

DINER JOURNAL

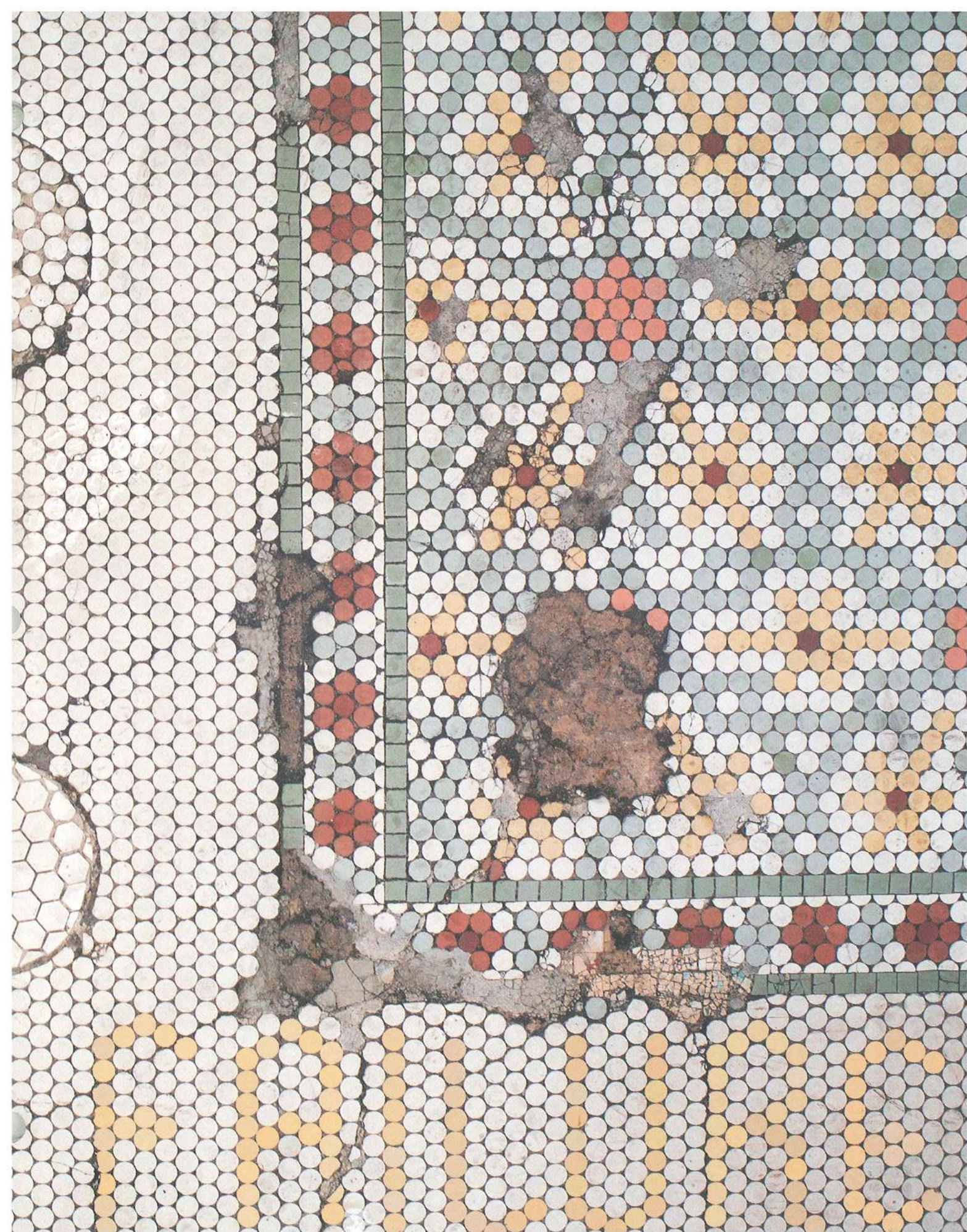
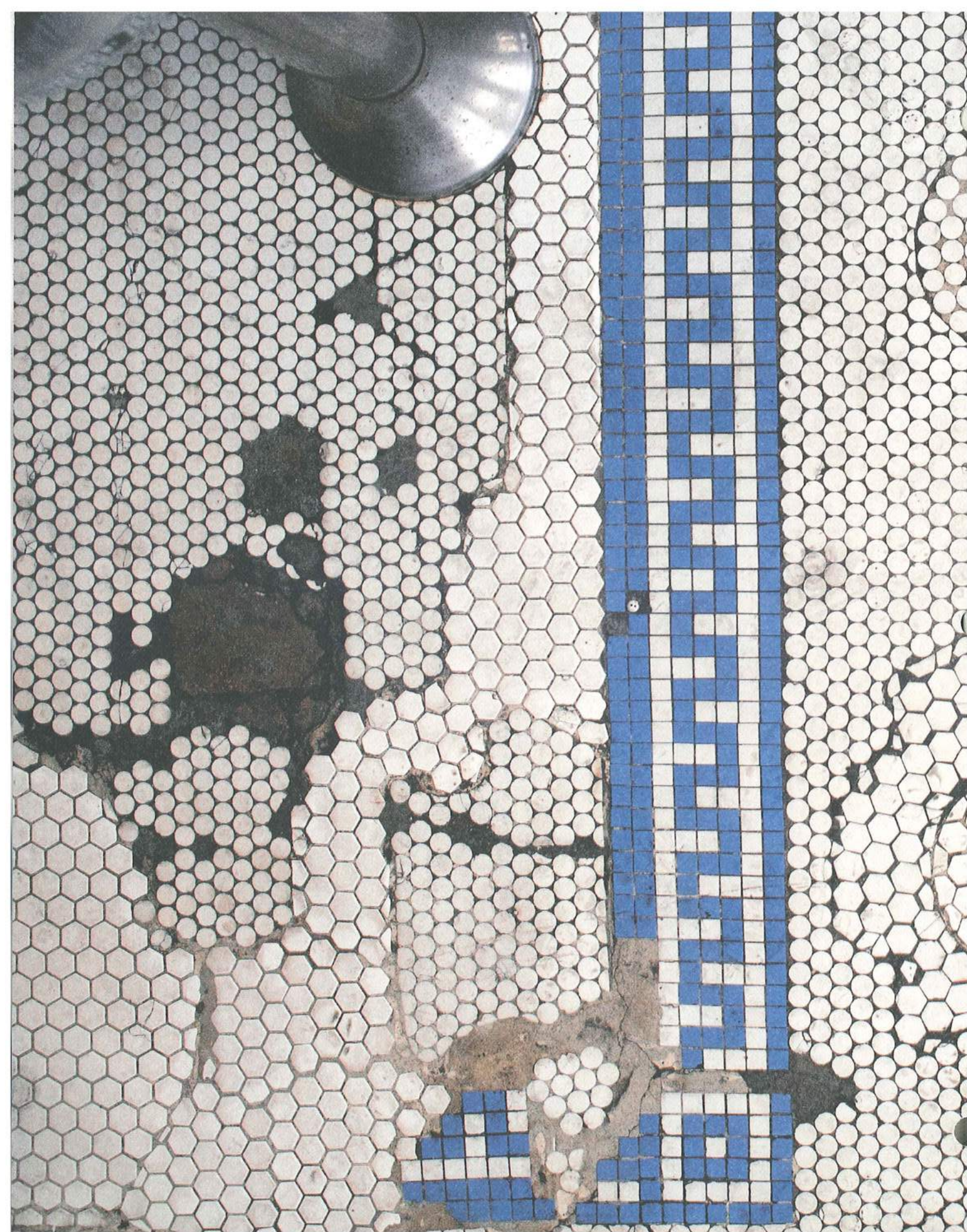
ISSUE No. 21

EGGS & FAILURE

NO ADS \$11

THE PHOTO ISSUE







DRAWING BY Emily Klass

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Anna Dunn A MOVABLE FAILURE

Risk is the only way anything happens around here and yet I still resist it. I exacted a brutal failure recently giving a presentation about the Diner Journal. I had written a draft trying to explain the philosophical foundations and practices that drive the magazine and how they in turn inhabit our new art space, This Must Be the Place. There is really nothing worse than having to talk about what you love and are viciously nervous about in front of a group of strangers. Andrew read the draft of my intro and suggested cutting the bit about the art space, that while it made sense to us it might be confusing. I begrudgingly agreed. This was perhaps the turning point. This is the thing about failure: You will never know what went wrong until you submit yourself to judgement and potential certain ridicule again and again. It is, in a way, an irresistible challenge, an irresistible kind of learning.

Standing at a podium has always made me uncomfortable. When forced to I often find my inner brain, the one that thinks without words, wondering what kind of acrobatics might allow me to fold, to tuck into the stands hollow, woody center and, as though into some gravitationally greedy black hole, vanish. The failure came when I skipped the art space paragraph and then on accident the paragraph following it and then while shuffling some papers trying to find the next right sentence, or any right sentence really, hit a button and made the slides behind me race forward until I was stuttering and sputtering, red as a lobster, in front of a rather astute Art of Eating cover. It was excruciating. I read what was left on the page, unsure if it made any sense and quickly sat down in my chair, nearly tipping over backward, then over correcting, lunging forward and making a loud thumping noise when my face hit the microphone in front of me.

What is invigorating about failure is how we forever return to it. Failure is a relief, an answer, the last page, until what ever it is you have forsaken starts in again, calling you out, asking you to attempt, to tempt, to once again flounder upon the sea. Failure is full with contradictions and our biggest successes happen so often in our mistakes. Failure is trite.

The relentless but ineffective alarm clock echoing into the thunderdome of our dreams, plants that refuse to fruit, edits never made, the unpossessed performance. These are maybe minor flops and so almost laughable, enjoyable even. To fail in love, in earnest, in honesty, these are the frightening failures. This moment now is one. It always comes, just before the pages will be printed, the ink spilling out into all the formulas of our good intents. Will it drip, bore, disappoint, offend?

The fear of failure can drive successful endeavors; it makes us want to do better. However the fear of frying an egg, seasoning the pasta, browning the meat, these fears maybe the way one can truly be unsuccessful at cooking. We have to allow the fear to activate us.

If writing, if creating is simply a kind of desire management... the desire to grow, to inspire to hope, then failure and all its trappings are just an over fried egg on the snow covered slopes of Mt. Olympus. Hmm. No, not quite right? Then failure and all its trapping are perhaps just the thundering, face hitting microphone, sound of all this living.

SAUSAGE

by Pepe

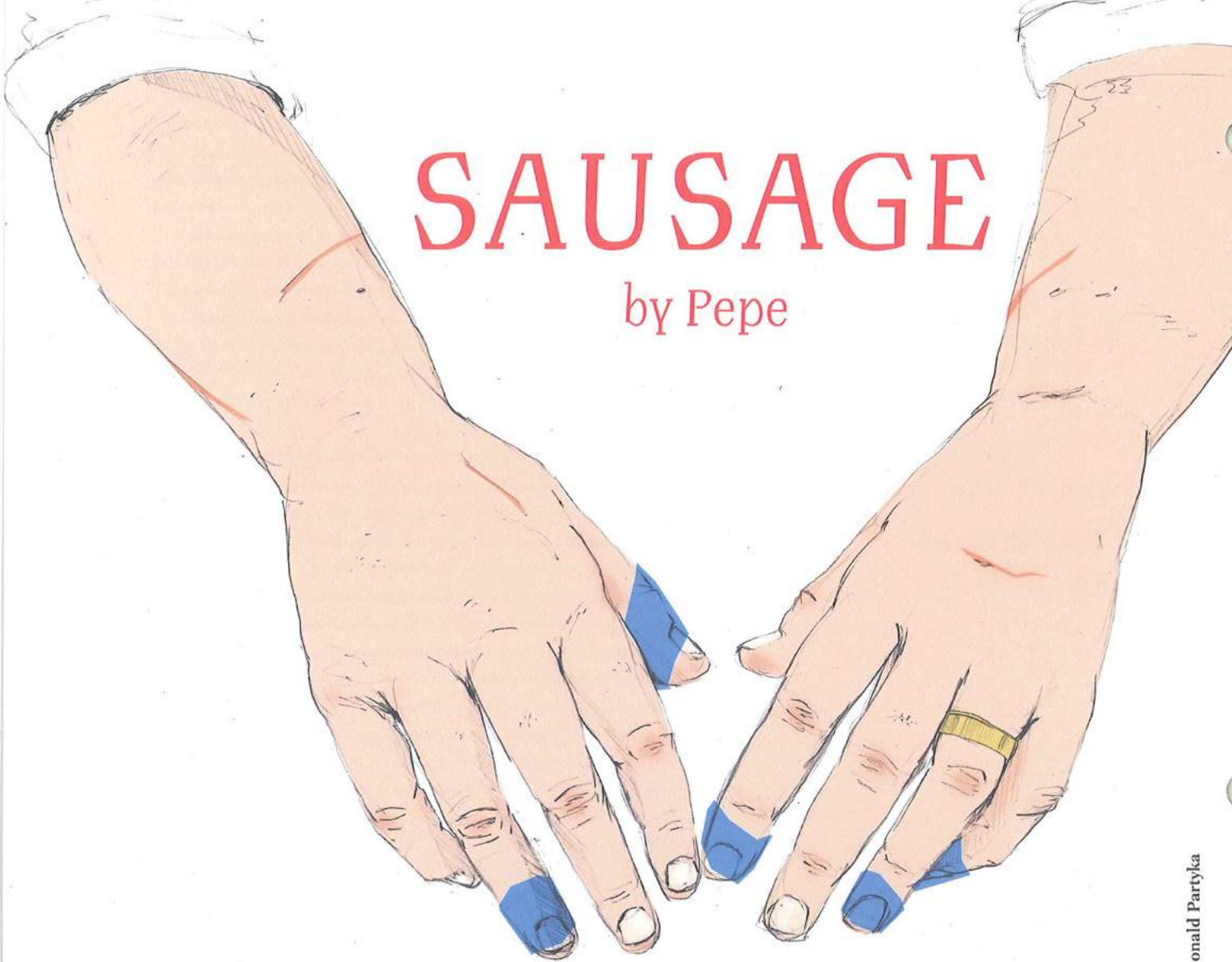


ILLUSTRATION BY Courtney Reagor TITLE TYPEFACE BY Donald Partyka

My in-laws were sitting across the table from me, staring at my fingers. One blue band-aid on my right hand, two on my left. Three fingers wounded. Blisters, pus, cuts. Real appealing. Not to mention the slashes on my lower arms from the featherbones scratching into me during yesterday's delivery.

Featherbones are the part of the spine that is left exposed on the shoulder or the "arm chuck" of a steer. They can sometimes be sharp, stick out in various directions and scrape up your arms pretty bad while you are carrying them. I have been told a thousand times to pull my chef's coat all the way down to cover my arms and protect them from these bones, but I always forget. I am too excited about carrying the meat in to worry about such petty details.

When we receive whole animals at the butcher shop, we get the animals in two or more pieces. This means that pigs come split in half, right down the middle. Two halves weigh about 100–150 pounds

each. Beef is broken down into eight manageable pieces, or "primals." A 1000 pound steer is cut into large 70-150 pound pieces. We unload these hulks off of the bed of the delivery truck, labor them across the street into the shop and lug them onto the butcher table. We then break those primals down to smaller cuts before putting them into the walk-in or retail case. We do all of this with our bare hands, sheer strength and a bit of bravado. Sometimes, when the delivery truck pulls up out in front of the shop, someone yells, "We got meat!" Another person puts on "Enter Sandman" by Metallica. It's pretty awesome.

My wife's parents just looked at me with their mouths open wide. I think it was the bright blue color of the band aids that really did me in. I mean, why blue? It's a dead giveaway. At least those "skin" colored ones kind of hide your business. "What the hell? Is this your new look as a Butcher?"

I explained that I was a bit banged up from my first few weeks of serious butchery. I attempted to regale them with tales of trial and triumph, how I had made my first sausage at the shop and how it had been a rather rough process. I laughed and told them, "I love this shit."

When you make your first sausage, it's important to remember how ratios affect the process. I had made the pistachio-mint pesto as a pasta topping in my home kitchen a few times, and it was always pretty tasty. People loved it! I thought it would transfer well to a sausage, subbing out the pasta for the ground pork.

Pistachios, garlic, fresh mint, chile, lemon zest, lemon juice, parmesan, salt and pepper, all pulsed together in a Cuisinart to make a thick, luscious sauce.

"It tastes like pork," one of my coworkers said. This was a pretty bad insult, considering that you were always supposed to taste the ingredients of the sausage, as well as the pork. Not just the pork itself.

"Yeah, I am not really getting the pistachios," another one said.

"Did you toast the nuts before you pulsed them?" my boss inquired. No.

"Did you cook them in a bit of water to help soften them before you pulsed them?" No.

"Did you pass them through a chinois?" Uh, nope.

I had no frigging idea what a chinois was. I had never worked in a restaurant, so I didn't realize that a chinois was a fancy name for a strainer. My boss was coming at it from a professional culinary background, and I was not. He had worked at a top kitchen in New York and he had the skills to prove it. He is the one we consult on everything. When I first met my boss and applied for an apprenticeship, he looked at my resume and then he looked me up and down. He looked at my arms. I'll never forget it. He was totally sizing me up. He must have been asking himself if I really thought I could do this job. If I really wanted to. If I was even physically capable.

First impressions can be tricky. While he was looking me up and down, I was doing the same to him. He was not at all that I expected to see in front of me based on the conversation I had with him over the phone. He looked a bit... metal. He was skinnier and lankier than I expected, but with obvious well-defined muscle. He just didn't look, or speak, like what I thought of as a "butcher." What I came to realize is that he is a very complex guy who turned out to be a great teacher. All of my co-workers taught me

everything I know about butchery and they were the best teachers I could have asked for. They all have different approaches to butchering and they are all extremely talented. I continue to learn from them everyday.

When my boss first taught me how to break down whole animals, he said, "The animal will tell you where it wants to be cut." It was all very Zen.

I wanted so badly to impress my fellow co-workers with my first sausage. It was different for me than for them. I didn't have a foot in the door. I told my boss that I would work for free and learn all that I could learn and that I had wanted to be a butcher for the past two years. I asked him to take a chance on me. And he did. I apprenticed for two weeks before getting hired, selling cheese and working the cash register three days a week and butchering the other two. I asked a million questions, no matter how dumb I thought I sounded, and wrote down everything that everyone said. I studied it all. I would come home at night, tend to my aching body and go over the day in my head (and on paper) to try and remember all I had learned that day. It was the only way I could keep all of the information clear in my head.

I tried adding more pistachios to the already made sauce so that the flavor would come through, but I was too nervous and frazzled to go into the kitchen to toast the nuts, cook them in a bit of water to soften them, and then pass them through the chinois to strain them.

I got over it when my boss tasted the second tester of the sausage that I had cooked up and told me that it still sucked. I marched into the kitchen, toasted, simmered, blended them in the Vita-Prep and then passed them through the chinois. I came away with a rich, velvety smooth paste, as opposed to a chunky, rustic mess. It tasted like the essence of pistachio. I mixed it into my ground pork mass and prayed for the best.

After testing a patty of the sausage, for the third time, I brought it over to my boss back at the butcher shop, handed it to him and watched as his face turned into a smile.

"Now that's what I'm talkin' about!" He said, "I told you that doing all of those things would make it better."

He was right. More importantly, it made me aware of the differences you need to pay attention to when making a fifteen pound batch of sausage versus making a cup of sauce at home to toss with spaghetti. Completely different ballpark. I should have realized I was in a different league when I noticed one of my co-workers literally peeling pistachios for a pâté that he was making. I was going to have to listen hard to all of my co-worker's advice and learn from them. I was going to have to step it up.

This experience, along with many others in my first few months as a butcher, taught me to challenge myself, overcome my flaws and to reach for success whenever I had the opportunity. I had wanted so badly to impress my fellow butchers with my first sausage attempt, but it took me three days to complete the project that should have taken me one afternoon.

