what many of us take away from knowing Didier is his total dedication to his vines. Didier started with nothing and became an international celebrity because he brought an insane level of rigor, love and attention to his vineyard. He was intense and extreme in everything he did but nothing matched his fanatic devotion to his plants.

Didier had one worker per hectare (2.47 acres), the same ratio as Burgundy's famous Domaine de la Romaine Conti. Usually, a grower in his area might have one or two workers for a surface of 30 acres, but Didier believed that the only way to make great wine was intensive vineyard and cellar work. That

one worker had to spend time in every other aspect of the winery to learn the entire process of making wine. The vines were increasingly selections massales, propagated by new plant material from numerous selected mother vines in the vineyard, and were trained to suffer and ripen at low yields. Some of his finest wines came from his recent plantings in Monts Damnés, in an insanely inclined site, where the plantings were from cuttings Didier took from old sauvignon vines all over Sancerre and Pouilly. Dagueneau acted as a reverse Johnny Appleseed and put together a genetically varied, rich and interesting vineyard population that made sensational wine even though the vines were less than ten years old.

I talked today with Didier Barrouillet at Clos Roche Blanche. That Didier was a great admirer and student of the other, now gone. Barrouillet told me that Dagueneau would do chemical analysis of all his vineyards three times a year and would make adjustments by adding organic materials to insure the health of his sites. Barrouillet said that he doesn't know anyone else in France who worked that way and insisted on such preciseness.

Didier was not an advocate of biodynamie, natural wine. He used some sulphur, disliked natural yeast fermentations and did not want to sell his wine because it was organic. He wanted to make the very best wine imaginable by guiding the minerality of his sites into the bottle. He was a strong-willed attendant and didn't suffer detours and dogmas.

In some ways he was an exception to every rule. Dagueneau didn't have a recipe, all he wanted to do was make great wine and he was prepared to sacrifice everything to get it done. Dagueneau became bigger than the AOC Pouilly-Fumé but he started with nothing and built it all by sheer will. Barrouillet told me how in the early years, Dagueneau didn't have hot water in his home, but the cellar was well equipped and well maintained.

Dagueneau's first vintage of Jurançon had some cork stain so he destroyed everything. Denyse and I visited him two years ago as he was about to bottle when he found the bottles that had been delivered to the winery had a small taint of plastic smell from the external wrapping. He called off the bottling immediately and told the bottle distributor to take it all back. It

# ON ICE

was summer and the distributor was closing. All the wine had been prepared for bottling, the equipment was in place, and Didier would be unable to get replacement bottles for a few weeks. All his shipment schedules were going to be turned upside down and his cash flow would be hurt. He didn't care. He was not going to risk the wine.

This winter we received a bottle of one of Didier's cuvées in our office before our shipment left France. There was no explanation why it arrived and we contacted his office to find out what happened. We were told that there had been a radioactive leak at a local nuclear plant and that Didier feared that the wine might have suffered from contaminating contact. He told us we were not obligated to take the wine if we tasted it and felt it was defective.

The three partners at Louis/Dressner Selections all did frantic internet searches and couldn't find a story about a radioactive leak, although there is a nuclear power plant in the area. Why was the leak so hush-hush? I volunteered Kevin to taste the wine who volunteered Denyse who volunteered me. Then the three of us suggested that Sheila, who runs our office make the definitive decision. Somehow, no one was in a rush to taste the wine.

Weeks later we finally opened the bottle. We found it reduced but felt worried we might anger Dagueneau if we didn't take this bottling. We sent a note and were told that the wine was no longer available and had been sold out.

Later that summer we asked Nathalie, who runs Didier's office, what the real story was with the radioactive wine. She looked surprised and fatigued at the same time and said: "Don't you know Didier?"

Turns out the wine had taken forever to ferment and Didier was unhappy with the results. He didn't want any of his customers to be stuck with the wine or take it out of obligation so he gave everyone an easy option out. Finally, his Belgian importer bought a large quantity.

