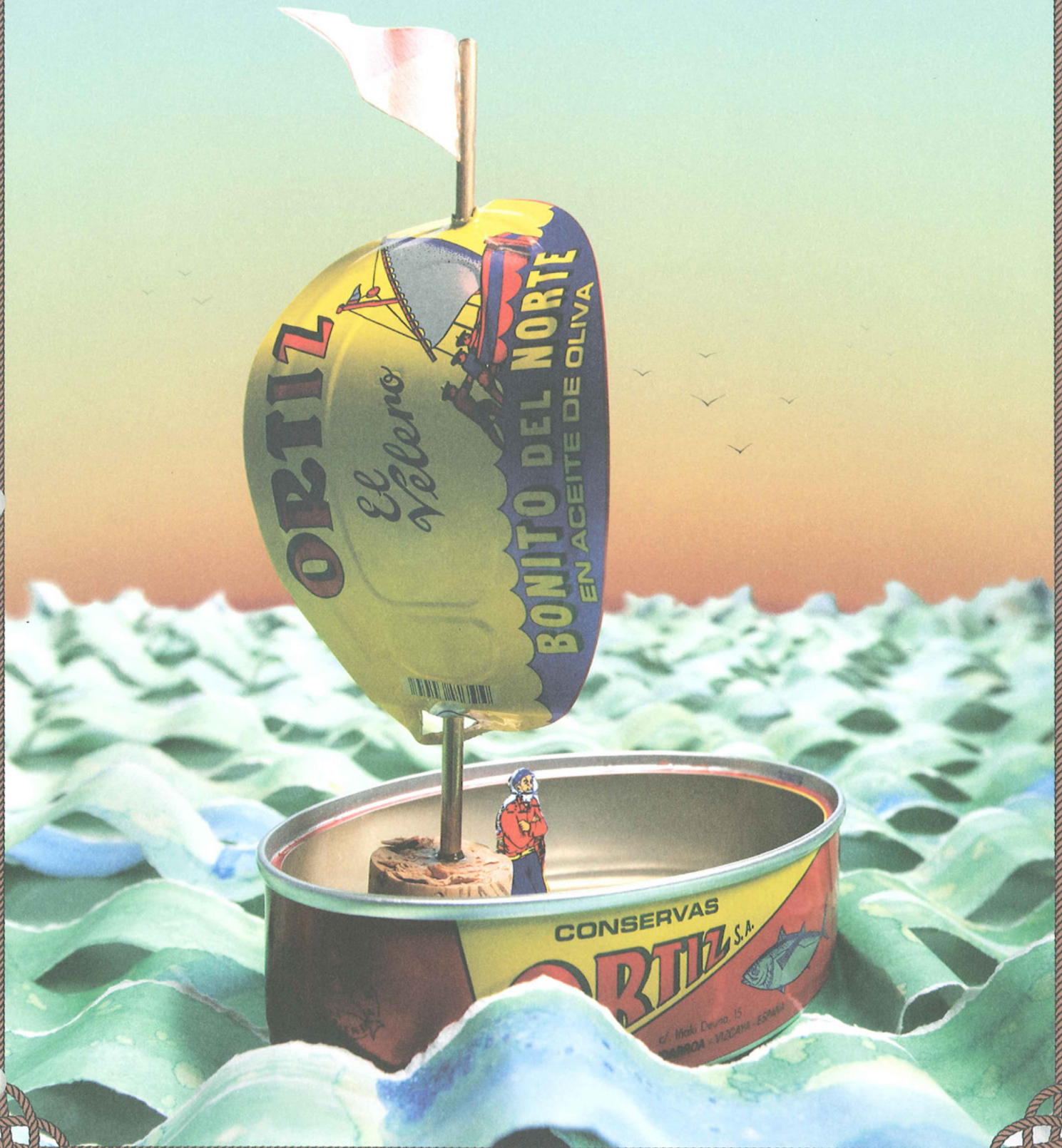


DINER JOURNAL

OYSTER PERPETUAL

ISSUE Nº8 ♦ SUMMER 2008



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SUMMER 2008

THE APPARENT WIND

When a sailor sees the current of sky across his sail it is not true wind. It is known as the apparent wind, a wind seen only by someone in motion. In the Spring we made a commitment to explore what our community had to offer and open up our process to the public domain. What proved to be a new and somewhat difficult process paid off. First we found inspiration.