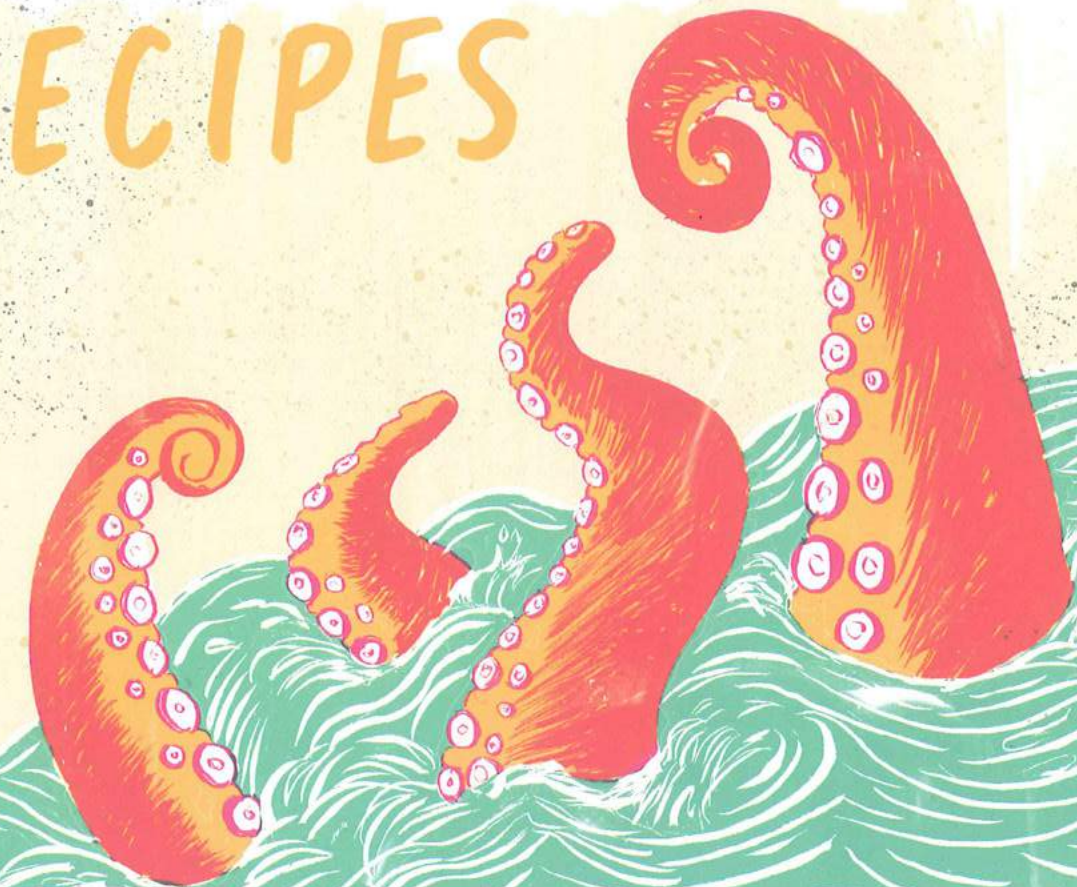
Looking back now, those sausages didn't end up selling very well at all, but the customers that bought them seemed to

like them and they gave me some positive feedback the next few times they came into the shop. I have definitely made better sausages since then, and will continue to do so, but you never forget your first. Honestly, you never forget the mistakes you make or how ridiculous you felt when you made them.

I finally became a butcher a year-and-a-half ago. I knew that it wouldn't be easy, but I knew that I would make it and that I would be good. Maybe even great someday. I've got a long way to go and a lot to learn still, but the challenges I have conquered as a butcher at Marlow & Daughters have taught me much. Always be open to learning from your failures. Always push yourself to be better. Don't be afraid to fail.

People asked me about that sausage months after I had made it. Not because it was particularly amazing, but because it was ballsy and different. And it tasted good. I haven't made it since then, though. I think I'll stick to making it the way I used to, at home for a family dinner, to top my spaghetti.

RECIPES



ILLUSTRATIONS BY Vidhya Nagarajan

PISTACHIO MINT PESTO

- 1 cup pistachios (raw and unsalted)
- 1 lemon (juiced and zested)
- 1 clove garlic (chopped)
- ½ cup fresh mint leaves
- 3 grinds black pepper
- 1 pinch kosher salt
- 1 pinch red chile flake
- ¼ cup shredded parmesan
- ½ cup olive oil

In a dry pan, toast the pistachios until fragrant. Add the toasted pistachios to a blender. Add the lemon juice, lemon zest, garlic, salt, pepper, chile, and mint leaves to the blender. Add 2 tablespoons of the olive oil to the blender, and blend on low speed to mix the ingredients. It will be chunky and you will probably have to stick a spoon in there to move the ingredients around a bit. With the blender on low, slowly add the remainder of the olive oil into the mixture until it becomes a paste with the consistency of pesto. Add a touch more oil, if necessary, to reach desired consistency. This "pesto" keeps well in the fridge for a few days and is delicious mixed into cooked spaghetti or on top of chicken.

FOR SAUSAGE MAKING AT HOME

If you are making this into a sausage, you will need the same recipe, but will apply it differently. You will need two pounds of locally-raised, pastured pork that has been ground fresh. Ask your butcher for ground pork with a 70% lean, 30% fat ratio to ensure you are getting the correct amount of fat-to-lean, as this is part of what makes sausage so tasty.

Prepare the pistachios the same way as the first recipe, but when they are done toasting, you are going to keep them in the skillet and add a bit of water to the pan. Half a cup should do the trick. Let the pistachios simmer in this water for a few minutes, until they have absorbed most of the water. When the nuts have cooled, add them to your blender with the rest of the ingredients, except for the olive oil.

Blend this for a few seconds, then add the olive oil in a steady stream, until the mixture has a smooth consistency. When

this mixture is completely cooled, add it to your ground pork and mix with your hands until all of the pistachio pesto has been thoroughly incorporated.

If you are going to be stuffing your sausages into links, use hog casings and make 6-inch links. If you do not own a sausage stuffer, you are going to be making patties out of this sausage meat. Simply form patties by hand into whatever size you desire. I would say palm size would be about right and should yield a nice patty. Fry the patty in a pan with a little olive oil, so that the fat renders slowly from the sausage. For a palm-size patty weighing about 6 ounces, it should take you 5–7 minutes per side on medium heat. You will achieve a crispy exterior and a juicy, well-seasoned interior. Let the patty rest for a minute or two before cutting into it, to allow the juices to redistribute, and serve with a salad.



BY
**SCARLETT
LINDEMAN**

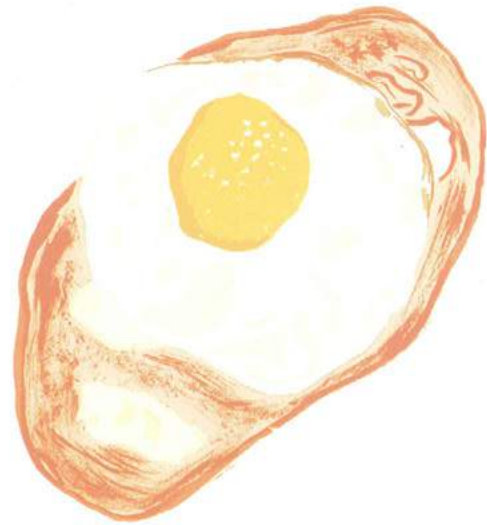
Nothing stings quite like ruining a plate of food. When a dish you've undercooked gets sent back to the kitchen in the restaurant or the crust of a homemade galette has burned to cinders in your oven, the feeling of defeat can be crushing. You've wasted not only a good piece of food, but also, the anticipation of a good dinner.

However, sometimes failure is a blessing. The only difference between a true ace in the kitchen and an amateur is a long accumulation of failure. The only reason I know how to cook a perfect *al dente* Bucatini all'Amatriciana is because I have failed at it so many times: pulled pasta from the water when it was inappropriately crunchy or plated limp strands of noodle that no sauce could save. In many

ways, the only way to fully understand the spectrum of doneness, heat, and flavor is to oversalt a steak and undercook a pasta dozens of times. These little mistakes help you comprehend how food cooks. They allow you to notice all the subtle imbalances, and get you a little bit closer to perfection, next time.

Momentary culinary downfalls are just experiences to learn from: So fail hard, recognize it, and you'll be more likely to hit perfect pitch every time. These recipes deal with tricky ingredients that any cook might wrestle with, and a handful of recipes for each, so if you boil the eggs for too long or turn the rice to mush, there's a recipe for that too.

AN EGG EVERY DAY



FRIED EGG ON BUTTERED TOAST

Anyone can fry an egg, but frying a perfect egg, one that's crispy only at the edges, with a firm white holding up a golden liquid orb, that is an art. It's a technique that I've botched dozens of times and takes much more finesse than one might think. Once mastered, it's a perfect meal when you're hungover, when there's no food in the house, when it's raining or for a sick child. Whenever and usually.

- 1 egg
- 1 piece of bread
- 2 T of butter
- 2 T olive oil
- salt and pepper

Heat a sauté pan, cast iron pan, or non-stick skillet with the butter over medium heat. When it starts sizzling, pan-fry the bread in the butter until golden, then flip and fry the other side. Transfer bread to a plate and keep warm while you fry the eggs. Wipe out any bread crumbs from the pan with a towel. Then add in the oil, and crank up the heat. When the pan is really hot, when soft wisps of smoke begin to curl from it, crack the egg into the pan. It will sputter and bubble violently for 3 seconds. Reduce the heat to a medium-low and let the egg fry away, for about a minute. The egg should be almost fully cooked but there will probably be a small ring of uncooked white surrounding the yolk. Cut the heat and cover the pan with a lid. After 10 seconds, remove the lid to check the doneness. If the white is still not cooked, place the lid back over and check after 10 more seconds. Season the egg with salt and pepper. Slide the egg on top of the toasted buttered bread, and you're done.

Note: Frying a perfect egg may take a couple of tries. If the yolk breaks or overcooks, just flip it out of the pan and start again. Or, you can eat it anyway.

SOFT-BOILED EGGS WITH MARINATED BROCCOLI AND ALMONDS

These soft boiled eggs have firm whites and bright orange yolks that are just beginning to set around the edges and give way to softly runny centers. If you over-boil them, save them for the Chilled Asparagus with Sieved Egg and Lemon Caper Vinaigrette recipe. (p.17)

- 4 eggs
- 3 bunches of broccoli, broken down into large florets
- 6 cloves garlic, smashed to a paste with salt
- 1 large pinch of ground Chile de árbol olive oil
- salt
- ¼ cup almonds
- 2 lemons, juiced
- ¼ cup red wine vinegar

Bring a small pot to a boil. Slip eggs into the pot. Set a timer for 7 minutes and 30 seconds. When the timer goes off, transfer eggs to an ice bath and let soak for 5 minutes, then crack and peel eggs. Toss broccoli florets, garlic paste, Chile de árbol, in a bowl with lots of good olive oil. Season well with salt then spread broccoli onto a sheet tray and roast in a hot oven (400-450) for 25-30 minutes, stirring occasionally, until florets are cooked through and starting to crisp up. Meanwhile, toast almonds in a sauté pan in the oven until fragrant, then toss with a glug of olive oil and season with salt. Transfer broccoli to a bowl, add in lemon juice, and the red wine vinegar, tossing well to combine. Let marinate for 30 minutes. To serve, place marinated broccoli on a plate and drizzle with any remaining vinaigrette. Quarter the eggs and place around the broccoli. Sprinkle the almonds over the plate. Serve.

SOUFFLE !

Who makes souffle these days?

- 2 T butter, plus extra for ramekins
- ¼ cup flour
- 1 cup milk
- 4 eggs, separated
- 6 oz goat cheese, crumbled

- 1 t fresh thyme, minced
- ¼ cup chives, thinly sliced
- 1 t salt
- black pepper
- 4 ramekins

Preheat oven to 400 degrees. Butter the ramekins. Melt remaining butter in small pot over medium heat. Whisk in the flour and cook, whisking constantly for 2 minutes. Add in the milk and bring to a boil, whisking constantly. Cook for a minute or two until very thick, then remove from heat and transfer to a bowl. Whisk in the egg yolks, goat cheese, thyme, chives, salt and pepper until well combined. Beat the egg whites with a pinch of salt, in a stand-mixer, until soft peaks form. Whisk in ½ of the egg whites into the yolk mixture, to lighten. Then, carefully fold in the egg yolk mixture into the remaining whites. Divide the mixture among ramekins and bake until puffy and golden, about 20 minutes.

SPAGHETTI CARBONARA

- 1 package of spaghetti
- ¼ # guanciale or pancetta, ground to bits in a food processor
- 5 egg yolks
- 1 T black peppercorns, coarsely crushed
- 1 cup pecorino cheese, grated

Cook spaghetti for half of the recommended cooking time in boiling water. Meanwhile, in a large saucepan heat guanciale crumbles until they begin to render their fat, crisp up and turn golden. Add in a big pinch of the black pepper and salt to the pan, then stop the cooking with a big ladleful of pasta water from the pot. Transfer the par-cooked noodles to the pan and continue to cook the noodles, adding ladlefuls of water as necessary, as the noodles cook. Keep testing the doneness of the noodles every minute or so, by eating a strand. Once it seems like they are a minute away from being done, there should be only about a cup of water left in the pan, just enough to moisten the noodles and create the sauce, turn the heat off and pour the beaten egg yolks into the middle of the pan and immediately swirl. Toss the pasta over itself to mix and combine with the egg yolk and the liquid in the pan. Add in a handful of cheese at a time, tossing and mixing the mixture so the noodles are well coated and sauced. The

sauce should thicken and turn creamy. Check the sauce for seasoning and add in the rest of the cracked black pepper. Serve immediately with more cheese on the side.

PAVLOVA

Use the yolks in the carbonara, save the whites for dessert.

For the meringue:

- 1 t cornstarch
- 1 cup sugar
- 4 egg whites
- pinch of salt
- 1 t white vinegar
- 1 t vanilla extract

For the topping:

- 2 cups cream
- ¼ cup sugar, plus 2 T extra for the fruit
- 1 t vanilla extract
- 1 pt raspberries
- 1 pt blueberries

Preheat oven to 250 degrees. Line a baking sheet with parchment paper. Stir the cornstarch into the sugar in a small bowl, set aside. In a stand-mixer outfitted with a whisk attachment, whip egg whites and salt, starting on low, increasing incrementally to medium speed until soft peaks become visible, about 2 to 3 minutes. Increase speed to medium-high, sprinkle in the sugar and cornstarch mixture. Whisk for another minute or two, add in the white vinegar and vanilla. Increase speed a bit and whip until meringue is glossy, and stiff peaks form, about 4 to 5 minutes.

Gently spread the meringue into four small piles on the parchment paper. Smooth out the tops, making sure the edges of the meringues are raised, to create a slight well in the center to place all the fruit and whipped cream. Bake for 1 hour. Check on meringues at least once during the baking time. If they appear to be taking on color or cracking, reduce temperature 25 degrees. When the meringues are done, turn the oven off, prop open the door slightly and let cool completely in the oven.

Whisk together cream, sugar, vanilla extract and a pinch of salt until it turns into whipped cream. Toss raspberries and blueberries together with a handful of sugar and a pinch of salt, to macerate;

let sit five minutes before serving. Pile whipped cream on top of each meringue, then pile fruit on top of the cream. Serve.

FLAN

Cooking the caramel is the hardest part. Then it's an easy bake.

For the caramel:

3 cups white sugar
¾ cup Lyle's Golden Syrup
or light corn syrup
¾ cup water

For the custard base (makes 12–15):

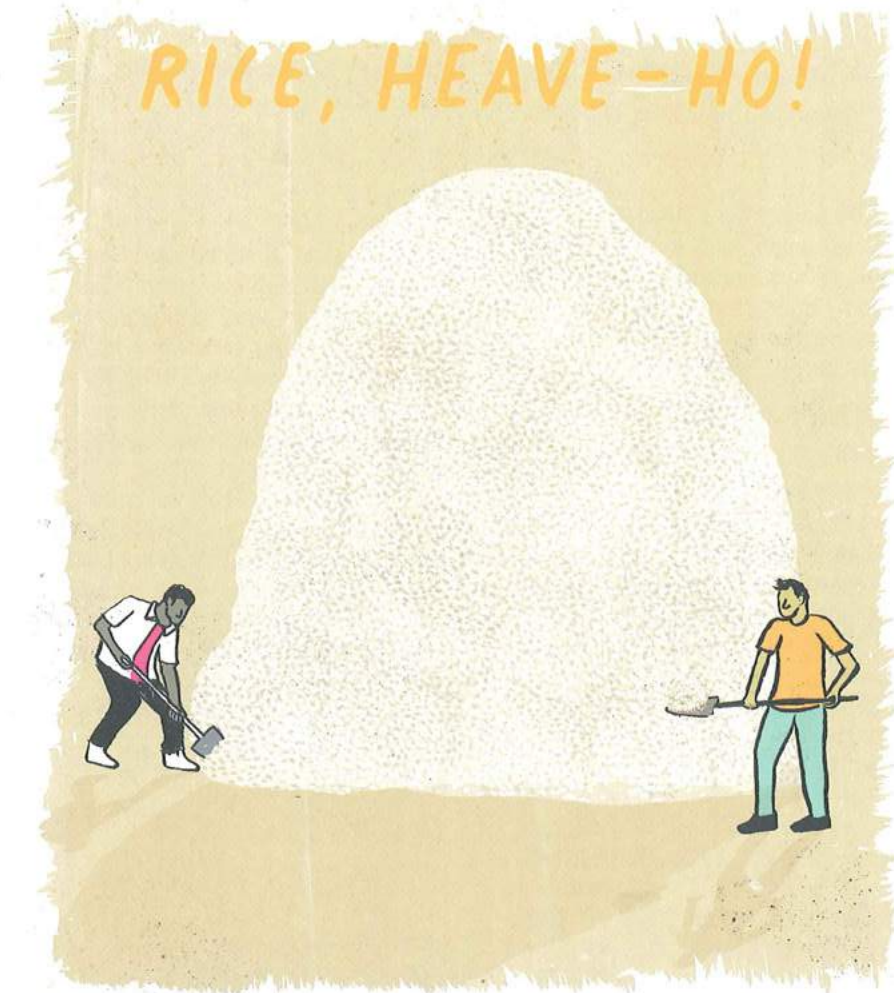
6 qt milk
2 cups sugar
8 whole eggs
12 yolks
1 t vanilla extract

Preheat oven to 325 degrees. To make the caramel, combine sugar, syrup, and water in a small sauce pan. Get an ice bath ready. Cook the caramel over medium low heat until it's a nice dark amber color. Remove the saucepan from the heat and plunge the bottom of it into the ice bath to stop the cooking. Pour a thin layer of caramel into each of the ramekins. Set aside to let harden while you make the custard.

To make the custard:

In a saucepan over low heat, warm milk with sugar to dissolve, do not boil. Whisk together eggs, yolks, and vanilla extract, then pour a cup of the warm milk mixture into the eggs, to temper, whisking to combine. Pour the rest of the milk mixture into the eggs, whisking to combine. Before pouring in the custard, give the ramekins a very light spray of Pam (or a light coating of grapeseed oil) to help the custards release. Strain mixture through a fine sieve then pour into ramekins. Place ramekins in a large pan and pour warm water halfway up the sides. Cover the pan tightly with aluminum foil. Bake in a 325 degree oven for 25 minutes, until just set, then let ramekins cool in the refrigerator.

To plate, run a paring knife around the edge of the flan and tip over gently onto a plate. The flan should pop out.



Rice is something I've always struggled with; in envy of the fluffy grains next to black beans at Dominican steam-table joints and lovely fragrant piles of Basmati rice at Indian restaurants. I always seem to end up with a gluey mass and a burnt crust cemented to the bottom of the pot.

For such a proletariat grain, rice can be cooked in a multitude of ways to achieve different results. The rice to water ratio plays a major role in the success of most rice dishes as does the variety of rice you choose. Salting early on so the grains have the ability to absorb the seasoning is also important. Nevertheless, if you overcook the rice, there's always fried rice or rice pudding for dessert, a sweet ending to any mistake.

PERFECT RICE

Generally, this recipe works for most rice styles: white, Arborio, jasmine, even brown, though some Asian rices are a bit too sticky for this ratio. I like using a more narrow pot so there's less direct contact of the rice on the bottom of the pot. The rising steam does most of the work.

1½ cups rice
2¾ cups water
1 t salt

Bring water to a boil with the salt. Stir in rice. Let water return to a low simmer, then cover pot with a lid, and cook for 20 minutes. Turn off the heat and let the rice sit for 10 minutes undisturbed. Remove lid and fluff rice with a fork.

TOMATO RICE

This recipe ensures a flavorful, fluffy pile that goes well next to practically anything; braised pork, stewy beans, or grilled meat. The trick is using slightly less than the traditional 2:1 ratio for water to rice: that is

1¾ cup water for 1 cup of rice. The post-cook steaming will ensure the rice cooks through.

1 tomato
½ of a white onion
1 sweet red pepper
1 jalapeno
2 garlic cloves
1 T salt
2 T oil
1½ cups white rice

In a blender, blend the tomato, onion, peppers, garlic, and salt on high until the mixture turns into a liquid. You may have to add ¼ cup of water to get it going. The mixture should yield around 1½ cups of liquid. Add enough water to the mixture so the volume yields 2¾ cups. In a high-sided pot, toast the rice in 2 T of oil for about 2 minutes, then pour in the tomato liquid. Bring the liquid to a simmer, then lower the heat to the lowest degree. Cover the pot and let it simmer until all the water is absorbed, about 20 minutes. Turn off the heat. Let the pot sit off of the heat for 10 minutes, top on, then fluff with a fork and serve.

PROSCIUTTO AND RICE PORRIDGE

Like Chinese congee, this technique purposefully over-cooks rice until it breaks down into a soft, creamy porridge. It can be eaten simply, like a soup, or with additional toppings—sliced scallions, crushed peanuts and a poached egg are nice.