That one bottle aside, tasting and drinking Didier's wines was always a wonderful experience. I don't know what the mineral Silex tastes like, but I can only imagine it must taste like Didier's cuvée of that name. I can't imagine it any other way.

Denyse said to me last night that when people die it is like when a light goes out. But Didier was more than a light, he was a natural phenomenon, a storm, a commotion and a celebration in a world that is often too dull and glum. Yes, he was bigger than life. But Dagueneau was a man who didn't suffer fools and clichés lightly.

Didier Dagueneau died September 17th, in a small plane crash in the Dordogne region. The wine world has lost a great vigneron and the world has lost one of the most original, charming and mischievous characters to ever grace a vineyard row.

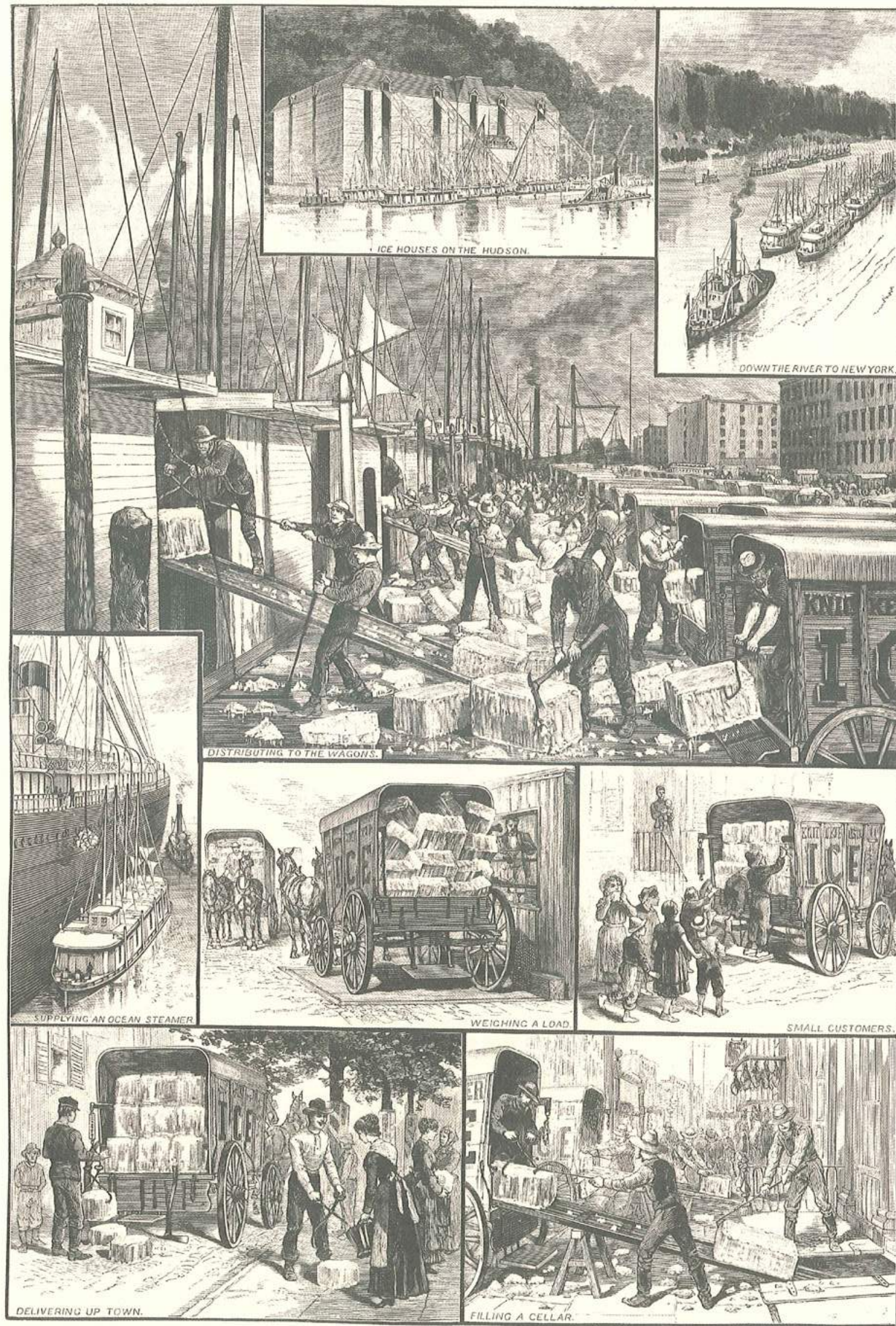
*by Joe Dressner*

On the Hudson ice houses once loomed cold, their timber planked reflections rippled by the barges. The ships waiting lazy under loading ramps: wood beamed, creaking into August stillness, torpor after noon. Ice slid down, each block a massive bastion, straw clinging to its sides. Straw and ice - summer's heat a dry effacing, while embracing sodden coolness, quiet weeping from the saw-cut face. Winter's harvest. Dreaming season's counterpart to sowing, tilling, reaping, the field a river's frozen surface, each morning swept of snow. Cut by teeth of iron, push-pulled, sharp lines previously incised, staccato muffled, hand gripped, horse drawn, a grid of square cut blocks. Pried apart and floated, clear channels to the ice house, packed tight with insulating straw. At home, the cutter's grip, cramped shut by cold's long creeping. Leather, wool, and cotton hung on lines while hands were warmed by coal fed radiant conclusion. Night still empty, lit by stars. Ice, towed in bellied barges, down the Hudson, lumbering in fleets of six. Along the journey, rooftop windmills pumping out the water lost from melting; upon arrival a harvest halved, dripped back into the river of its origin. Wagons