I have a hard time reading about food, just as I enjoy waiting for water to boil over staring at a still life painting. Both moments seems basely illogical. You don't smell words, or lick paint. What's more, I feel a lurking need for a newly imagined lexicon for taste. So I shy away from food writing with the understanding that until I have something real to offer it, I can't participate in it's dialogue.

In 1941 MFK Fisher names stew: *a swoot, a sweat, a tank for live fish, a brothel*. This is the start to her soothing article "A Supper to Sleep On." Fisher's words are small and quiet but boldly evocative. Her precision of moment, her awareness of her eyeballs, for example, or of the slight dance the young chef before her endures, provides certain lightness to language. It maybe that the simple imagination, like the simple plate of oysters, is the most effective imagination. So we set out, in our centerfold, to document one of her more narrative moments, the making of oyster stew at the Doylestown Inn.

This season we have embraced new voices and old. Bella, Stacey, Grant, Sasha, Peter, Elizabeth and Robert have given us the air in our sails. Performance, cinema, language, longing. The ocean holds all these things. So does the summer sun. AD

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Thank you to **SEAN REMBOLD, DAVE GOULD, JASON SCHWARTZ, MCKAY MCFADDEN & LAURICE FOX** for their work.



In the Spring 2008 issue of the Diner Journal we made two glaring errors. On the dessert page (p.24) "am cheese" under the filling directions should read Boz. cream cheese. Also we would like to give credit and thanks to Elizabeth Schula for her wonderful and inspiring illustrations.



WORLD OCEAN

The true color of the ocean does not rely on the sky. It is, in fact, a complex meeting of moments on the crest of a wave. Light moves in different ways; some light, red light absorbs, blue scatters while the cloudy grey of the atmosphere reflects. Transparency here is a complex incident, dependent on chlorophyll, phytoplankton, seaweed, suspended particles. This summer, through the murk, we have taken on the Mariana Trench. Typhoid Mary Mallon, Barbara Wheaton, Piracy, MFK Fischer, Champagne, New Amsterdam. Myth, history, appropriation, literature, tradition, New York City. The Bivalve.

Just as some things are so small, some things are so big you can barely see them. The two blocks are long, most of the time it's impossible to know that we live by the water as we hunker down into the day. We do, we live in a geography beyond loft buildings, skylines and elevated trains. So often in New York we see above us, beyond us, or even the pavement at our feet, before we even glimpse the vast system of rivers and ocean surrounding us. It's only certain moments, when the air is heavy down here under the bridge, that you can sometimes smell the ocean. It's a shock really to remember it is there, at the end of those choppy grey streams curved tight around our city. The sea.

Thanks must go out to the oyster. Our beloved bi-valve, tiny as he/she may be, has anchored us. Here we are New York. Our city, bought for maybe \$24 and a few oyster shells (or was it clam shells and the measles?) was built literally and figuratively on a heap of those sparkling coral-like shells. Oysters were New York's celebrated food, eaten by rich and poor alike, a culinary common denominator. Eaten with relish, beloved by all, no compromise, no complaints, always a celebration. Nothing as invigorating as the oyster could ever be consumed without exuberance. Consider their flavor: briny, fishy, sharp, clean and mineral. They set you straight. How the oysters of New York so

well suited their consumer, their palette and our demeanor. What did it mean to live in a place where the populace had largely been dining on raw, salty, sea creatures?