1 inch-thick piece of prosciutto, diced into small cubes then ground into a crumble in a food processor
3 T butter
2 cups rice
4 cups water
4 cups really good chicken or pork stock
2 T salt

Combine all ingredients in a pot. Bring to a simmer and cook over medium heat. The rice will absorb most of the water after 40 minutes. Keep cooking and stirring occasionally until most of the liquid has been absorbed, the mixture thickens, and the rice really softens, about 30 minutes more. Check the seasoning and add more salt or butter if desired. More stock can be added to loosen, as needed.

CHICKEN AND RICE IN A POT

Like the prosciutto and rice porridge, this method couldn't be simpler: Rice, chicken, and water are combined in a pot and cooked together until a rich, starchy stew forms. Incredible.

2 cups white rice
1 chicken (whole, or broken down into 4 pieces)
6 cups stock (water is fine too)
2 inch knob of ginger
1 large shallot, sliced
2 T salt

Combine all ingredients in a pot. Bring to a boil then lower heat to a simmer. Cook for 45 minutes. Pull the chicken meat from the carcass and recombine into the rice stew. Let cook for 10 more minutes, adding additional water or stock to loosen, if needed. The dish should end as a thick soup. Check the seasoning, adding more salt if needed. Serve; great with chile paste, scallions, and soy sauce.

RED RICE AND CARDOON CAKES

For the rice:

2 T olive oil
1 scallion, sliced in half
1 t salt
1 cup red rice
1¾ cup water

For the cakes:

2 stalks of cardoon
1 peeled and grated potato
salt
oil

To cook the rice:

In a small pot, heat olive oil until shimmering. Add the scallion, rice, and salt to the pot, stirring so the rice toasts in the oil. After three to five minutes the rice will start smelling nutty and toasted, almost like popcorn. Add in the water, bring to a simmer. Cover with a lid and cook over low heat for 30 minutes. Lift the lid from the pot. If there is any visible water left-over, continue to cook with the lid on for five minutes, then turn off the heat and let the rice steam for 10 minutes more. Transfer rice to a sheet-tray and let cool.

To make the cakes:

Preheat the oven to 450 degrees. Cut cardoons into 2 inch batons and cook in boiling water until tender. The water should be changed 3 to 4 times throughout the cooking process, to remove bitterness. On the last boil, add a handful of salt to the pot. Slivers of cooked artichoke, sliced ramps, or leek could be substituted for the cardoons.

Slice the cooked cardoon into thin julienned strips. In a small bowl, combine ½ cup of the rice, a pinch of salt, ¼ cup of the cardoon, and ¼ cup of grated potato. Stir well with your hands to combine, mashing the ingredients together to form a moist mixture. Heat a tablespoon or two of oil in a medium sauté pan over medium high heat. Place drops of the rice and cardoon mixture into small piles in the sauté pan, pressing down with a spatula to form little latke-like cakes. Fry the cakes on one side until golden, then flip and press down again. Slide the sauté pan into the oven, letting cook for about five minutes more until cakes are crunchy, golden, and the centers are warm. Remove. Sprinkle the cakes with a little salt and serve. Great with a fried egg on top or a mound of aioli, to dip.

CRUNCHY RICE PILAF WITH PISTACHIOS AND ORANGE

This rice recipe is, perhaps, the most difficult in this collection but also the most unique. In this Persian style pilaf the rice is allowed to crisp up on the bottom of the pan into a thick golden crust that is then broken up and folded back into the dish at the end.

2 cups long-grain white rice
1 T salt
¼ cup milk
¼ cup vegetable oil
½ cup hot water
1 T butter

For the rice topping:

1 orange
½ cup pistachios, toasted and chopped
1 carrot shredded
¼ cup apricots, finely diced

Wash rice well in three changes of water, until the water runs clear. Soak rice in two cups of water with the salt, for two

hours. Bring rice and water to a boil in a medium pot, cook for 10 minutes. Add in milk and oil, then push the rice to form a big mound. Poke holes into the mound with the bottom of a wooden spoon to let the steam escape and continue to cook over medium heat, 10 more minutes. Combine the butter and hot water so the butter begins to melt, then pour over the rice mound, patting the rice down to compress it a bit. Lower the heat a little and continue to cook the rice for 25-35 minutes, rotating the pot occasionally to ensure the heat source touches the bottom of the pan evenly. The rice will begin to form a thick golden crust. You'll have to listen to the rice carefully and occasionally peek at the underside to make sure it's not burning. Once the rice sounds like softly popping corn, it's done. Transfer the rice to a large platter, breaking up the crunchy bits as you go, and piling them on top. Sprinkle the pilaf with the zest of one orange, the pistachios, the carrot, and the diced apricot.

RICE PUDDING WITH RHUBARB

What to do with leftover cooked plain rice?

For the rice:

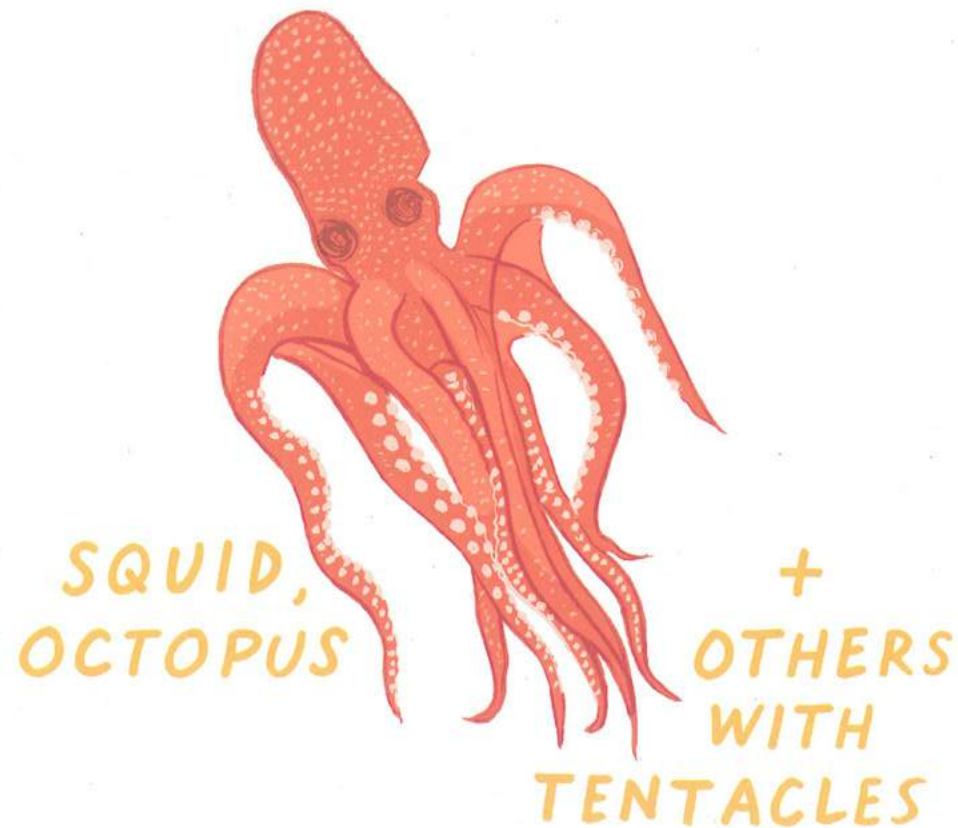
- 1 cup cooked rice
- 1 ½ cups milk
- ½ cup cream
- ⅓ cup sugar
- ½ vanilla bean, split and scraped
- 1 pinch of ground cardamom

For the rhubarb topping:

- 4 stalks rhubarb
- 1 cup sugar
- 1 pinch salt
- 1 teaspoon orange zest

Combine all rice ingredients in a pot and bring to a boil over medium-high heat. Lower heat to a simmer and cook for 40 minutes until thickened, stirring occasionally, making sure the rice isn't sticking to the bottom of the pot.

Meanwhile, make the rhubarb topping. Dice the rhubarb stalks then toss them with sugar, salt, and orange peel and spread mixture out onto a sheet tray. Roast in a 400 degree oven for 7 to 10 minutes until slightly softened but still retaining shape. Scrape rhubarb into a bowl, remove orange peel, then spoon over rice pudding.

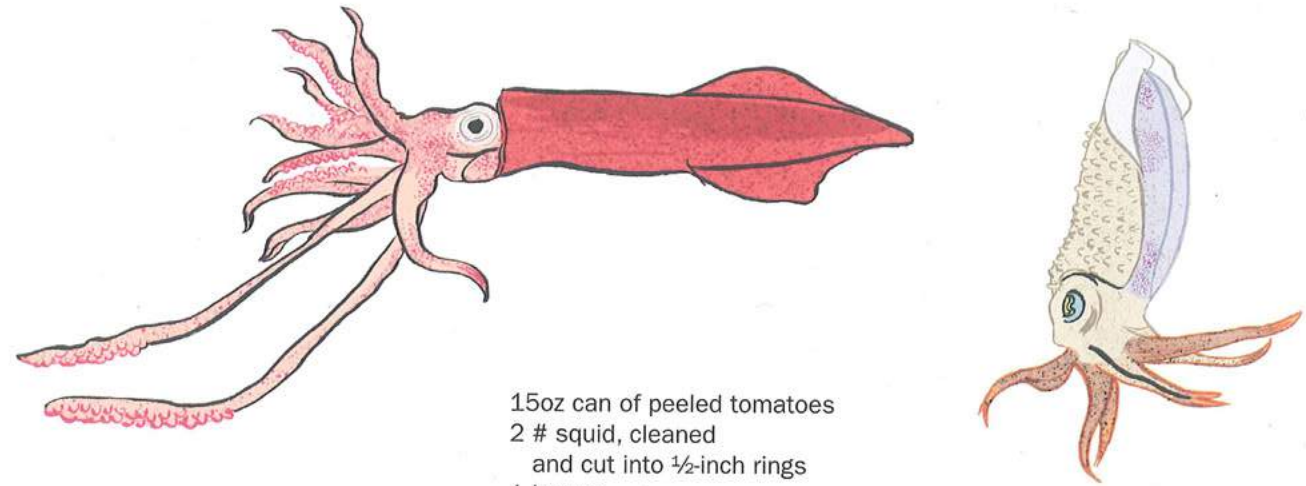


Squid, octopus, and others with tentacles, like cuttlefish or sepia, shouldn't be reserved for restaurant kitchens. Though their tentacles, ink sacks, and alien eyes seem to scare off most home cooks, they are economical and quite easy to cook.

Almost all of the octopus sold in the United States is cleaned and frozen so all you have to do is throw it in a pot and cook it. An octopus should gently simmer in aromatic liquid -- broth, dashi, water with an onion and carrot and/or a bottle of red wine, until tender. This can take anywhere from 45 minutes to 2 hours, depending on the size of your octopus. Start checking the octopus at the 45 minute mark by sticking a small sharp paring knife into one of the tentacles, similar to the way you check a boiled potato. It should meet little resistance when it's done. You can even slice off little pieces of the tentacles and eat them to check. When the octopus is sufficiently tender, remove it from the pot. The tentacles now can be sliced into manageable portions and used in recipes, most of which feature pre-cooked octopus to be reheated, seared on a plancha, or grilled.

Cleaning squid and cuttlefish, which can be easily purchased fresh, is maybe the most off-putting part of the process. There are two edible pieces on a squid; the top of the head, which looks like a pointed arrow, and the bottom tentacles. To clean a squid, firmly pull the head away from the body; it will pop off and the innards will slide out. Cut off the top of the head part and remove any innards. This part can be sliced into rings or left whole to be stuffed. Then take the bottom half and chop off the tentacles just below the eye. Rinse everything well and let drain.

Squid and cuttlefish should be cooked hot and fast or braised low and slow, like octopus, for a long time. Anything in between should be avoided.



SEARED SQUID WITH BASIL AND CHILE

- 2 T olive oil
- ¼ # of squid, cleaned and sliced into tentacles and rings
- 1 cup cherry tomatoes, sliced in half
- 1 fresh hot chile, thinly sliced
- 1 small bunch of green beans, briefly blanched
- 1 bunch basil
- 1 bunch mint
- 2 T almonds, toasted and chopped
- a lemon or lime
- more good olive oil
- salt

In a large pan, heat oil over high heat until smoking. Add squid to the pan, making sure not to crowd the pieces – they all should have contact with the pan. Season with salt. Let the squid sear without jostling the pan for 30 seconds. Add in the tomatoes, chile, and green beans, then shake the pan aggressively to jostle everything about and let sear for another 30 seconds. Then add in herbs, almonds, and a squeeze of lemon into the pan. Add a glug of olive oil and toss well to distribute. Serve immediately.

BRAISED SQUID

- 1 cup fregola
- ½ cup olive oil
- ½ cup currants
- ½ cup pinenuts
- 2 cloves crushed garlic
- 1 Chile de árbol, crumbled
- 2 T capers

- 15oz can of peeled tomatoes
- 2 # squid, cleaned and cut into ½-inch rings
- 1 lemon

Par-cook the fregola in boiling water for ½ of the recommended cooking time. Drain and set-aside. In a large sauté pan, heat olive oil until shimmering. Add in the currants, pinenuts, crushed garlic, and chile, cooking over medium heat until the pinenuts start to toast and turn golden. Add in the capers and the tomato, crushing up the tomato with your hands before adding them in. Bring sauce to a boil then add in the par-cooked fregola and a little water if the pan seems too dry. Add in the squid, stirring well to combine and cook just until the squid turn opaque, about two minutes. Season with salt and zest the lemon over the top with a microplane.

FRIED CALAMARI SANDWICH WITH AIOLI AND LEMON

I'm still not sure why this sandwich tastes so amazing. In Spain, this style sandwich is served in every outdoor cafe, on flimsy tasteless rolls, and sometimes, even without aioli – just bread and perfectly fried squid.

- ½ # fresh squid, cut into ¼ inch rings
- 1 can of beer
- ½ cup semolina flour
- 1 pinch of salt, plus more to season
- crusty rolls
- aioli
- lemon wedges
- olive oil

Have your squid prepped and ready. Heat a fryer or a pot of oil (olive or grapeseed cut with a little olive, for flavor) to 350 degrees. You don't even really need a thermometer: drop a drop of batter into the oil. It should bubble away and rise to

the top of the oil, but should not do so violently (turn the heat down) or too lackadaisically (turn the heat up, a little), just a nice bubbly bubble. Whisk together beer, semolina flour, and salt until smooth. Toss squid ringlets in the batter, coat well, then remove and slip into the hot oil. Fry squid for one to two minutes, until starting to turn golden and are very crunchy. Pull squid from the oil and drain. Toss in a bowl with more salt to season, then pile onto a roll slathered with aioli. Serve with lemon wedges.

GRILLED OCTOPUS WITH MINT, POTATO AND OLIVES

- 2# cooked octopus, cut into pieces
- 1 bunch of mint, leaves plucked
- 4 potatoes, peeled and boiled until tender
- ¾ cup of olives, pits removed
- lemon juice
- olive oil
- ground Chile de árbol

On hot grill, grill octopus tentacles on both sides until starting to char. Meanwhile, in a sauté pan, warm a cup of olive oil over medium low heat. Break the potatoes into large chunks and add to the pot with a large pinch of salt, pepper, and a pinch of ground Chile de árbol. Warm the potatoes, folding the potatoes into the oil to combine. Some of the potato will crumble and break down into a sort of chunky mashed potato. When the octopus is ready, transfer to a large bowl. Add in the mint, the olives, the juice of a lemon, and a glug of olive oil and toss to combine. Season well with salt. Spoon the potatoes down on a plate and arrange the octopus over them.

OCTOPUS SALAD

2# cooked octopus, cut into pieces
4 carrots, cut in half lengthwise
4 celery ribs
1 bunch parsley
1 t crushed red pepper
1 t dried oregano
¼ cup red wine vinegar
1 lemon
½ cup good olive oil
salt

You can sear the octopus tentacles on a hot cast iron pan or grill to give it some char, or not. It tastes great just sliced and marinated, without the sear. Slice the octopus into ½ inch pieces. Thinly slice the carrot on a mandoline. Thinly slice the celery, on the bias. Chop parsley. Combine octopus, carrot, celery, parsley, red pepper, oregano, and red wine vinegar in a bowl, tossing to combine. Zest and juice the lemon into the bowl, add in the olive oil, and season well with salt. Let macerate for 30 minutes, tossing occasionally, before serving.

CUTTLEFISH AND PEAS

Cuttlefish are more round and stout than long and lean squid but should be cleaned, prepared, and cooked in a similar manner. They are normally sold fresh.

2 # cuttlefish (sepia) cleaned and sliced into 1 inch pieces
2 cloves garlic, crushed
1 cup olive oil
1 cup white wine
1 # tomatoes, chopped
2 Chile de árbol, crushed
1 white onion, sliced thinly
4 cups fresh peas
1 small bunch each parsley and mint
salt
more good olive oil

Heat the oil in a large pot over medium heat. Add in the garlic and cook until golden, add in the cuttlefish and sear on all sides. Add in the Chile de árbol and onion and cook briefly, stirring everything about. Add in the wine to deglaze. Let the wine evaporate, then add in the tomatoes. Cover the pot and simmer for 35 to 40 minutes. Add in the peas and cook for 8 more minutes. Two minutes before serving, add in the parsley and mint, chopped. Season well with salt and serve.

SHAVED ASPARAGUS SALAD WITH PECORINO AND MINT

10 asparagus spears
½ cup toasted chopped almonds
1 large handful pea tendrils
1 small handful mint leaves
1 hunk of pecorino cheese
1 lemon
olive oil
salt

With a vegetable peeler or mandoline, thinly slice ribbons of asparagus into a large bowl. Add in the almonds, pea tendrils, mint. Grate some pecorino cheese into the bowl. Squeeze in the juice of half a lemon, season with salt and pepper, and add in a drizzle of olive oil. Toss well to combine. Check for seasoning, plate, and serve with more pecorino cheese grated over the top.

The spring season marks the return of the vegetable. It's an exciting time: peas and their tendrils, dainty radishes, and tender, snappy, asparagus rejuvenate the kitchen after a long winter of potatoes, turnips, and apples. Treating these delicates with care is important; overcooking saps their spirit. When in doubt, just serve them raw.



ASPARAGUS AND OTHER DELICATES

CHILLED ASPARAGUS WITH SIEVED EGG AND LEMON CAPER VINAIGRETTE

Asparagus needs a quick, in-out blanch followed by a dunk in ice water to turn a vibrant green with a tender, snappy, crunch.

2 bunches asparagus
4 lemons
2 T capers, finely chopped
1 T dijon mustard
¼ cup olive oil
4 hard boiled eggs, cut in half
small bunch of basil

Set up a pot of boiling, heavily salted water and an ice bath. Snap the dry bottoms off of the asparagus. Plunge asparagus in the boiling water and let cook for 30 seconds. Remove from the water and place in the ice bath. Let soak for 60 seconds then remove. Refrigerate on a sheet tray lined with a kitchen towel. Then, make the vinaigrette. Zest and juice lemons into a small bowl. Add in caper, mustard, salt, and pepper. Whisk to combine, then whisk in olive oil. When ready to serve, plate asparagus on a plate, pour vinaigrette over the top. With a sieve with large holes, or a box grater, press the hard boiled egg through the holes so the crumbles fall on top of the asparagus. Season the egg with salt and pepper and tear basil over the top.

FLASH-ROASTED ASPARAGUS

2 bunches of asparagus,
bottom stalks snapped off
olive oil
salt
pepper

Crank your oven as high as it can go. On a sheet tray, toss asparagus with olive oil, salt, and pepper. Slide the tray into the oven and roast for 2 minutes. Shake the pan around, tossing the asparagus about. Then roast for 1 more minute. Serve immediately with a warm bagna cauda, grated bottarga and lemon, or grated pecorino cheese.

RAMP POTATOES

This is a great way to stretch a couple of handfuls of ramps. The thin slices of ramp fry with chunks of potato so everything is covered with green and imbued with the garlicky intensity of the ramps.

6 yukon gold potatoes, boiled until tender
2 bunches of ramps
mayonnaise
1 hunk parmesan cheese
oil for frying; could be olive or grapeseed

Break the potatoes into medium sized chunks, about 1.5 inches square. Slice the ramps very thinly, greens, stalk, and bulb. In a large sauté pan, heat oil until shimmering. Carefully add in the potato and fry until beginning to crisp and turn golden, about 10 minutes. Drain the oil from the potatoes and continue to fry the potato pieces in the pan, without any oil. Add in the ramps, tossing to combine and fry for a minute, so the ramps wilt and become fragrant. Season the potatoes and ramps well with salt, then transfer to a plate schmearred with mayonnaise. Shave tons of parmesan over the top. Serve immediately.

FAVA BEAN PUREE

This bright green puree is spring in a spread.