waited, aligned along the West Side piers, the ice men, fit, mustachioed, hats wide brimmed, axe and tongs in hand. Oyster barges, apple barges, grain barges, flat boats floating, filled with farmers in their wagons: like a gridded paramecium the city feeding, ringed by ciliated piers. One million tons of ice per year delivered: hand cut, barge driven, weighed on platforms, pulled by horses up avenue and street: midtown, downtown, slid down cellar ramps to pork packers, beef butchers, Kosher poulterers, German steak houses, beer gardens, grand hotels, to all but the very poorest homes. And to the ocean steamers: ten tons of ice if bound to Europe, sixty tons to last a voyage to Brazil. Meat, provisions safe: cool keeping. Ice "as much a feature of household economy as water itself, and except in cooking the one is seldom made use of without the other. It has come to pass that our citizens regard water, no matter what its temperature may be, as flat, unless it has ice in it - and in homes, in restaurants, hotels, saloons, and wherever men and women assemble, ice and water go together, and one is as fully utilized as the other." So wrote Harper's Weekly Journal in August 1884. So, luxury slid into necessity, indulgence made the norm. Oversized waxed cups now come pre-filled, cubes clunk, chute dumped, soda pumped. Ice was winter's harvest: the culling of the river, a product of the region, still redolent of spring, grasses, diabase and gneiss, leaves golden: pushed each year by winter into clear solidity. Ice from the north was shipped in trains to southern states - Chicago sent to Mississippi, New York to Florida. Carts returning laden, insulated coolness holding strawberries, lettuce, spring peas - delightful imports in the bleakest months of roots and tubers. A gentle trick unlearned by electricity. Mechanical refrigeration on a long path toward efficiency, ice boxes still in use through World War I, the word still heard, though fading with the terms of former ways: ice-box, automat, IRT. When did it last freeze, the Hudson? Ice is gone, recalled.