1# fava beans
good olive oil
1 garlic clove, crushed
2 shallots, thinly sliced
10 mint leaves, finely chopped
1 lemon

Shuck the fava beans by pulling open their pods and removing the beans. Bring a pot of salted water to boil. Get an ice bath ready. Drop beans into the boiling water. Cook for 1 minute, the water may have not even returned to a boil. Pull favas from the water and shock in the ice bath. Remove beans from the ice bath and peel away their outer skins. If you pinch open the skin with one hand you can squeeze the skin with the other to easily pop out the bean. Once all the favas are peeled, place them in a food processor. Meanwhile, heat a glug of olive oil in a small sauté pan. Add in the garlic, sliced shallots

and a pinch of salt and cook, stirring occasionally until the shallot is soft and translucent, about 5 minutes. Remove from heat and add mixture to the food processor, with the mint, the zest of the lemon plus ½ of its juice, a pinch of salt, and ½ cup of olive oil. Process until smooth. Taste the puree and adjust the seasoning as necessary. Spread the puree on any sandwich or dip spring vegetables into it.

RADISH AND PEAS WITH BURRATA

1 ball burrata, halved
handful of breakfast radishes
handful of snap peas
handful of pea tendrils
1 lemon
olive oil
salt

Place burrata on a plate. Season with salt, pepper, and olive oil. Quarter radishes. Slice snap peas very thinly, lengthwise. In a small bowl, combine radishes, snap peas, and pea tendrils. Season with salt, squeeze in some lemon juice, and add a glug of olive oil. Toss well, check the seasoning, and pile over the burrata. Serve with toast.

ROASTED FIDDLEHEADS WITH GREEN GARLIC

Fiddlehead ferns are the tightly furled sprouts before they unroll into a leafy green fern. Because they sprout up from the forest floor, they can be quite dirty and need to be washed in multiple changes of water before using.

1 # fiddleheads
6 stalks of green garlic, thinly sliced
good olive oil
black pepper
salt

Bring a large pot of salted water to a boil. Blanch fiddleheads for one minute, transfer to an ice bath. Using your hands, swirl and stir the fiddleheads in the water to loosen the leafy brown matter that stick to them. Pour off most of the water, including the ice and fill container with more

water, continuing to stir the fiddleheads through the water, aggressively. Repeat with a few more changes of water until most of the brown is gone. Pull the fiddleheads from the water and spread out on a sheet tray lined with a kitchen towel, to dry. When the fiddleheads are dry, place them in a large bowl with the green garlic and toss well with lots of olive oil, black pepper, and salt. Spread the mixture out onto a sheet tray and roast in a medium-hot oven (350-400) for about 45 minutes, stirring every 15 minutes or so, until the fiddleheads are golden and somewhat crispy. These roasted fiddleheads are great on toast with pancetta and a fried egg or cooked into a pasta dish with lots of parmesan cheese.

FRIED SQUASH BLOSSOMS

20 squash blossoms
2 cups ricotta cheese
6 basil leaves, finely chopped
1 t salt
½ t grated lemon zest
¼ cup flour
1 cup water
1 cup light beer
pinch of salt

Carefully open up the squash blossom and check for insects. Pluck out the stamen, the little stick of pollen inside. Fold together the ricotta, basil, salt, and lemon zest. Open each blossom and spoon in a tablespoon of the cheese mixture, then carefully twist the blossoms closed.

For frying, heat a medium pot, half filled with olive oil. Whisk together the flour, water, beer, and salt. Carefully dip each blossom into the batter, turning to coat, letting any excess drip off. In batches, drop the blossoms into the hot oil and fry for 2 minutes. Remove the blossoms from the oil and sprinkle with salt. Serve immediately.

There are two camps in the kitchen: savory cooks and pastry people. Though overlap is encouraged, generally most savory cooks find the scientific precision and measurement of baking to be difficult. Nevertheless, sweet baked goods are always impressive, no matter how simple they may be, so an arsenal of desserts is a must.

A UNIVERSAL MUFFIN

This muffin wears many hats: You can use buttermilk instead of milk for extra tang; substitute almond flour for some of the regular flour and stud the muffins with slivers of almonds; bake it in a cake pan for a simple dessert; or just pop little pieces of fruit, like raspberries or peaches into the batter before it bakes. The batter is easily stirred together and should be kind of lumpy.

Dry:
4 cups all purpose flour
1 cup sugar
1 t salt
½ cup baking powder

Wet:
2 cups whole milk
½ cup grapeseed oil
4 eggs

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Whisk dry ingredients together. In a separate bowl, whisk wet ingredients until combined. Stir everything together until just mixed and slightly lumpy. For muffins, fill muffin cups ½ full, then bake until a toothpick stuck into the center comes out clean, about 15–20 minutes.

For buttermilk muffin: Substitute buttermilk for the milk and add an extra ¼ cup of grape seed oil to the mixture.

BAKED GOODS



For almond muffin: Substitute the 4 cups flour with 3 cups all purpose and 1 cup almond flour, plus add in half teaspoon pure almond extract. Once batter is in the muffin cups, stick slivered almonds into the batter.

For fruit muffin: Once batter is in the muffin cups, stick small pieces of fruit like raspberries or diced peaches into the batter, then bake.

For a cake: Pour batter into a greased cake pan and stud with nuts or fruit. Bake until the center is firm to the touch and a toothpick inserted into the center comes out clean, about 35 to 45 minutes.

KITCHEN SINK COOKIE

You can put anything into this cookie. Swap the nuts for other nuts, any chopped dried fruit for the golden raisins, anything goes.

Wet:
8 oz butter, soft
½ cup sugar
½ cup light brown sugar
2 eggs
1 t vanilla

Dry:
2 cups all purpose flour
1 t baking soda
½ t baking powder
½ t salt

Add-ins:
2 cups rolled oats
2 cups semisweet chocolate chips
1 cup sweetened flake coconut
1 cup golden raisins
1 cup coarsely chopped toasted walnuts

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. In a stand-mixer outfitted with a paddle, cream together butter, sugar, and light brown sugar. Add in the eggs one at a time and the vanilla extract. Meanwhile, whisk together the flour, baking soda, baking powder, and salt. Slowly add in the dry mixture to the wet, mix until just combined. Then, fold in the add-ins, until distributed evenly throughout the dough. Spoon tablespoons of the batter onto greased cookie sheet and bake until lightly golden and firm to the touch, about 12 to 14 minutes.

UPSIDEDOWN CAKE REDUX

Here's the correct recipe for the Walnut Pear Cake, from The Menu Issue, which, failed to include sugar. After making this recipe a bunch, I've found you can substitute most fruits for this recipe: sliced dried figs, slices of fresh blood orange, cooked apples.

8 oz butter, divided
½ cup packed brown sugar
½ t salt
5 medium Bosc or Seckle pears, ripe but slightly firm
1 cup AP flour
½ cup whole wheat pastry flour
5 oz walnuts, toasted and finely ground to a coarse flour (hazelnuts, or pecans will work well too)
1½ t baking powder
½ t baking soda
1 t cinnamon
1 cup sugar
2 eggs
1 t vanilla

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Grease, dust lightly with flour and line the bottom of a 9" spring form pan with parchment paper. Wrap pan in foil. Peel, half and core pears.

In a 10" sauté pan, melt 2 oz of the butter together with brown sugar and salt. Add pears in single layer. Cook, carefully turning occasionally, over medium until pears caramelized and tender. This will take about 15 minutes depending on the ripeness of pears. You can also skip this step if you are using dried fruit or citrus, just heavily butter the bottom of the pan and sprinkle with a handful of sugar.

In the meantime make the cake batter. Whisk together the flours and walnuts with baking powder, baking soda and cinnamon. Beat the remaining 6oz of the butter with the sugar until light and fluffy. Add eggs one at a time, then the vanilla. Slowly beat in the dry ingredients until just combined, scraping down the sides of the bowl halfway through. Remove pears from sauté pan and arrange cut sides down in the spring form pan. Pour any caramel left in pan over top of the pears. Drop batter over pears and spread to an even layer. Place on middle rack in oven and bake until toothpick stuck into the center comes out clean, about an hour. Cool 1 hour be-

fore removing the spring form ring and inverting onto a serving plate.

KOUIGN AMANN

Kouign Amann, or "Breton Cake" is like a yeasted puff pastry with a deeply caramelized crust. Great with coffee in the morning.

1 T dried yeast
¾ cup tepid water
2 cups flour
½ t salt
2 T milk
1 cup sugar, divided
1 stick salted butter, cut into ½ inch pieces and very cold
2 T additional butter, for greasing pan, I did a butter-lined parchment in a spring-form, dusted with a bit of flour

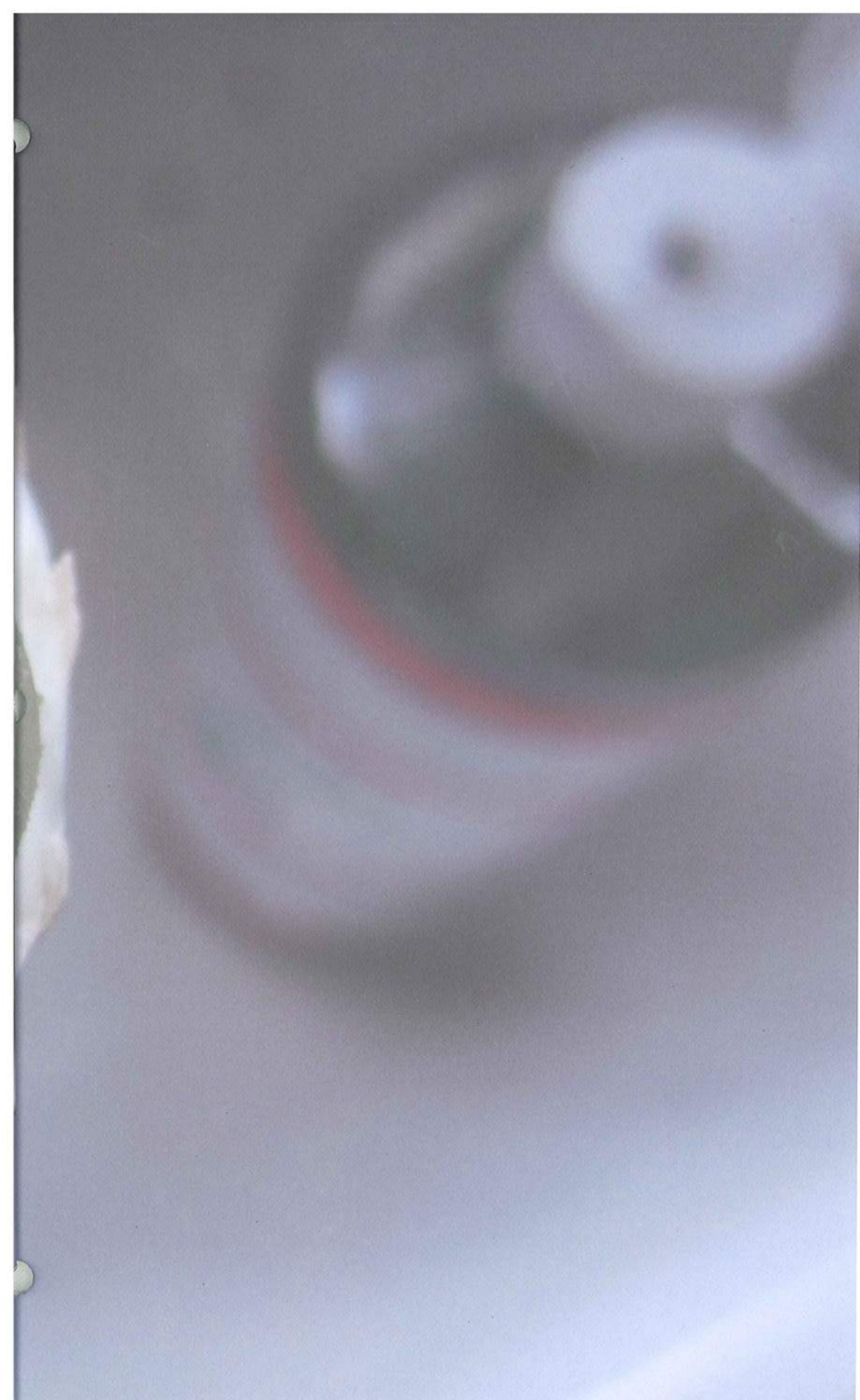
In a bowl, dissolve the yeast in the water with a pinch of sugar. Let stand for 10 minutes. Stir in the flour and salt. Dough should be soft but not too sticky. Knead the dough until smooth and elastic, about 3 minutes. Let rest in a bowl for 1 hour.

Roll the dough into a 12" by 18" rectangle with shorter sides to left and right. It might be sticky and difficult to handle, use a minimal sprinkling of flour if necessary. Distribute butter into center of the dough and sprinkle with ¼ cup sugar. Fold the left side over the butter and then fold the right side over the left side. Sprinkle the rectangle of dough with ¼ cup more sugar and then fold again into thirds, folding the bottom up, and then the top over the bottom to resemble a tall square. Place dough on a heavily sugared countertop, sprinkle with ¼ more sugar on top and roll out into a rectangle like you started with. Fold it into thirds and then chill in the refrigerator for 30 minutes.

Preheat oven to 425 degrees. Roll dough into a circle about the size of the baking pan, sprinkling with sugar. Coax it into the pan, smushing it down if necessary. Drizzle with a little butter and more sugar. Bake for 40–45 minutes, until the top is deeply caramelized. Let stand, then release when warm.

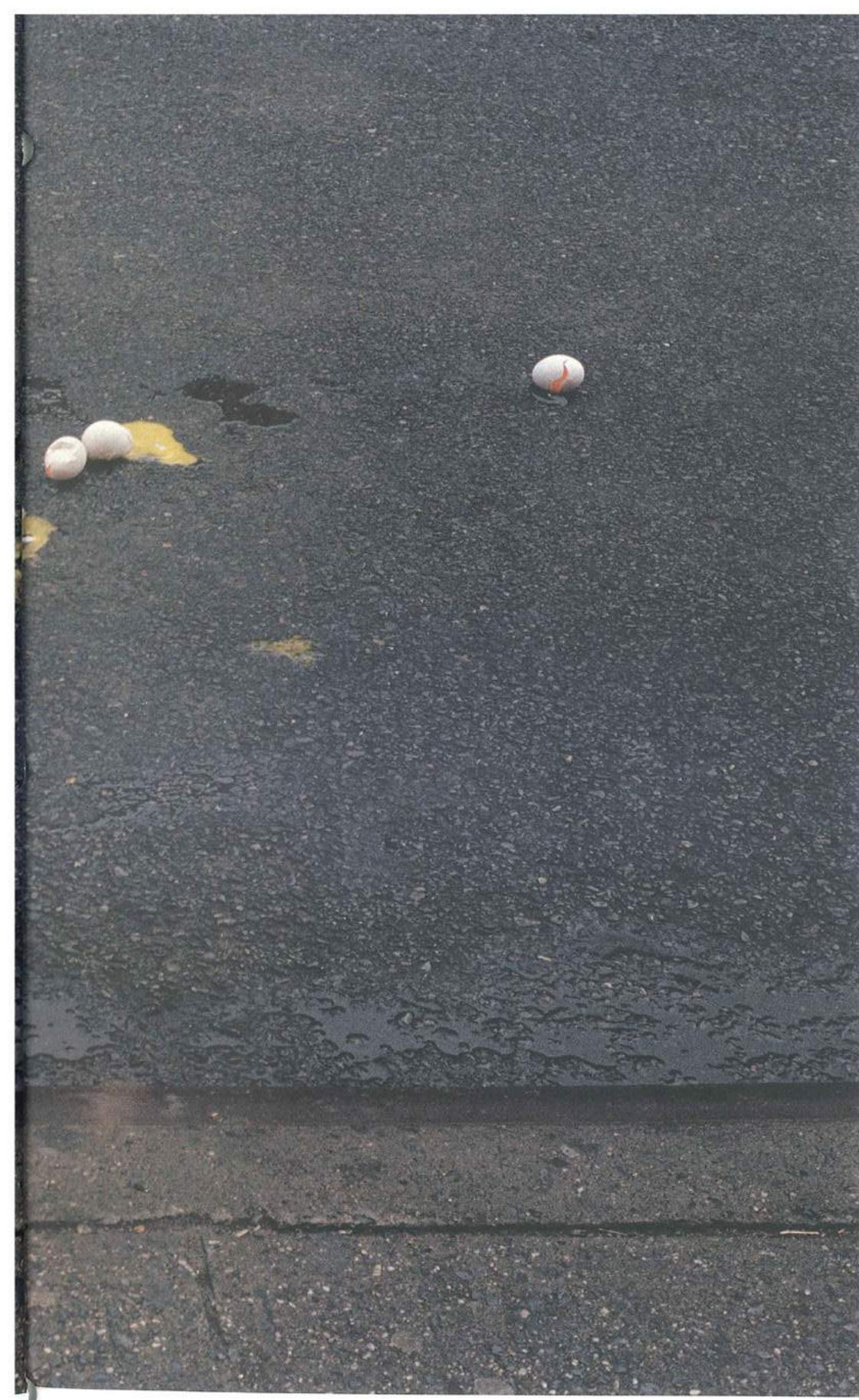
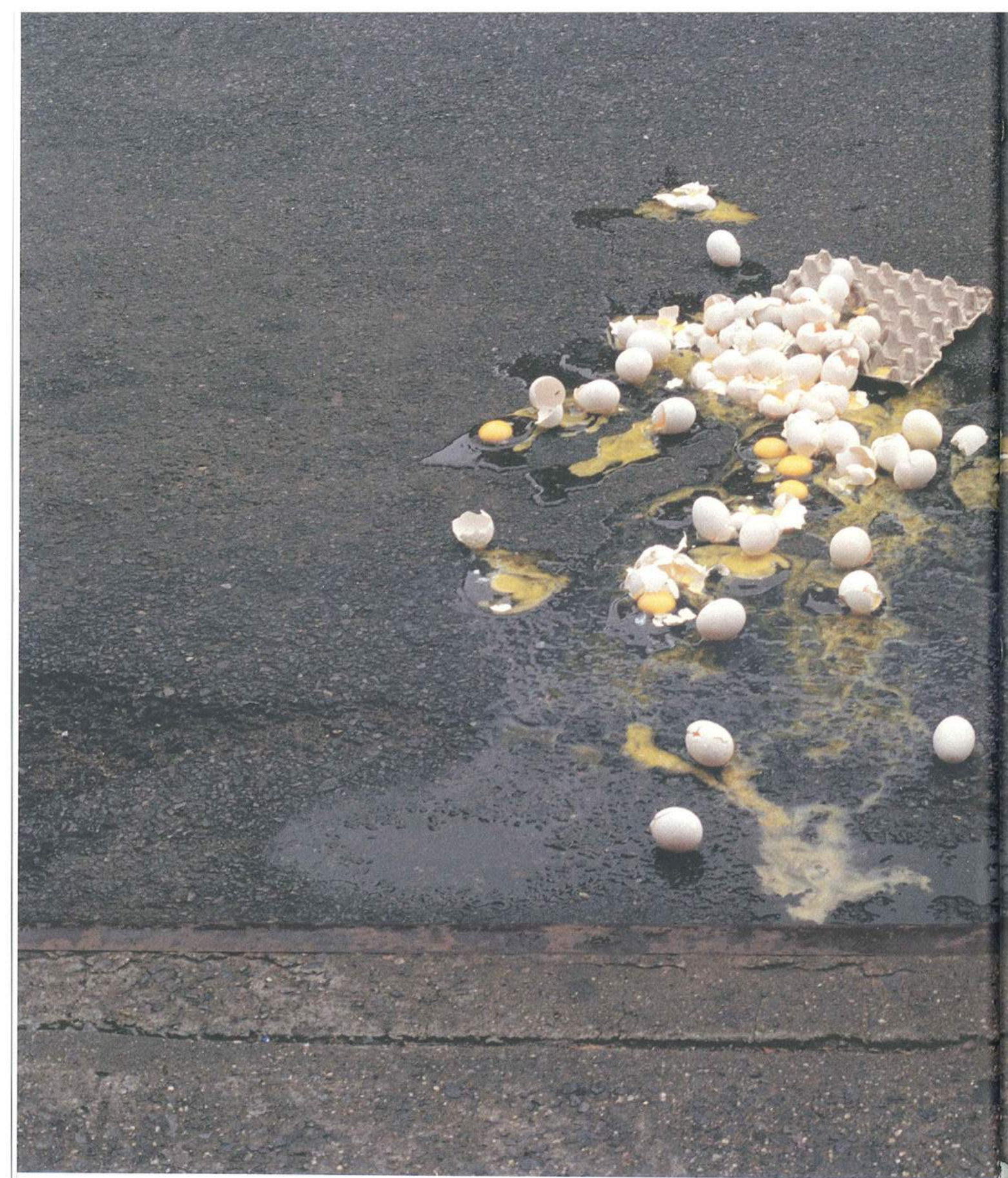


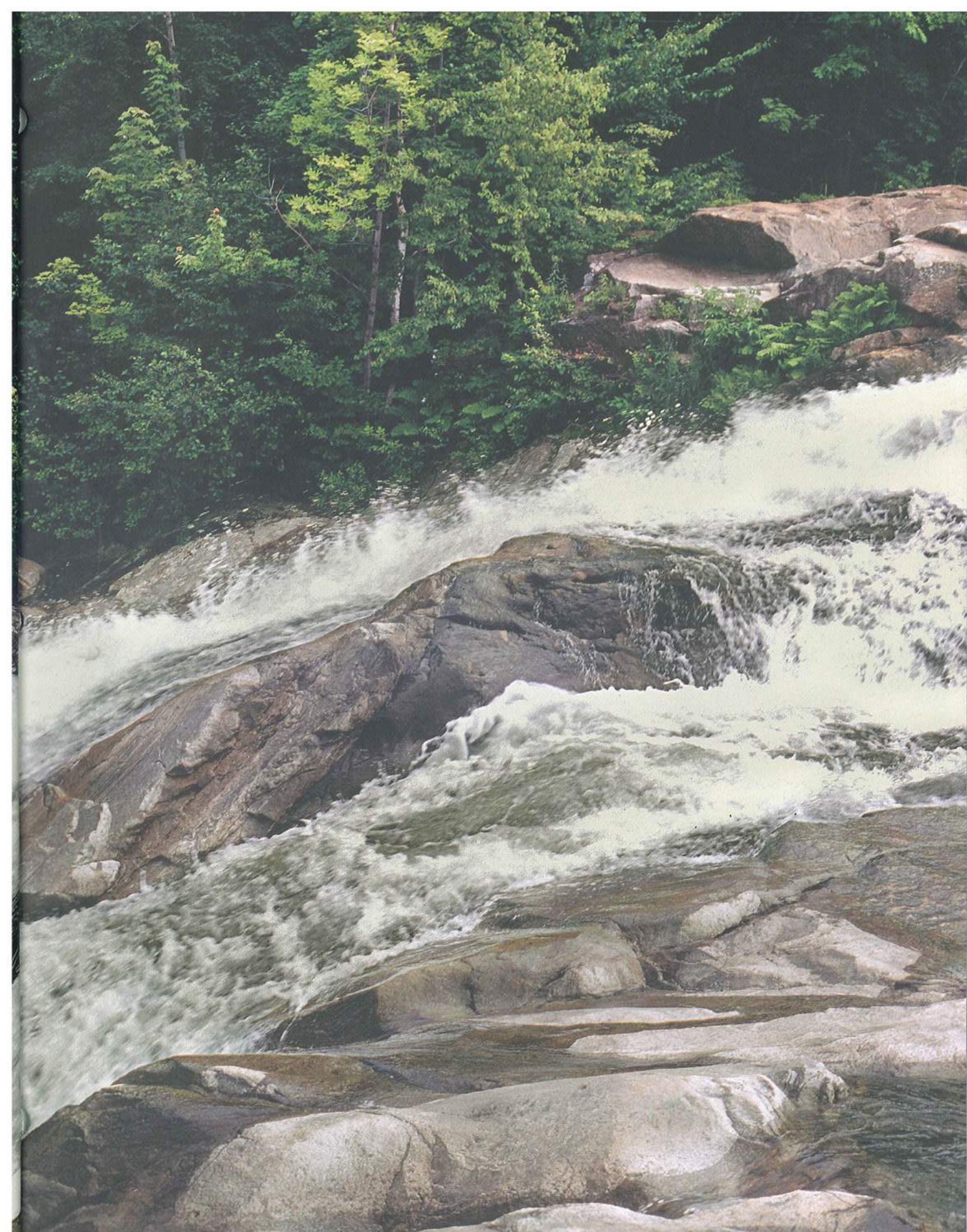
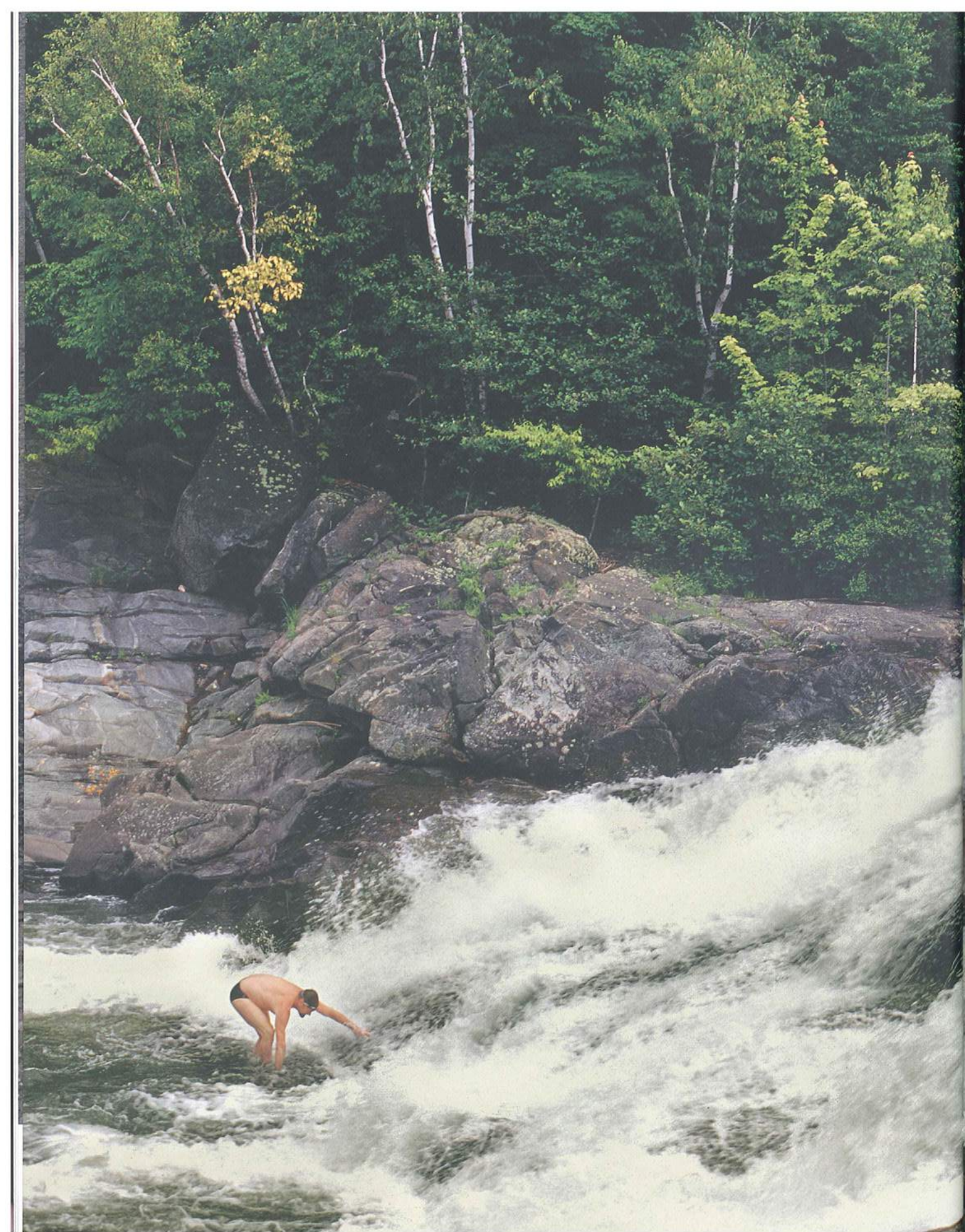
The language of failure is, in its genesis, starkly emotional. So what better way to say it than with images. When staring at a photograph we take in, interpret and travel through time and space in a profound, personal and silent way. Before all the nonsense, a picture transports. Here are a few, brave frames. -AD

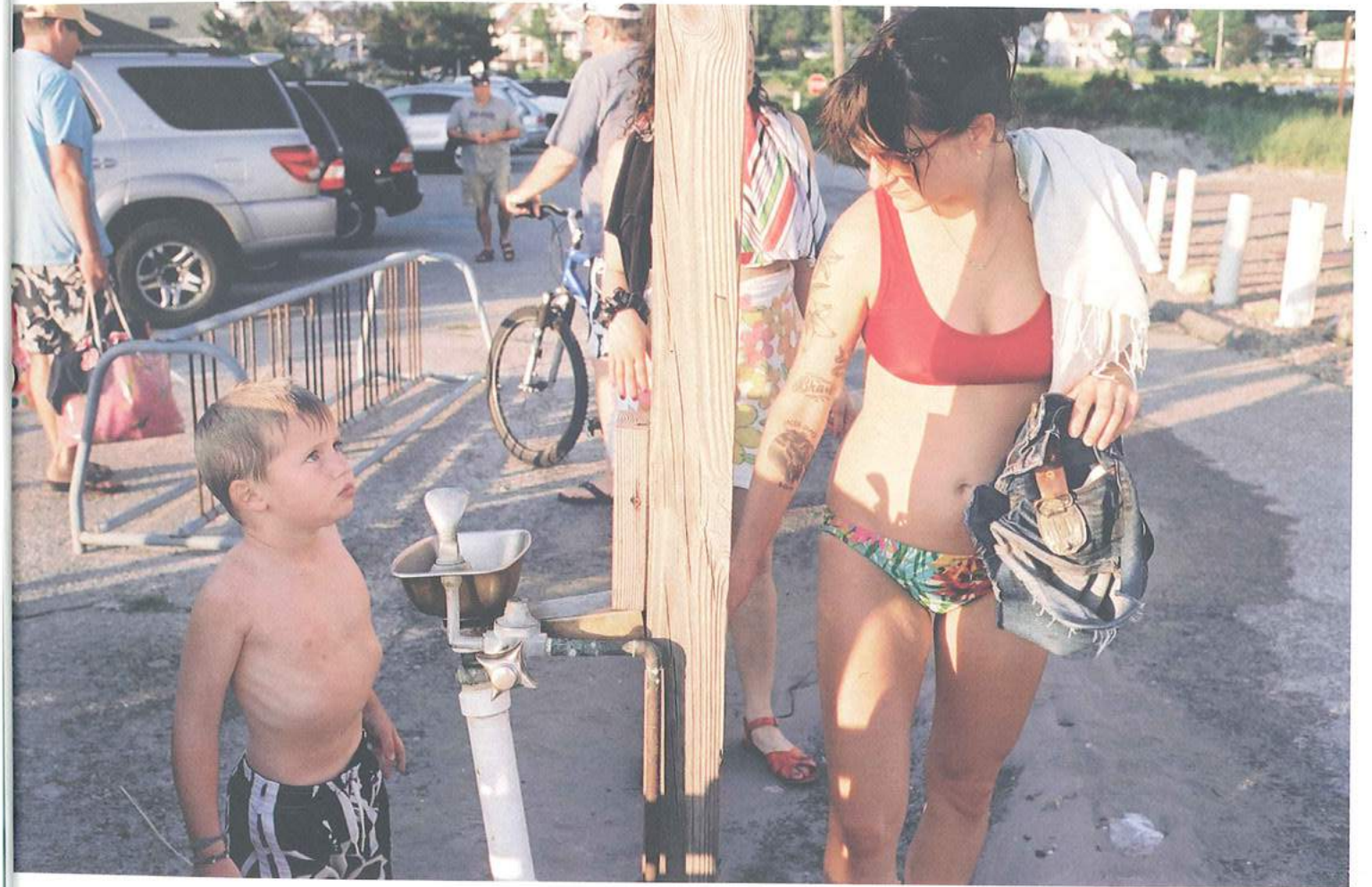
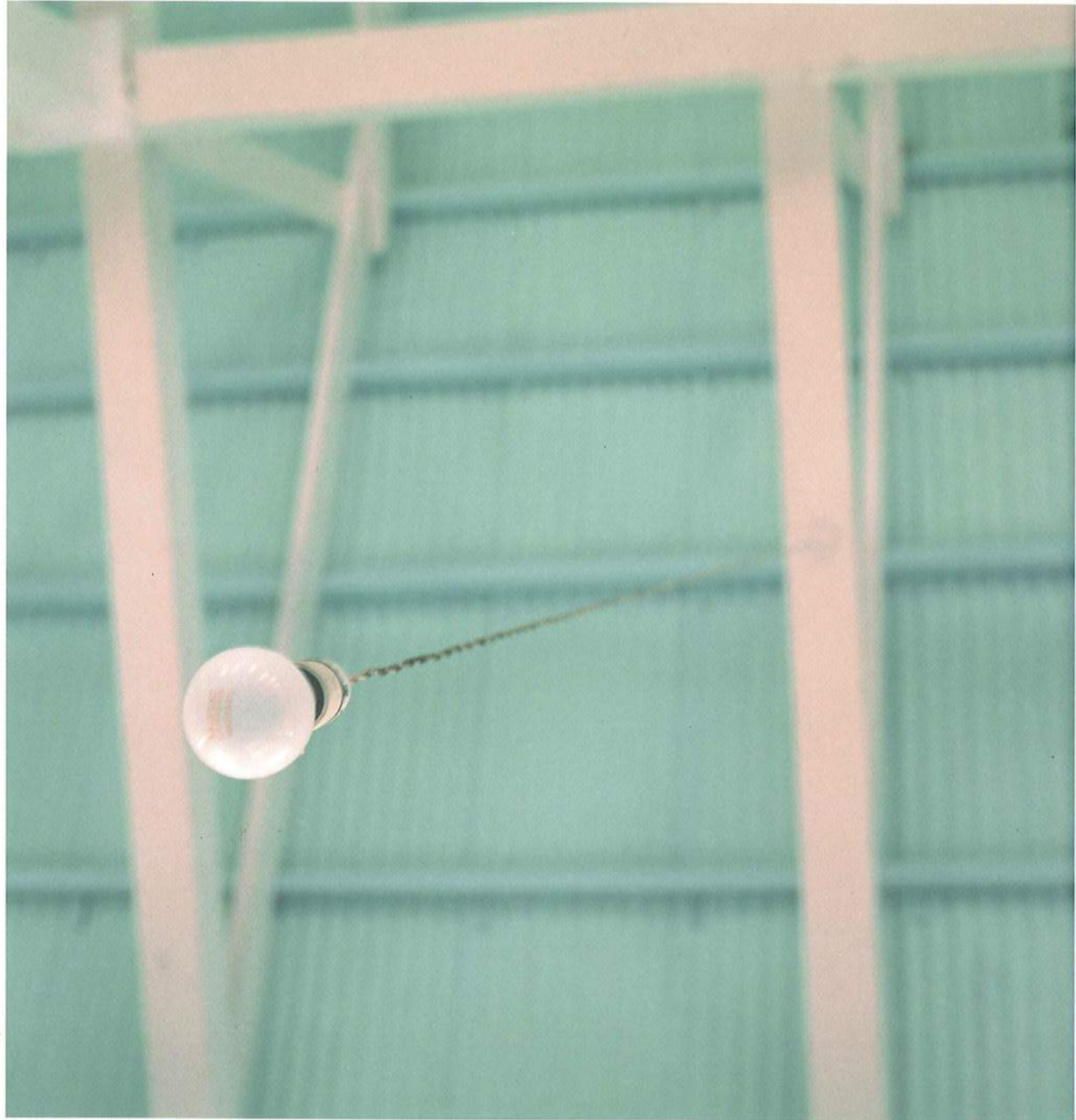






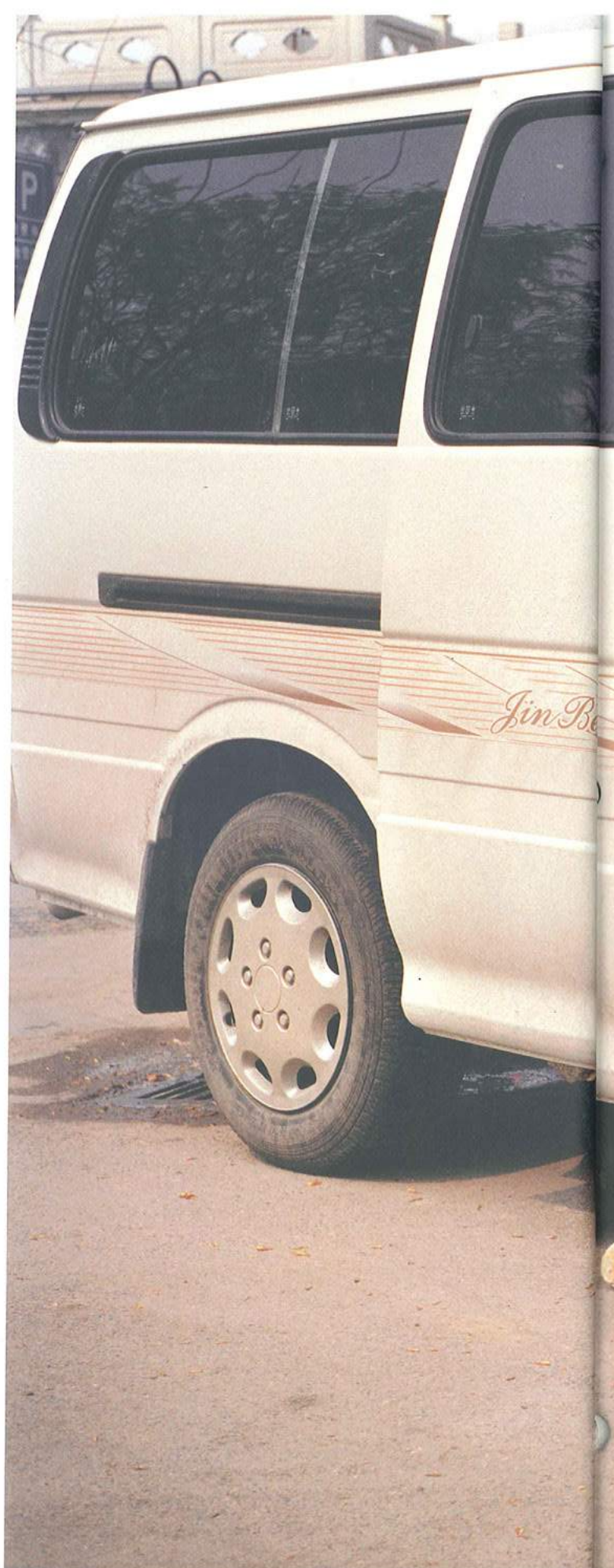


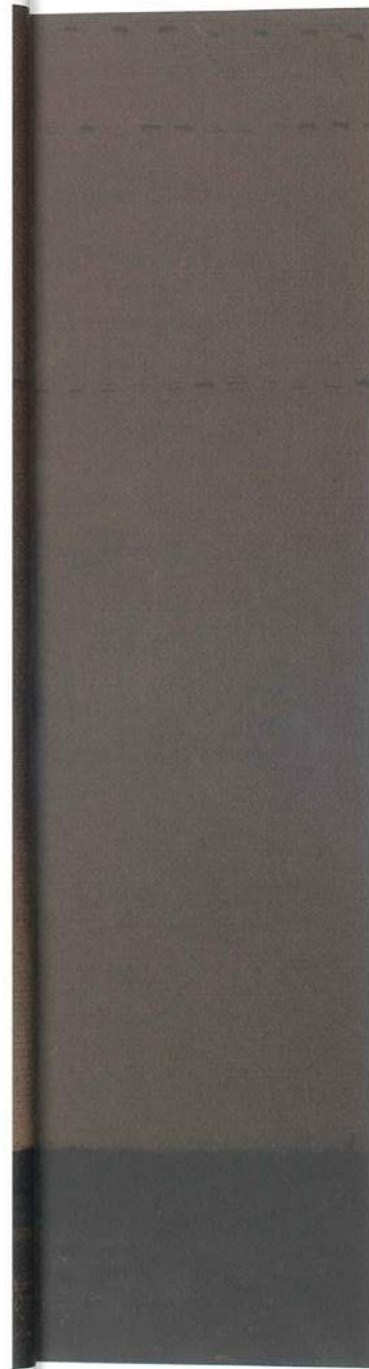














Joshua Wiles

[4, 62, 63]

Julia Gillard

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WINE

BY LEE CAMPBELL



I still remember the first time I saw him. It was one of those basement affairs. An event space chiseled from the underground halls of a downtown restaurant. Rather stuffy with lots of dark corners. Plenty of eager tasters, but not much light or personal space. Indeed, there was a heap of compelling wines to try. Yet, given the lodgings, it's always amused me that many people imagine these gatherings to be something sophisticated.

And there in the midst of all of the swirling and sniffing and spitting, René Mosse sat with his arms folded high on his chest. Confident, bemused, self-assured. I was immediately drawn to him, and therefore to his wine. I just knew it would be all of the things this man looked to be. In a word, I expected that first sip to be perfect. And yet when I nosed up to a glass of his wine it wasn't. Not at all. And that was the moment my love affair with natural wine began.