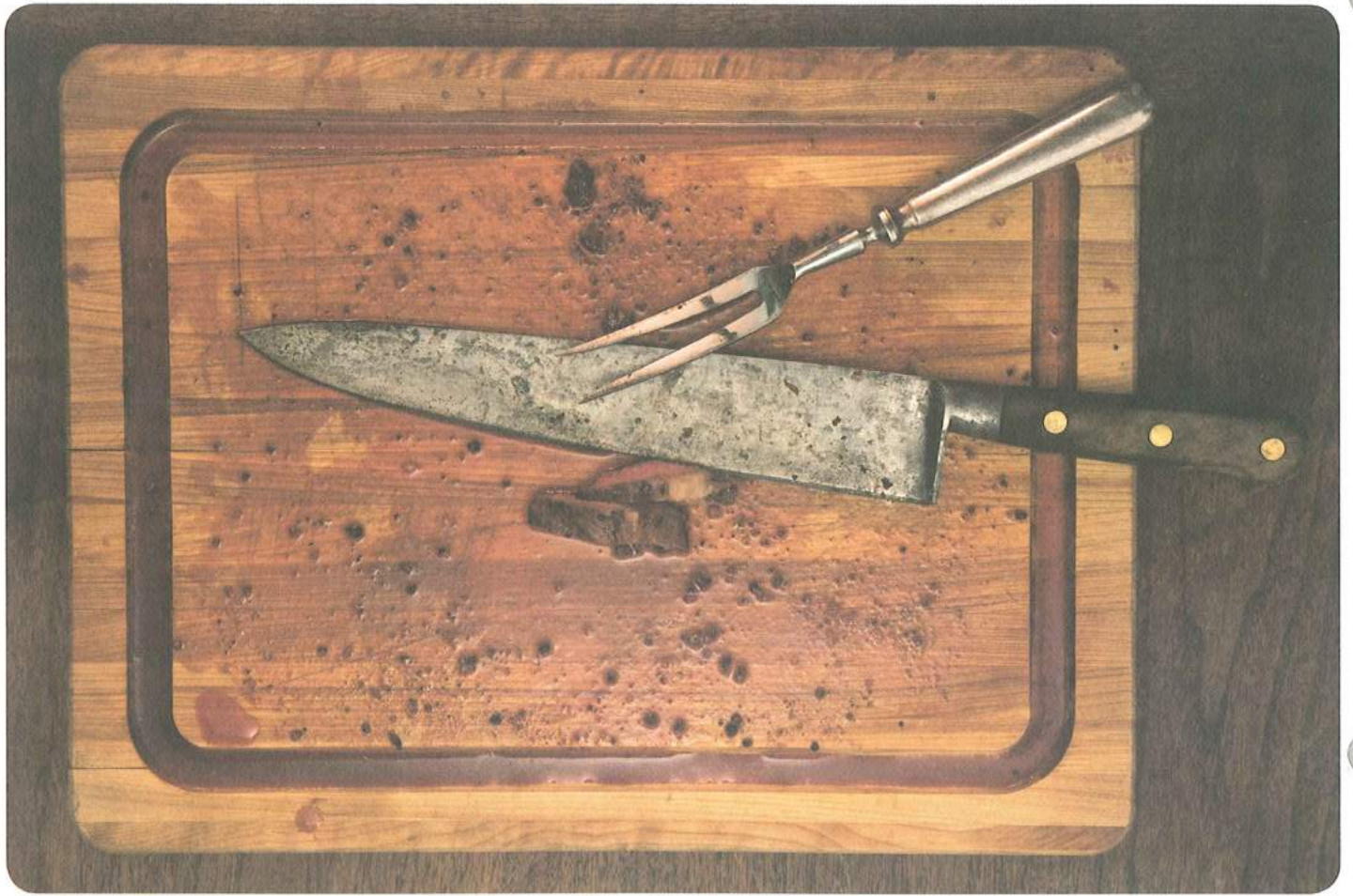
*by Robert LaValva*



*Scribner's Monthly Magazine, 1875*



THE ICE INDUSTRY OF NEW YORK.—DRAWN BY F. RAY.—[SEE PAGE 565.]



*THERE'S MORE GRAVY  
THAN GRAVE ABOUT YOU,  
WHATEVER YOU ARE.*