The term "natural wine" is a befuddling one, even to those of us in the wine trade. To the casual imbibers, it probably seems like a redundant turn of phrase. After all, isn't all wine natural? It's made from grapes, and what could be more natural than grapes?

As it turns out, most of the wines out there, particularly those with the sexiest labels, are made by intervening in the farming and fermentation processes way more than is necessary to create good wine. This is done to create a product deemed marketable. From planting homogeneously-cloned vines and utilizing synthetic pesticides or herbicides in the vineyards, to machine harvesting. From stifling natural fermentation through the crutch of laboratory yeasts and correcting sloppiness by adding sulphur, to the mad-scientist; loading up on shiny high-tech equipment which splits cells or attaches molecules of oxygen. These endeavours are generally what get in the way of a good glass of wine.

Natural winemaking is hard to define. But I can tell you what it's not. That first time I tasted René's version of natural wine, a rush of emotion and sensation flooded through me. In an instant I tasted the sun and the dirt. I tasted someone's passion and labor. I even tasted love. But I also tasted a wine which displayed a certain raw and unfinished quality and almost seemed to flaunt its flaws. And by this, I was taken aback.

My obsession may have begun as early as childhood. Even now, I am able to easily call up a memory of Vacation Bible School, circa 1984. A sweltering church basement, my attention actively surfing the aqua-colored waves of my imagination, only every now and then could I zero in on the glistening and pontificating teacher. Suddenly, she spoke of Jesus turning water to wine. Now that was interesting; Jesus and water and wine. These elements became symbolically, almost mythically, tied together for me and led to my ultimate conclusion: Wine was, in fact, a gift from God. After college, when vodka and tequila and even beer lost their shiny allure, it was wine that continued to hold my attention. It was wine that seemed preordained and most natural to me.

Later on, I explored wine professionally and discovered that other wine lovers (enthusiasts, restaurateurs, sommeliers, shopkeepers, vigneron) would so often treat me like long-lost family, setting an extra plate at the table, offering me a place to lay my head. All this because we cherished a fancy glass of juice. But this juice, in truth, symbolized a way of life. A life which espoused hard work, getting dirt under your fingernails, making time for family and friends, and knowing that nothing is better than having loved ones crowded around a convivial table.

When I eventually learned that not all wine is naturally made, it was a punch to the gut. Long after I had exited that hot church basement and all of its related ways of life, it still felt that Someone or Something had been forsaken. And years later, in that other basement, with a confident man named René, I began to unearth the hard truth of my ideals.

Like so many things made by hand, the little inconsistencies and imperfections of a wine made very naturally—what some would call flaws—become an essential part of its form. The challenge for a vigneron is to ensure that these inconsistencies add to the wine's character, rather than detract from it. It's a delicate balance, and one which is generally mastered only with time and experience. When I crossed paths with René and his wines all those years ago, that balance had not yet been achieved. Although the wines were stimulating and showed promise, the scale tipped too liberally to a place in which the beauty of the wines became muted. So while he was clearly confident in his work, and I was clearly enticed, I wasn't quite convinced.

With each subsequent vintage, I returned to his wines. And ultimately, I discovered the source of René's self-possession. Each year, the wines improved. Each year that beauty came more into focus. My initially cautious interest turned into full-blown fanatic support. What I eventually came to realize was that winemaking, especially winemaking of the extremely natural sort, was a bit of a moving target. Each year, physical conditions, fiscal resources, personal experience and emotional resiliency form a mysterious algorithm which creates the wine that ends up in bottle. The hope is that each year the winemaker is more and more empowered to make the wine he believes in. Therefore, to be an artisan winemaker is not to be mired by the early failures; it is to have the conviction to continue on...hopefully, buoyed by the persistent curiosity of a young sommelier, rather than discouraged by any of her initial criticisms.

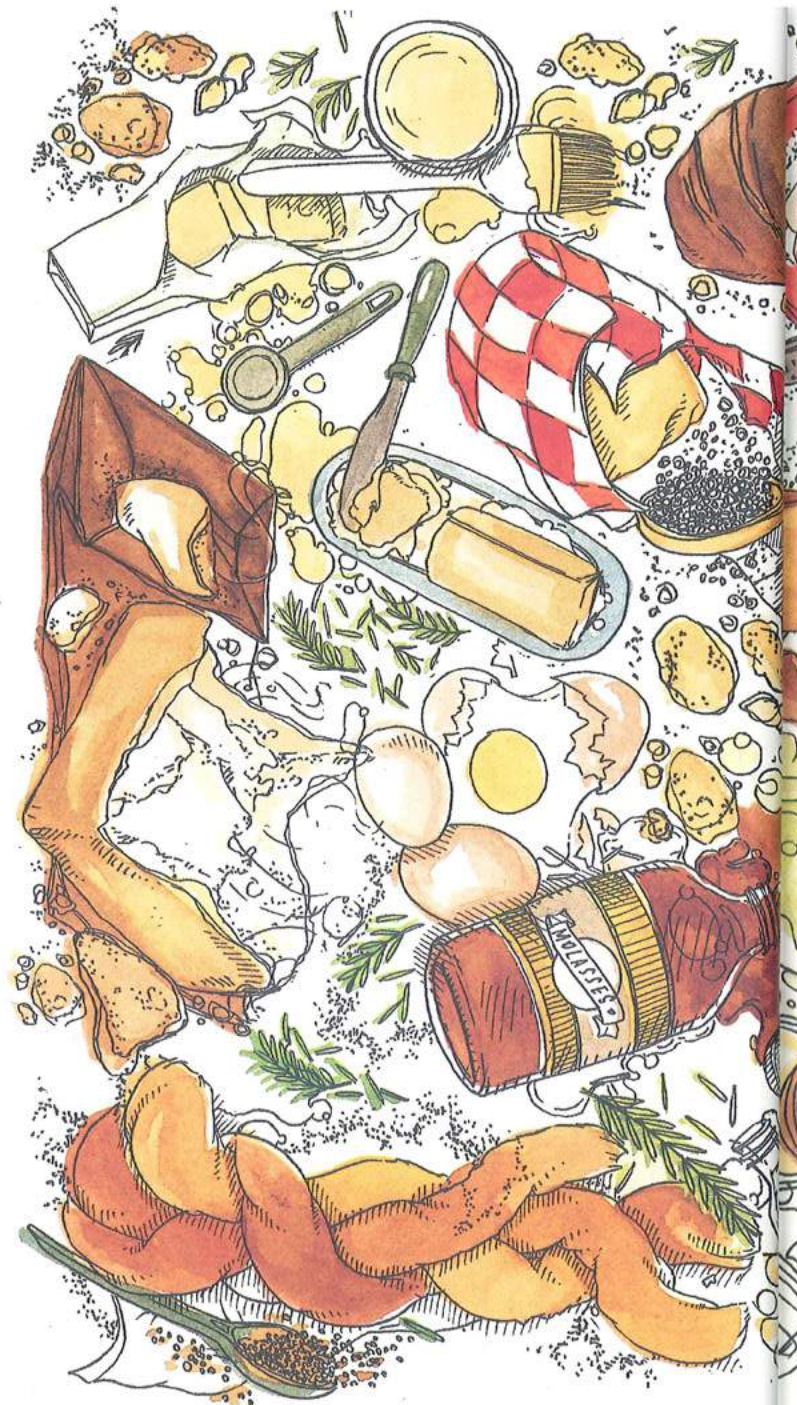
BREAD

BY CASEY ENGELMAN
ILLUSTRATED BY LUCY ENGELMAN

My obsession with bread began before I could fathom baking anything for myself. Throughout my childhood my grandfather, Arnold, would bake us a loaf each Sunday. Driving his Cadillac over to our house as soon as it was finished rising and baking, he delivered it to us still piping hot. Each morning began early, patiently measuring and pouring the necessary ingredients into the basin of his bread machine before simply sealing the lid and waiting. While he waited, allowing the mechanism to do all the work, he quietly tended to his sprouted avocado seeds, a small forest of stalks and jars filling the counter top and windowsills.

When finished, the seeds would be soaked, and the bread packed up in a simple brown lunch bag. He would walk into the kitchen, place the bag on the table and stand back, gazing at us over his plaid-covered belly. With eager little mouths, we would quickly dive into the top of the puff with not even a notion of neat slices or sandwich making. We would gather, the four of us siblings, to devour it joyfully while our elders watched on, laughing at our hunger and haphazard enthusiasm.

With age, my prowess for kitchen exploration enhanced, I gradually became interested in delving into the world of bread baking. After years of fluffy sandwich loaves from the grocery shelves, my family slowly transitioned to opt for more artisan varieties. These crustier things required a knife and our hands in order to be enjoyed. They were more welcoming, often packed in neat brown bags or wrapped nicely



in parchment to maintain moisture. After reading about the mysteries of sourdough starters my younger sister Kirby and I decided we too wanted to take part.

Be it toast in the morning with jam or to sop up runny yolk, crusty slices to sandwich fixings between or a hearty slice to dunk into oils with dinner, this food is ever-present on our family's table. Not too long ago in kitchens across the nation, loaves were set to rise daily, then fetched from the oven early in the morning for slices throughout the day's meals. Kirby and I believed in this tradition, the way it could enhance our home and ultimately our hearts.



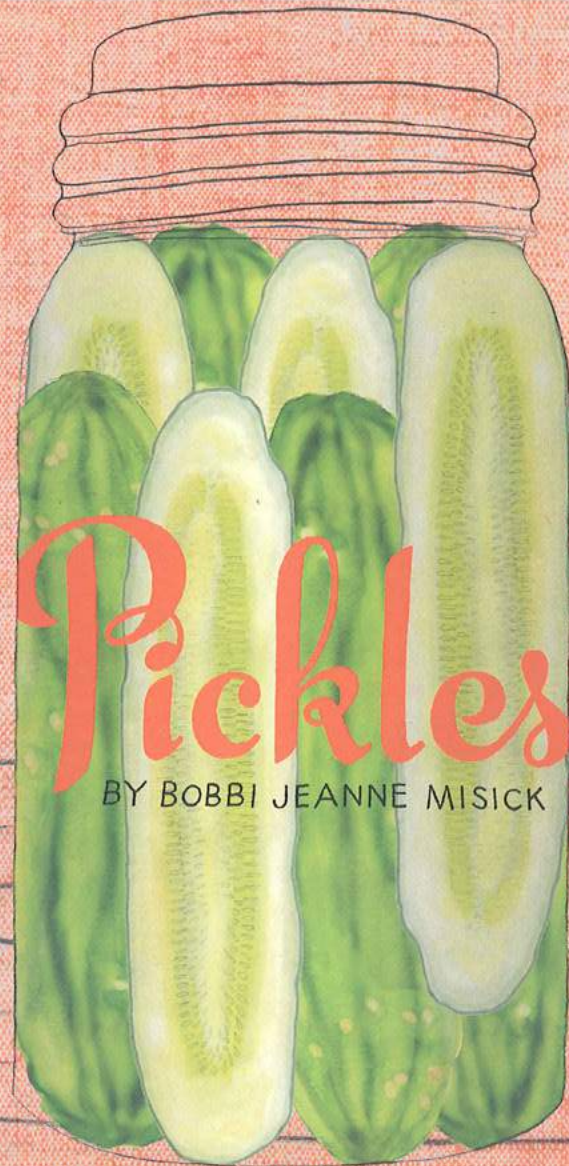
This journey didn't even really begin with bread. We started with the monster of the lake, the levain leviathan, the sourdough starter. Between reading blog entries and newspaper pieces singing the praises of this mysterious goop, we were convinced it would leaven us to bread heaven. A small glass bowl was filled with four tablespoons of flour, the rye variety many stipulated, and wetted with orange juice. Each morning, we would feed the mess more juice, and stir, waiting for it to explode with the yeasty power it had inside. We had read up, it was supposed to become a lively and slimy mess. After four days all we had was a foul-smelling petrified pile of hardened orange rye flour.

Our first attempt at real bread was a hearty pumpernickel. Full of dark molasses flavor and rye density, we were sure this would be a great start to our baking escapade. It was December and the pumpernickel would pair well with the rich stews and thick soups of the season. But alas, after a knead and rise under our favorite white and blue kitchen towel, the baked loaf emerged less than ideal. At first glance, the popped scores and tanned complexion hinted at potential greatness. But the six inch round was as dense and dry as ever. The interior, once sliced, had been sucked clean of all moisture, revealing instead a stiff almost sandpaper surface. Butter smeared atop wasn't even enough to compensate for this arid landscape.

We didn't even wait a day to begin again. If it was possible, we would see it to be true. We could bake, and challah would be our next try. The first challah loaf taught us a lesson all bread bakers know well—patience. After braiding the long slender loaf and letting it rise, our excitement quickly overwhelmed us and we prematurely popped it into the oven before a full second-rise. This, we soon found, is a big baking no-no. Again, the loaf, hard and hardly delicious. A second attempt and full two rises later, we had hit something closer to the light and shiny, golden braid.

After discovering the famed no-knead bake-in-a-pot recipe, we realized that crustiness and fluffiness we so desired. This recipe was something of a shock after our various trials and string of errors. No more than four ingredients composed the recipe, the simplest mixing method brought them all together to perfection. It just took time.

After the first mix, it was required that you tuck in the loaf beneath a floured towel and let it rest. It would need to be revisited twice more before the oven. A few quick folds were all it took to ensure that these steps were met, but they also assured us of a more desirable result. This monitoring, too, made me closer to the process, and happier to deliver something so finely crafted to the mouths I cared about. The process of making bread was full of compassion, I found. Each step required some attention or careful handling in order to be successfully imagined.



Pickles

BY BOBBI JEANNE MISICK

Any regular pickler would have cringed and giggled watching me with my first batch of pickled green beans. I was going on instinct. I combined some sea salt, a little sugar, a whole lot of vinegar, hot chili flakes and dried dill from the local supermarket. No measuring cups or spoons, no heating or cooling. I dumped the liquid and my beans into a washed out Tostitos Salsa jar, slipped it into the fridge door and waited confidently, convinced that I would have crisp, delicious dilly beans in just a few days.

My obsession began a few summers ago with a hopeless crush on and subsequent affair with a young, reckless and tattooed chef who worked in an open kitchen on East 5th street. My good friend was a manager at the tiny eatery, so I had plenty of opportunities to scope him out. I'd stroll into the restaurant late in the evening, refreshed from a day of wasting time, lean over the stainless steel pass and say, "Haaaiieeee," cocking my head to one side and using the

breathy, Jessica Rabbit voice. I had no idea that it would actually work. The guy made me so nervous, I found it difficult to exchange much more than the ordinary greetings with him. Nevertheless, I made sure I delivered them with the sexiest posturing possible.

When I popped the lid a week or so later I was greeted with cloudy liquid, whose odor made my right eye squint and my jaw click. Naturally the sprigs of dried dill stuck to my beans, making eating them a bit of an obstacle. With every bite the sting of vinegar and hot pepper rushed to all the little cuts in my mouth. I loved those overly tangy, squishy green beans. I even chopped them up and put them on salads and in sandwiches, until I couldn't lie to myself anymore. I was on to trying my luck at red onions, radishes and fiddleheads ferns.

The chef's menu featured a salad with pickled green beans that made my mouth drip water. I wanted to eat

his dilly beans with everything and convinced myself that when I was going to the restaurant, it was actually the salad that I was after and not the hot man in whites. When we did start dating, I was probably a bit too excited and overwhelmed. We enjoyed a brief romance of meeting up after our respective closing times, walking his dog and cozying up on the floor of his not-yet-furnished Lower East Side bedroom.

One night it ended, just as quickly and stupidly as it had begun. I sat at a table near the window with my girlfriends. Watching him lean over the bar and share stories of his inkings with a bubbly woman with a half-sleeve at the bar, I realized that I would be walking myself home that night. What did she have that I didn't have? Oh yeah, a fucking koi fish on her left arm.

Once I really realized it was over, which took a few days of pestering my girlfriends with questions and bitching about my feelings, I decided to make my own god-damned pickled green beans. Silent revenge? Who cares.

I blasted Patsy Cline's appropriate melodies of love triangles and lamentations of being left behind and spread out bowls of spices and bags of vegetables on my kitchen counter. Next challenge – one batch of sour pickles and one batch of bread and butters. This time I followed recipes that I'd found online. I lined up mustard seeds, hot chilli flakes, black pepper, pimento, ginger, cloves, sugar, sea salt, apple cider vinegar and tumeric, which stained the kitchen counter for weeks. In-between "I Fall to Pieces" and "He Called Me Baby" I boiled the spices, packed the cucumbers into more washed out salsa and pasta sauce jars, dumped the hot liquids on top, sealed the jars and popped them into the fridge. With the onions left over from the bread and butters I made a special batch of sweet and sour onions with garlic, star anise and hot chili peppers.

I packaged a few pickles from each batch into small Tupperware containers and bicycled them over to a previous ex's apartment, where we tasted pickles, giggled uncontrollably and drank a bit too much wine. I ended up in his bed, like I always did, in his favorite ratty red t-shirt and orange star underwear. Our legs wrapped together, watching a zombie movie, I couldn't help wonder why this couldn't work out, why he couldn't just love me like this every day? Everything was there. What was missing?

Last summer, after ending a brief career as a relationships writer and editor, I intentionally dove into becoming a pickle master. Among my mishaps, are a batch of half-sours, bitter and tongue numbing from too much pimento and star anise. I'm not so sure why the cucumbers turned black or the garlic in the jar turned bright florescent blue. I'm also not sure how they didn't poison my poor pregnant sister who didn't have the heart to tell me she couldn't stand them. She took about two bites before wrapping the rest up in a paper towel, leaving it to sit on the kitchen counter.

There were the perfect garlicky, dill pickles, whose recipe I followed meticulously, with the hopes of some-

thing to rave about, only to bite into the most delicious tasting but mushiest feeling kirbies ever. I was getting closer.

There was the environmental documentary filmmaker, who looked like a douchy version of Olivier Martinez' character from *Unfaithful*, conveniently lived near one of my favorite bars and who unfortunately really liked Aerosmith. I realized I had made a few missteps one morning while having sex to "Dream On." It was playing on his iPhone next to us. I should have gone home soon after. I stayed til noon.

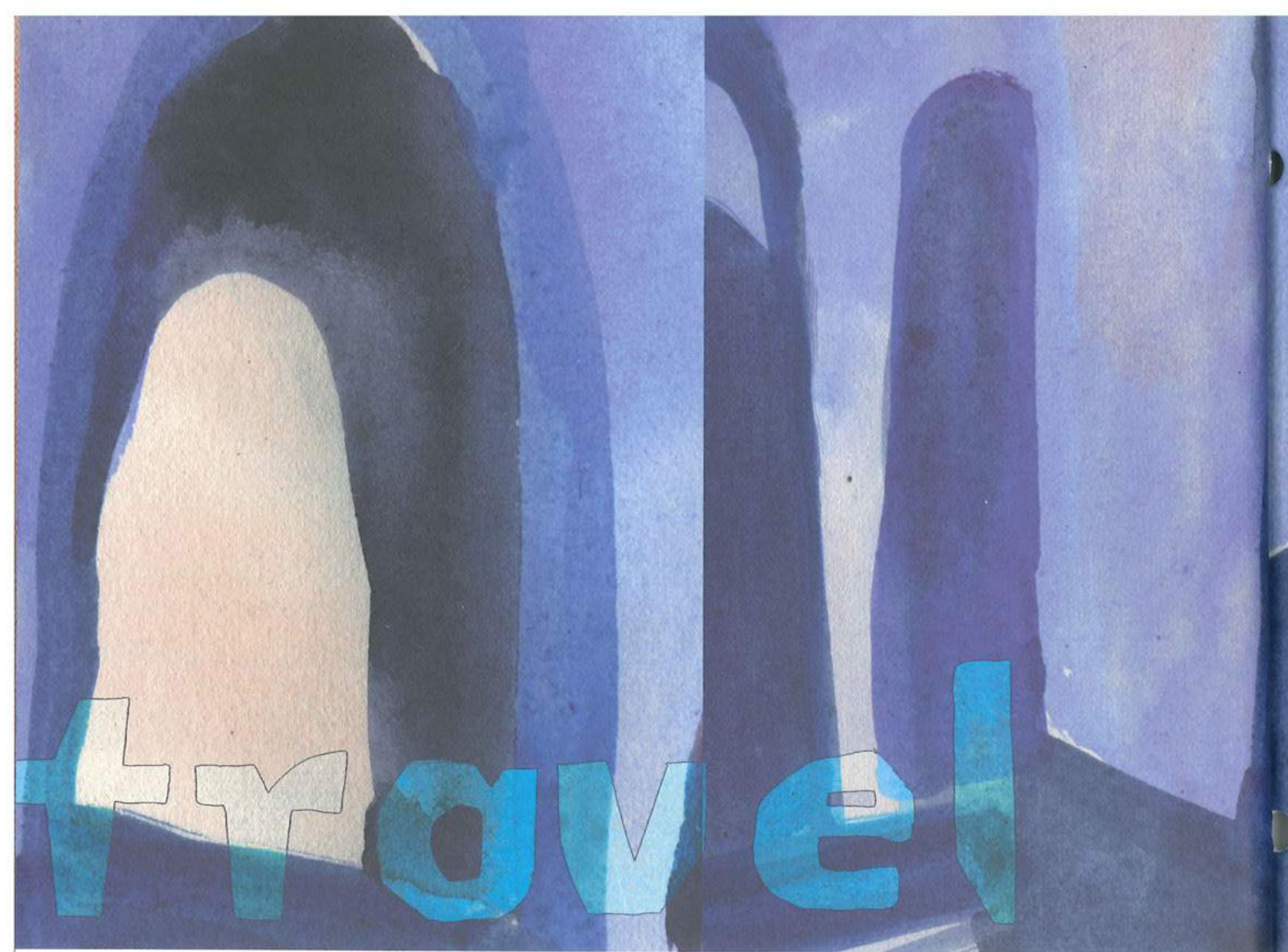
Still there were small victories, a batch of kimchee daikon that Mama O could be proud of and a Japanese sweet and sour radish recipe that still makes me drool a bit when I think of it. I saved the brine. My favorite pickles from last year are a jar of long hot peppers that I keep around to add heat and flavor to anything I'm cooking. After sadly dumping out a too sweet batch of garlic scapes that I had spent a small fortune on, I beamed when I popped the lid on these and bit into a pepper. The rush of heat to my cheeks, the tang of vinegar and the cooling of it all on my tongue.

I offered up the brine from these peppers to season a pot of dinosaur kale that my friend and lover Jason was cooking up the morning after Valentine's Day. We had spent the early hours of that morning frolicking in the street, making out in doorways, laughing a lot and questioning what the fuck we were doing with each other. I slurped up the warm liquid in bed, nervous about another open-ended love affair, but content with the events of the night before. And then... nothing.

"Spring is back. I'm sorry Bobbi," Jason squinted sympathetically while telling me the reason he had disappeared was because he and his ex-girlfriend had gotten back together. "I figured as much," I said, my skin growing warmer with every syllable of this conversation. Leaving the restaurant where we encountered each other I huffed and squirmed with a mixture of anger, annoyance and disappointment.

"I'm sorry too!" I drunkenly shouted once my friends and I had gotten out of earshot. "I'm sorry I ever let you near me, you fucking freak! Ugh!" I stumbled.

As the sun comes out again and I stroll through the farmers market, the season's first Persian cucumbers so smooth and cute, pop up in little baskets. Ramps begin to appear on my favorite menus and I am swept with the desire to fill my bag with vegetables, spread them all over my kitchen table, to line up my spices, to turn up the country music and fill the apartment with the smell of boiling apple cider vinegar for one more summer. No doubt I'll create new mistakes this year. I already have; I tried dumping radishes into the sweet and sour brine that I had saved from last summer. Nothing pickled. I know now that if my cucumbers are unmatched in size they may turn black or mushy or both. And I've come to accept that sometimes the garlic just turns blue.



PAINTING BY Sophia Casas

We were strangers really, but I had faith in my ability to get along with people. Since I had no money at all, he offered to pay for everything. It was flattering and encouraging. Something about our meeting, like all meetings of its kind, felt fated. So I let him buy the plane tickets to Madrid and after several days and trains and busses and a ferry, we found ourselves in Africa.

It smells immense and vital in Morocco. After the orange tree lined streets of Spain, which smelled like the cologne pumped out of clothing boutiques, Africa had only the warm, soothing smell of an animal's skin. We walked across the border among rows of women. They were holding stacks of floral printed fleece blankets that they had bought in the Spanish town, Ceuta, where the ferries land.

On the road beyond the border check point I saw men carrying or leading goats and sheep, one per man. There were no cars, no busses, no taxis. At this point, only five days into traveling, we barely spoke. I found myself wanting to be quiet and to watch and listen. He accused me of being boring, soulless and cold. The energy of our

first conversations disappeared abruptly.

With some difficulty, we convinced someone to take us all the way to Chefchaouen, a medieval town built at the base of the Rif Mountains. Our driver listened to Biggie on cassette tape and he had the bad habit of waiting until the last minute to shift, causing a horrible grind and lurch as we climbed the hills. The landscape became somewhat greener as we moved toward the mountains and still we saw men everywhere, leading goats.

Spanish Jews settled the town in the fifteenth century. They sought refuge in Morocco after the Spanish Reconquista forced them out of the Iberian Peninsula. The entire city has been rinsed in a blue tinted white wash since that time. Accounts vary as to how the practice began. Some one told us the color was thought to repel insects. Now it attracts tourists. The chalky blue covers even the narrow cobbled streets, which climb up and up.

The air is thin and clean there. My friend ran around me in circles photographing everything, photographing me. I kept my hands over my face and twisted out of his frame. He laughed and tried harder to capture me, enjoy-

ing the tension. I felt like a child begging not to be tickled any more. Some fear of coming too near danger, some panic was in me.

From the terrace of our room we could see the rooftops of almost the entire town. On each roof stood tethered at least one goat or sheep. The night was full of the sound of their bleating and the jingle of the small tin bells around their necks. In these mountains, as in most, we could see so many stars that the sky took on a fabric-like texture, creating the impression of movement and folds. It was too dark for the camera and we sat outside quietly smoking hash and drinking tea. Boys played soccer on a dirt field rigged with lights and we could hear their high voices below us.

The call to prayer began at dawn and I counted three different voices. The mosques were all outside the walls of the city, deeper in the mountains, and the songs seemed to come from all directions. After a little while, we got up and went back out onto the terrace.

Below us, families had gathered on their rooftops. The killing of the animals began when the prayers ended.

Men tied their hooves together, heaved them down onto their sides and then cut thier throats. Groups of women stood to the side, ready to clean up and finish the butchering. Blood ran over the rooftops and the women splashed buckets of water over the pools, causing it all to run down the gutters and into the blue hewed streets where it flowed downhill in crimson washes.

When it was over, everything went quiet. The women stepped inside to begin cooking, leaving the butchered animals up on the terraces while they prepared and lit fires. I realized I had been comforted by the sounds of animals moving and breathing all night long. The city felt suddenly empty.

It was not that I felt some indignation at the loss of life. It had been done quickly and respectfully and with religious solemnity. Something else nagged at me and made me uneasy. Smoke filled the air and it had a strange, herbal scent to it. My friend wanted to go out and look around. I put on my boots and he led me out, camera swinging around his neck.

Teenaged boys stood around fires lit in the streets with squirt bottles of petrol. They were thin and wild, their eyes glassy from hash, like tomcats. The hooves and horns of the sheep and goats were arranged on mattress coils suspended above the flames. Burning hair and sweet, heavy wood smoke. We learned the plant used in the fires was one gathered in the hills for this sacrifice. It was some kind of laurel or bay tree.

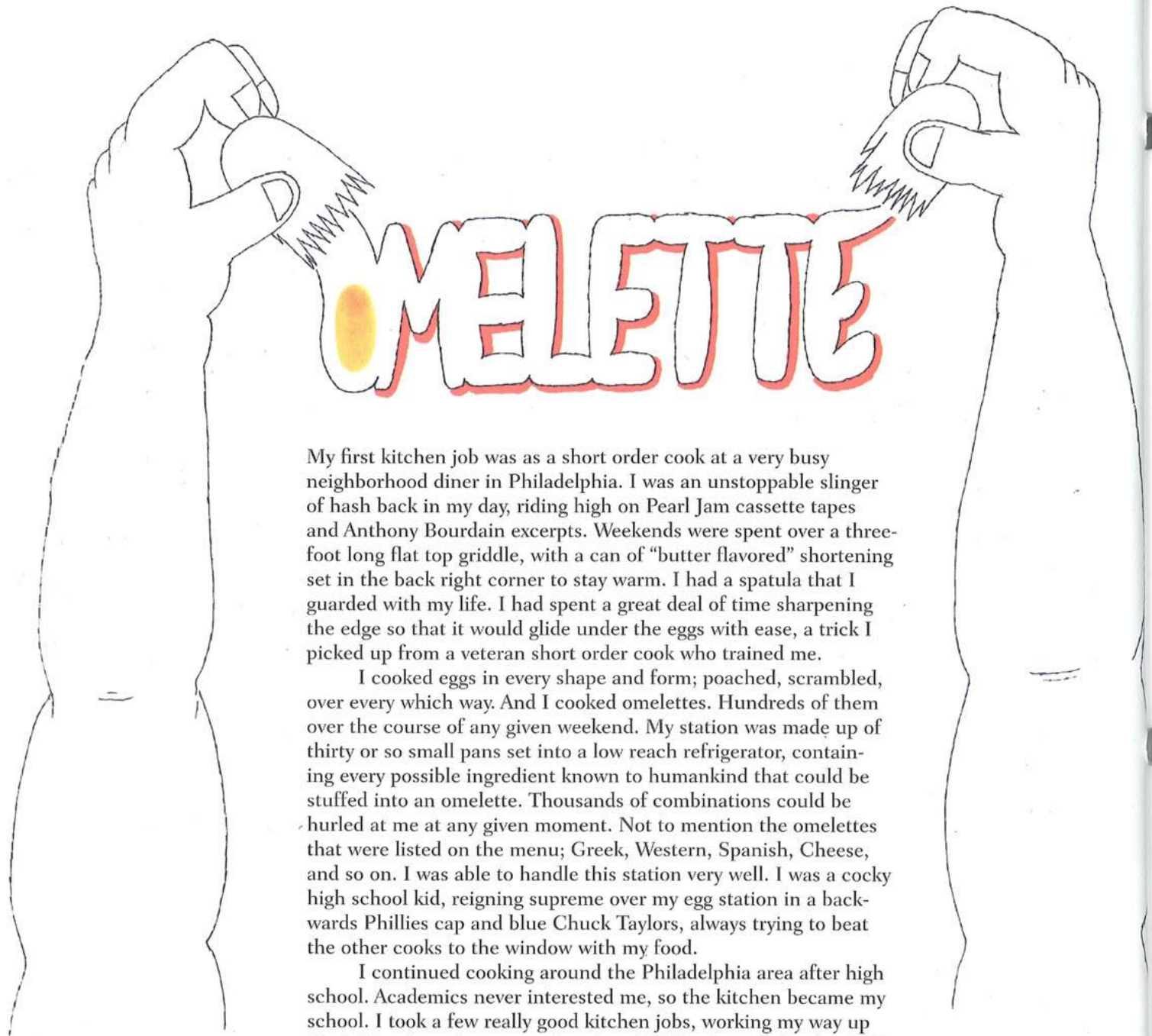
I looked at my friend as he moved about rapidly taking pictures and quizzing the guys in the street. He was getting that same glazed over, red rimmed look because he had been smoking almost constantly since we had arrived. His movements were jerky and loud, his camera garish. The boys laughed at him and posed in front of the fires.

Leaning heavily against a wall, it occurred to me that I couldn't leave him. He had our room key and I had no money of my own. I would have to endure the whole trip. He would lead me around and photograph and examine me and I would have to let him. I would be picked apart. I would stop being me for a while and become a representation or an idea.

And the feeling of danger that seemed to be running below me, or that had been dissolved into the air? It had something to do with the extreme passivity that I had adopted from the moment I met this stranger. I had not noticed how precariously I had positioned myself or even that I had been led into a situation in which I had so little power.

He turned to me and took my picture. He said, "Why are you like this?" and held out his camera for me to see. "You look so small and sad and ugly." Smiling, I said, "I don't know what you mean." It was all I could do, to dislike him and to let him see it.

—FALLON FLAHERTY



My first kitchen job was as a short order cook at a very busy neighborhood diner in Philadelphia. I was an unstoppable slinger of hash back in my day, riding high on Pearl Jam cassette tapes and Anthony Bourdain excerpts. Weekends were spent over a three-foot long flat top griddle, with a can of "butter flavored" shortening set in the back right corner to stay warm. I had a spatula that I guarded with my life. I had spent a great deal of time sharpening the edge so that it would glide under the eggs with ease, a trick I picked up from a veteran short order cook who trained me.

I cooked eggs in every shape and form; poached, scrambled, over every which way. And I cooked omelettes. Hundreds of them over the course of any given weekend. My station was made up of thirty or so small pans set into a low reach refrigerator, containing every possible ingredient known to humankind that could be stuffed into an omelette. Thousands of combinations could be hurled at me at any given moment. Not to mention the omelettes that were listed on the menu; Greek, Western, Spanish, Cheese, and so on. I was able to handle this station very well. I was a cocky high school kid, reigning supreme over my egg station in a backwards Phillies cap and blue Chuck Taylors, always trying to beat the other cooks to the window with my food.

I continued cooking around the Philadelphia area after high school. Academics never interested me, so the kitchen became my school. I took a few really good kitchen jobs, working my way up the ladder. Learning as much as I could. The days of slinging hash at a greasy spoon diner were miles behind me. The years rolled on and I found myself married and living in the suburbs. My wife and I decided that we needed an environment that was a little more exciting than our current surroundings. Life was catching up to everyone we knew. All of our friends were buying homes and starting families. Which was fine for them, but we were not quite ready to settle down. We thought that maybe the best thing for us was to move to New York. I was Brooklyn bound.

I took the bus to New York on a cool spring day. I was nervous walking in the door. I sat down at the bar and looked over the lunch menu. I ordered some food, ate my lunch, and after paying the check asked the bartender if they were hiring cooks. She went into the kitchen and the Sous-chef came out to talk with me. A month later, after a day spent in the kitchen, numerous emails back and forth with the chef, and countless trips between

Philly and Brooklyn to search for apartments, I was hired to be a line cook at Diner. I was to start right away. My wife, due to prior commitments at home was to join me in our new city two weeks later. I packed the car with only the bare essentials, and drove up the turnpike listening to early Springsteen albums. I always loved *Born to Run*, but now it actually meant something to me, as I was starting a new life for myself.

My initiation into the Diner kitchen was something we all know as Brunch. I knew the day would come. I would stand at the ready to face down a dining room full of hung-over revelers. My position was the egg station. I would be responsible for banging out a few dozen or so sunny eggs to sit atop a number of the day's dishes. And I was to cook omelettes. The day before brunch service another line cook showed me how to make the Diner omelette, and his was textbook perfect. The omelette was a silky custard, pulled off the heat at just the right moment to barely set the eggs, encasing it all in a smooth canary yellow outer layer. He flipped it out of the pan into a tri-fold like some kind of line cook origami. This was not the omelette of my younger days just poured onto a flat top griddle, cooked until it was brown, and gathered up by

its sides before being thrown on to a plate. I was able to make a few during this little practice run and they were pretty good. Fueled by my arrogant early days at the other kind of diner, I thought this would be a piece of cake station for me to work.

Brunch began; I had to make three omelettes at a time, along with perfectly seasoned crisp potatoes as garnish. I had what seemed like hundreds of sunny eggs to cook, as the Sous-chef barked out orders, adding more and more to the count. Every omelette ordered I had to make twice. They were over cooked, or too small, or maybe had a small hole in them. Try as I might I couldn't flip them out of the pan the right way, allowing them to fall into a graceful rectangle. The orders kept coming in, the ticket paper spewing out of the machine like an erupting volcano. I was personally responsible for holding up the other cooks as they waited for me to get my eggs right. All of their dishes were ready and I was behind, their food was becoming cold while it sat there waiting for a classic sunny egg to be placed on the plate. It was hell on earth; I was becoming more and more disappointed in myself with every omelette that was rejected by the Sous-chef. The station in front of me was a total disaster. I had been

ILLUSTRATIONS BY Jeffrey Kriksciun



defeated. I might as well be lying there in a pool of my own blood, ready for the buzzards to swarm and eat me as I took my last breath.

That day stayed with me throughout the coming week. I was mad as hell. I should know how to do this. I can't go around saying that I am a cook, without knowing how to properly cook a damn omelette. The weekend was fast approaching and I lost more and more sleep with every day that crept closer to me and that egg station. I even went as far as to research eggs. I went straight to "On Food and Cooking," by Harold McGee. I read about coagulation of eggs, about protein strands squeezing out moisture, about time and temperature effects on eggs. I was determined to get this right. I refused to be the weakest link.

I laid in bed with my eyes wide open Friday night, anxious to get in there and reclaim victory. I planned it all out in my head. How my station would be set up to maximize space, and efficiency. I knew what to do, now I just had to put it into play. I went in extra early that morning to get set up. I had it all just how I wanted it to be. I refused to let the situation control me; I was going to take charge of this thing. The Sous-chef and I looked at each other prior to service.

"You got this?" he asked.

"Yeah, I got this."

The revelers slinked in the door just as they did the previous weekend. And just as it happened the weekend before and probably every weekend since the dawn of time, the orders came flooding in. Brunch is never nice to you. All those pictures you see of chefs in their pristine kitchens, gently plating food, using tweezers to float garnishes atop the plates? I can guarantee that none of those pictures were taken during brunch service. Brunch is a savage beast. It goes right for your jugular. And there I was ready to take aim and fire with the first call of an omelette.

With my head down, teeth clenched, and heart pounding, I grabbed a pan from the ledge above the stove. I turned the burner on somewhere between high and low. I dropped a small ladle of clarified butter into the pan, gave it a swirl and reached for the eggs. As soon as they hit the hot pan I knew that I only had a few seconds to get this right. The Sous-chef was barking his orders to the squad but I tuned it out for a few brief seconds. I seasoned the eggs with salt and pepper, and I reached for the rubber spatula. I began swirling the eggs around in the pan. Watching them come together. Bringing the outer layer in towards the center to evenly distribute the heat. I removed the pan from the burner when I felt the eggs were just hot enough. I dropped a spoonful of goat cheese down the center, followed by grilled scallions. I knew that with every second passing these eggs were still cooking and it was only a matter of time before they were too tough to send out. I set the pan below the broiler to gently melt the cheese and glaze the top of the omelette. I brought the pan back down. It looked good, but now

came the hardest part, getting it out of the pan.

This was it, the moment of truth. I refused to look up. I could feel the chef's eyes on me, praying that I get this right. It's the bottom of the ninth, tied game, two outs, a 3-2 count. This was my moment. I switched my hand to an overhand grip. Brought the pan over the plate and began to twist my wrist while my other hand guided the omelette into form. I held my breath, and flipped the pan over.....

It was over cooked. Covered in brown stripes like a sad little tiger. My heart sank into my chest. I wanted to puke. I think my teeth were still clenched. What could have gone wrong? Why did this happen? How could it be? Maybe I just can't do it. Maybe I should just pack my things and leave. I was horrified.

I spent weekend after weekend working that station. Even when I was given the choice of what station to work I chose the egg station. I stayed focused through service, and when I cooked a really good omelette I made a mental note of everything I did to achieve it. What pan I used, how high the burner was turned up, how long I let it sit on the flame, and so on. I counted the seconds it took for the eggs to coagulate in the pan, the time it took to melt the cheese just right. I wanted to be able to meticulously recreate that perfect omelette time and time again. I became obsessed with the timing, the temperature, and the graceful flip onto the plate. I watched the other line cook make his omelettes and copied his every move.

Eventually, with a lot practice and patience on my Sous-chef's behalf, I was able to cook an omelette, actually several at once. I no longer lost sleep over cooking a few dozen eggs. I earned the trust of my Sous-chef and fellow cooks. In a way I began to be typecast as, "The omelette guy?" I guess you could say that I had come full circle from my years rocking the griddle in Philly to my current position as a cook at Diner. Who knew a simple egggy fold could possess such powers of transformation.

BY:
JOSH
SOBEL

TREES

MEGAN



OFFNER

Just the other day, I found myself on the receiving end of an impassioned one-way conversation with a local guy named Butch. He was telling stories about dowsing. Apparently, there had been numerous failed attempts at digging wells as people tried to develop the fallow farmland around his house. They dug down only to find shelves of limestone, hundreds of feet thick. If they persisted and drilled their way through the stone, they "scared the water away" with all their aggressive banging around.

"Water can change its course," Butch tells me, daring me not to believe him. Apparently all he needs to "witch water," or find the sweet spots for a well, are a couple of straightened out metal hangers. He walks across the land holding the metal rods right out in front of him, and when water is below there is no stopping the rods from crossing.

I recently moved to Warwick, NY to work with trees. My draw to this land was itself a kind of divining. Not long after the seed of a dream to start a regenerative forest management/sustainable local wood business was planted in my mind, the land, the mill, and the support for it all sprung up here. I moved up from Brooklyn with a long-time friend who I had started dating. After just a couple of months, he left to take a job out west in order to lend us financial support as I built the business. Alone in a rotting cult-built 54-sided house in the middle of nowhere, whenever I feel scared, overwhelmed or unshakably sad, the trees are my comfort, my solace, my friends. Whenever I feel hopelessly isolated, the trees remind me that I'm not alone. They invite me up to sit in one of their crooks, absorb my fears, and soothe my heart. Always challenging me to accept their wintery death only for the certain glory of spring.

At a forest owner's workshop that I attended some months ago, it was a slap in the face to hear a Department of Environmental Conservation forester say that our forests, my friends, are dying. Afterwards, I asked him what this meant. He was quick to say that there would always be forests, but that the forests as we know them are disappearing.

Many of the trees we know and love, oaks, hickories, ash, walnut and cherry, aren't regenerating. With globalization came the spread of innumerable foreign forest pathogens that our trees have little-to-no resistance to, as well as "exotic invasive" plants that colonize forest floors and vines that strangle trees. Due to industrialization, our forests struggle against air pollution, acid rain and deteriorating soils. Climate change is sending our ecosystems into a tailspin and an ever-growing deer population continues to feast upon hardwood saplings. We have no next generation when our trees die.

Currently, the tree most at risk is the ash tree (*Fraxinus Americana*), a tree often depicted by ancient cultures as the tree of life, or the world tree. In New York State about 1-in-12 trees is an ash tree, approximately 900 million trees. Not only does ash thrive in our forests, it was commonly planted as a favorite yard and street tree. Ash was, ironically, planted to replace trees that died from Dutch Elm Disease, the last great forest blight.

There are sixteen ash species on this continent and all may be completely decimated by the Emerald Ash Borer (EAB), a small beetle that is currently at the top of the Northeast's forest pathogen most wanted list. The EAB larvae are what kill the tree. The beetle lays its eggs underneath the bark, and when they hatch they begin feeding upon the tree's cambium layer, the layer just beneath the bark that transports water and nutrients to the whole of the tree. As the larval mass feasts its way around, the tree starves to death.

EAB was first identified in packing material shipped to Michigan in 2002, though it may have existed undetected for years according to some experts. There are currently no means to stop the beetle from spreading, as it has no local predators. Efforts to slow the beetles' advancement are improving, through regulations on the transportation of firewood, their main vector, and by creating "sink trees" in affected forests. These girdled trees, trees with a ring of bark stripped away, in their weakened state are more attractive to the EAB. The colonized trees are then removed and destroyed, lessening the pressure of the EAB populations in that forested area.

Biologists are trying everything from importing and releasing several species of Asian wasps to prey on the EAB larvae, to developing expensive chemical treatments that are only viable on a limited scale. There has yet to be a silver bullet, but these efforts buy scientists time to develop other solutions, arguably at the risk of introducing other factors that could alter the long-term balance of our ecosystems.

When infested ash trees die, two to four years after EAB colonization, the ones left standing are fragile and known to shatter becoming potentially hazardous and expensive. The remaining gaps in the forest, if unmanaged, often lead to the colonization of aggressive invasive plants, increased erosion and less storm water absorption. An 18" diameter

white ash collects 2,400 gallons of water every year in its leaves, and the root system can hold 27 times the water of a bare soil. EAB invasions typically result in many trees dying simultaneously, so if the affected community is unprepared, the aftermath can be physically and economically devastating.

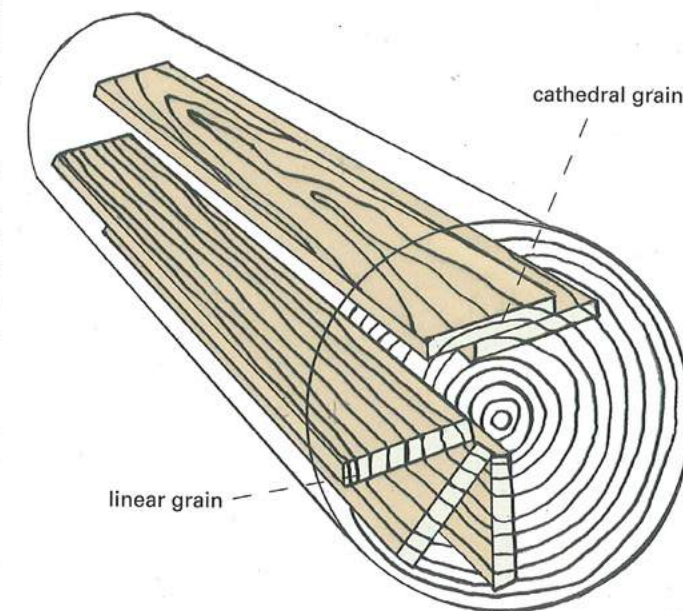
To date, the EAB has already been responsible for the deaths of over 60 million ash trees across the Midwest, the Northeast and Canada. At the rate they are presently spreading, the extent of their damage may cost homeowners and local governments across 30 states billions of dollars for ash treatment or removal and replacement.*

It hasn't been easy to see the positive, the potential opportunities and lessons in such a seemingly dire situation. However, in the shadow of beyond-peak-oil and climate change, and on the coattails of the local foods movement, we are finally grasping on a larger scale the pressing need to localize goods and services. With its relatively low moisture content, ash is a quick drying hardwood perfect for jump-starting local wood product industries. It is excellent for making everything from flooring to furniture, boats to baseball bats. It turns well for making things like tool handles, and steam-bends beautifully to make musical instruments. I've spoken with many ecologically minded individuals seeking a lighter-colored, less distressed option to reclaimed wood that they can still feel good about. Some of the wood has grayish streaks from mineral stains or insect damage, which is desirable for those looking for interesting character-grade lumber.

Even after kiln drying, ash can attract other non-EAB insects if left in storage. Therefore, it is best if used in a timely manner and can only be hoarded at the risk of losing its value. Once EAB is discovered in an area, that county is quarantined, thus restricting the transport of non-kiln dried ash and making the establishment of local markets not only imperative, but convenient and logical. Examining these realities brings to mind Occupy Wall Street-esque conversations about forms of currency beyond money and of resource-based economies. By processing the available material from our dead and dying trees and sharing or bartering the abundance, we have a practical alternative to monetary exchange, one that fosters resiliency by creating jobs and minimizes dependence on outside resources.

To create this alternative, relationships between individuals, businesses, and state and local organizations need to be established, as does the infrastructure to harvest, transport, store, process, market and distribute the wood products. Most of these components already exist independently, so little is needed by means of investment if we pool our resources to work together for a common good.

The challenges are to deepen our trust in others in order to share resources, and to work against our human tendency to act only when we have to (often when it's too late) and start working on creating these systems now, while there is still economic value in our dead and dying ash trees and while we have the luxury of (in permaculture speak) a graceful descent.** Concurrently, the transport of heavy materials, such as lumber, is becom-



Ash has a lovely white-to-golden hue and a beautiful linear grain if quarter sawn, or a dynamic "cathedral" grain if flat sawn closer to the edge of the log.

The galleries, the channels that larvae eat in the wood, look like road maps, abstract expressionistic swerving lines that seem to be circumventing some invisible topography. Stare at these channels long enough and it is not difficult to see how our human galleries, our roads, superhighways, and developments cut off the continuous flow of life that our ecosystems need to thrive.

ing more cost prohibitive as the price of fossil fuels continue to escalate. Thus, whatever expenses are incurred in setting up these municipal systems to manage local wood would likely pay for themselves over time in fuel savings and with the elimination of extraneous middlemen.

It is also clear that we need an affordable alternative for heating our homes. Lower grade trees and branches that are unsuitable for higher-value wood products are a great option, as ash has one of the highest BTU ratings (23.6 per cord). Remarkably, due to its low moisture content it can be burned "green", i.e. freshly cut, making it (yet again) ideal in this time of transition. As a rule, firewood must be seasoned for a year before it is burned, As Lady Ceila Congreve illuminates in the last stanza of "The Firewood Poem":

*Poplar gives a bitter smoke,
Fills your eyes and makes you choke,
Apple wood will scent your room
Pear wood smells like flowers in bloom
Oaken logs, if dry and old keep away the winter's cold
But ash wet or ash dry a king shall warm his slippers by.*

After the firewood and other added-value wood products are processed, the remaining ash material can be mulched to less than one cubic inch (the size on which EAB cannot sustain itself) and composted, used for agricultural or gardening purposes, or even be inoculated with fungi and used to stabilize some of the erosion conditions caused by the loss of the tree.*** Historically, the municipal response to dealing with infected ash trees has been predominantly to turn them completely into mulch. Even if the maximum value isn't extracted from the tree and this continues to be the preferred solution for dealing with EAB, the abundance of mulch created is perfectly timed with the increase of storm water and erosion issues that we face as global weather patterns become more and more extreme.

For all that they do for us and provide us with, the greatest gift that our ash trees are giving us, as I see it, is a call to reconnect with our forests and collaborate within our communities. Instead of falling victim to the paralysis that comes with feeling like we have failed our forests, we can seize this opportunity to recognize the fragility of our environment and participate in the effort to bring things back into balance.

In no way am I advocating a haphazard clearing of our forests, just the conscious participation on many levels to use our "worst" trees first, to improve the health of our forests, our communities, and ourselves. Not unlike Butch's straightened hangers, the ash trees are pointing us back to nature, our source, so that together we can navigate these challenging times.

* Kovacs et al., 2010

** "The Power of Community: How Cuba Survived Peak Oil" is a wonderful documentary that illustrates this point. For more information on descent scenarios see David Holmgren's site:

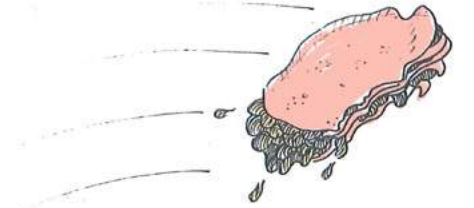
<http://www.futurescenarios.org/content/view/26/40/>

*** Stamets, Paul

<http://www.fungi.com/mycotech/roadrestoration.html>

cake

by amanda elliot



ego

Before the voices in my head began chattering and the episode pouting by the bathtub, several weeks before, I was talking with a friend of mine when she boldly pronounced, that she had eaten "THE BEST CAKE EVER!" It's amazing to me how easily I can be won over with sweeping gestures and definitive statements. I'm an easy sell, plain and simple. I might have taken more lovers in my day, if they had known to simply set the mood with Sade.

The cake that she was holding so high in regard came from a bakery in uptown Manhattan and has long been known as their signature cake. My new found nemesis, I was told, consisted of many layers of sweet crepes, at least twenty, sandwiched between what the makers like to refer to as an "ethereally light and creamy custard." Even if I weren't such a sucker for the next big thing, anyone that uses the term ethereal to describe their custard must be worth investigation.

a challenge

When too expensive to buy, make from scratch. How hard could a crepe and custard cake be to make? Take crepe, apply custard, repeat twenty times, BAM! Cake made of crepes. I guess I somehow hadn't seen this as being a big enough

trial so I added additional obstacles, just to see how far I could push myself. Which is strange and totally out of character. Make a cake for a big holiday celebration with lots of friends, who love to eat great food, drink great wine, and laugh. Oh how they love to laugh. Also talk a big talk to those attending the party, that this will be the most stupendous monumental cake in the history of all cakes.

Honestly, it was going quite well, crepes were being made, custard was chillin' and I was feeling pretty good. Halfway through construction was when we (me and the cake) took a detour south.

ancestry

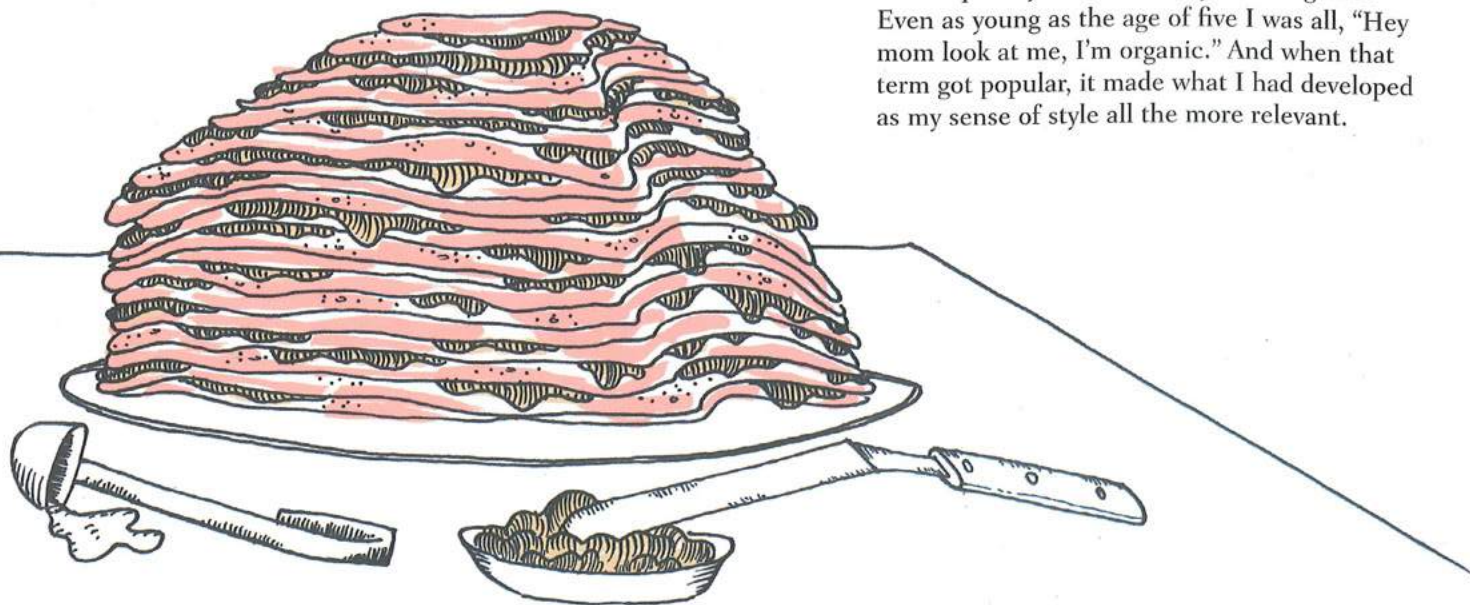
My father's anguish began deep in the woods of West Virginia. He grew up with little more than a room, a dirt floor and the complicated grappling of a relationship with an Italian man named Felix Nicosia. He didn't know at that time, but Felix was his father. It wasn't until many years later that his mother exposed the truth. She had a relationship with Felix while still married and became pregnant with my father. My father had a gut instinct all along that this was the case. A picture of Felix was one of few photos kept in his wallet.

My father's teenage years were spent living alone on the edge of Harlem on the brink of the civil rights movement, where he spent his days slinging hoagies at the Boat House and slamming

Rheingolds at night. He was the classic prototype of an angsty New York city youth. The strong, brooding Sicilian blood helped him to survive the streets. This same blood, passed down by the man named Felix on a hot West Virginian night, would follow the gravitational pull of conception and be pumped directly into the veins of his three granddaughters.

I'm the youngest of three girls. There is an ten year age gap between me and my older sisters. We are vastly different but are each known for being stubborn, hot tempered and we all live and die by our love of family. And though our triggers are different, if you poke the piñata hard enough, we will explode.

In my younger days I would often get wrapped up into the romance and passion that supposedly shrouds Italian women, constantly searching for some sort of ancestral answer to my genetic makeup. Once in Trieste, I found myself uncontrollably pushing the wooden windows open, boldly yelling to streets barely rustling with the twinkling lights of early dawn, "BUON-GIORNO!" It was Easter weekend in a Catholic country and everything was booked except for one ramshackle hostel on the back side of the plaza. Before I fell asleep that night, I knew the only thing that would make up for the fact that I had to sleep there, would be if I could wake up early enough to break open the windows and yell down the biggest greeting I had to offer. Coincidentally, the only Italian word in my repertoire. I often whisked myself into roles, such as these Italian women portrayed to me through cinema. But alas, I'm only about one half that of my father, making me only a quarter Italian, and whatever Fellini movie I had been writing for myself can't quite explain why I was really on



the floor of my hundred square foot bathroom, staring numbly up at the white tiles of the wall. I was trying desperately to calm myself down but a flood of doom and gloom was settling in. This was about a cake.

marriage

Michael, the quiet lion as I like to refer to him, was in the other room on high alert, checking in periodically and mustering his best efforts to calm me down. Michael is like an egg and I'm like kimchee. Eggs are delicious, creamy, packed with protein and everyone likes them. Kimchee is spicy, sour, sometimes offensive and you either like it or you don't. We are polar opposites in many ways, which is why what we have works. He sits back quietly twisting his curly red locks and pipes in with a "everything okay butter stick," or a "you're radical, you know that right?" Those words would be comforting to some, but for me they are confused with mockery. I didn't need consoling, I needed to yell and scream and give that buttery rich hump of mess a piece of my mind:

"HEY YOU!!! Yeah I'm talking to you, Mr. Sandwich Cake."

That was what you get with food temper tantrums, a lot of ridiculous slander being aimed at an object without brain or heart. It wasn't my first ride on the Ferris wheel and certainly wouldn't be my last.

moonlighting

I'm a cook, not a baker. Or better yet, I'm a dancer, always was, always will be. I've never had a Type A personality. An adjective that I use frequently to describe myself is *organic*. Even as young as the age of five I was all, "Hey mom look at me, I'm organic." And when that term got popular, it made what I had developed as my sense of style all the more relevant.

From conception, I've been fed off the land. Unlike many children of my generation who were gorging themselves on Kraft mac and cheese and cheeseburgers, I ate what my mother would pull from the garden or harvest from the animals we raised. Back then I was extremely envious of all my friends who seemed only to taunt me with their powdered cheese moustaches and happy meal stained t-shirts. But I was organic. To me it meant being close to the things which you're eating, creating or being a part of.

I was being extremely organic with my crepe making and I soon realized that the inconsistency of the crepe size was going to have a negative outcome on the construction of the cake. The first few layers were gorgeous, thin and luscious cake atop oozing light pastry cream. Pure beauty.

Then sadly, towards the middle things were going astray. The tectonic plates had definitely shifted to a sloppy glob of sugar and cream. I kept adding more crepes to the top, but they just acted as drapery, covering the whole spoiled affair. I suspected it was the shape so I started to square off the cake in hopes that it would stay straight. This only made it worse. That's when I started to feel it, there at the beginning of my big toe, slowly working it's way up the calves of my legs. The ghost of Felix Nicosia took a long pause in my stomach.

would have, could have, should have

A waterfall of tears. Childlike fear and embarrassment. Michael who had quietly been watching the saga unfold had now come over to console me offering up those words that no one longs to hear:

"It's the thought that counts."

Here's a word of advice for all those kind and dear lovers that like to comfort their partners who have a history of anger management woes. Tears, paired with fear, paired with anger, means maybe you should leave the room and let us figure this one out on our own. I'm sent further into a spiral, catapulted by all of life's little disappointments.

Why didn't I continue gymnastics (yes it's true you were only in one meet) but with a little prodding I could have been holding gold, doing back flips to the soundtrack of the Charlie Daniels band. Why didn't I ever send in that recording of me doing backup vocals to Ben Harper

and The Innocent Criminals? I could have been launched into musical superstardom, shaking up drum circles and transcending other youthful teens.

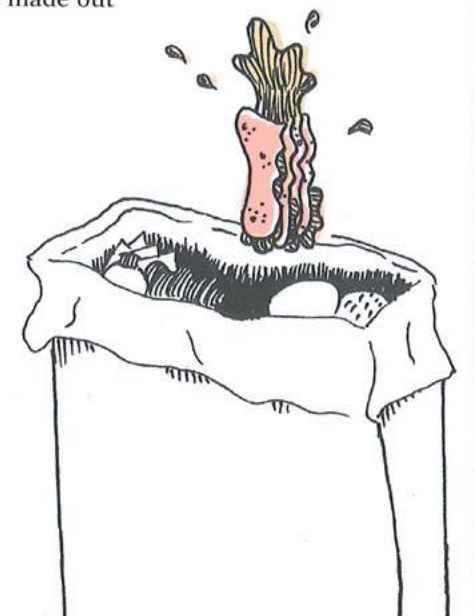
After this last outburst, and the look on Michael's face, I know that a timeout is needed. And I find myself in my ceramic cell. Alone, save my raging sea. Heavy breathing and mantra talk help calm the situation from a DEFCON 2 to 4, and I come to the conclusion that there was but one resolution. Michael had been waiting patiently by the door.

He asks, "Have you calmed down?" I reply with a nod of the head and murmur, "yes."

I'm lying. I go directly to the freezer and grab the cake. I split it into pieces and with great vigilance throw the first section in the trash, followed promptly by hurling the second at the wall, making a painting that even Mary Boone would swoon over. I take the third to the street and kick it towards the man down the block that threatened my life through asphyxiation the week prior.

And before I have time to tackle and obliterate my fourth piece of the cake, I see Michael running to hide it in the trash outside. I felt the great therapeutic release of the gnawing pain of my madness, and stress of the last few months. With resignation I thank the cake for enlightening me to the rubble I had been reduced to.

Consumed by the fragility of life and desperate to understand its meaning, many people travel. They flock to India and Southeast Asia looking for Eastern philosophies to aid them in these answers. Some instead have children and place the burden of purpose on procreation. Some of us, or maybe just me, bake twenty tiered cakes made out of crepes and fail.



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