There are challenges here. Keeping afloat can be hard watching the afternoon sun fall soft on the East River. If the ocean is the great unknown then do we live in some kind of loss when we live on land? If we are merely peripheral to that blue continent of salt, do we as a species resent that? And so we pillage and pry it's life from gathering shores and push our pollution deep below its quivering lip. Or are we simply attracted to beauty and want a piece of it, maybe too many pieces? Too many fish from the sea. The waterfront that we live so close to is romance but not reality.

Oysters have a lot to tell us. While our connection to the oyster was initially culinary and evocative, it turns out that oysters are a useful species through which we may take stock in what we do and where we are. Much like our beloved bees, oysters are indicator species, dubious as that title may be. Because of their simple constitution the mollusk's survival is basic and based in the quality of the water. They can kill us quite quickly if the waters in which they live are contaminated. And so we must pay close attention to their experience if we are to continue to have a relationship with them. Fortunately, oysters are so beloved and such a part of our local identity that great strides have been made in cleaning up New York waterways and the oyster beds of Long Island in attempt to maintain a healthy habitat for them and other species, including ourselves. And while no one is eating oysters out of New York City harbors today there are people planting oysters in the rivers and canals to observe how they and the waters respond.

It is cited that New York once boasted the largest population of oysters in the world. And they are still with us not in fact but in spirit. How does it feel to spend a Sunday afternoon sitting in the sun with a plate of oysters, ice quickly melting and sloshing around, calling out for another dozen until we've spent half a weeks pay on one of the great pleasures of life by the sea? We feel invincible, giddy, proud, special, cool. I don't think oysters make us amorous as much as they do joyful and even nostalgic. What other food transports us back to a time when we were maritime, makes us want to walk down to that corrupted water and visit the New York we so often don't see? CF & AD





Sea Change

written by ROBERT LAVALVA

A human community...if it is to last long, must exert a sort of centripetal force, holding local soil and local memory in place. Practically speaking, human society has no work more important than this. WENDELL BERRY: *THE WORK OF LOCAL CULTURE* (1988)

WATER

Stand, high on the Empire State Building, and look towards the Seaport. You won't see it, in the shadow of the Brooklyn Bridge, but you could begin sensing how it came to be. Feel the rivers as *arms of the sea*, stretching on either side of you. The Hudson is a fjord: carved by glaciers, fed by the sea's pulsing tides, reaching deep inland. The East River is not at all a river, but a curving estuary, a watery jug handle connecting the Long Island Sound to the New York Bay. Lower Manhattan - *New Amsterdam* - pierces like a root into the harbor, where Sound, River, and Bay come together.

The Brooklyn Bridge tells a story: *cross where the river is narrowest*. Conserve materials while building bridges; conserve energy while rowing. The waters meet in Lower Manhattan, which meets Long Island where the crossing is easiest: the place now called the Seaport. It is a meeting point of meeting points.

OYSTERS

The Lenape settled in this region three thousand years ago. Their paths led to the Seaport, joining Manhattan and Brooklyn by canoe. On the Manhattan side, they gathered to feast on oysters, which grew thick here along the shore. They coaxed the shells loose with fire, casting them empty into huge middens along the strand. The Dutch, arriving in the 1620's, spread the mounded oyster shells into a gently curving path along the river's edge. They named it *Peral Straat* - Pearl Street - three thousand years of shells along the shore, a crisp white band, glinting in the sun. This same path, the same curve of Pearl Street can still be walked today. It forms the Seaport's backbone, the shells beneath the asphalt.

TURNIPS, ROOTS, AND STRAW

At Pearl Street and Peck Slip, look toward the river. This intersection was once the island's reedy edge. Everything before you was taken from the water, block by block - the riverfront shifting from Pearl Street to Water Street, from Water Street to Front Street, not evenly but in a jagged hopscotch down the shore. South Street, begun in 1810, finished the edge, stretching from Peck Slip to Whitehall.

Behind, the land rose into a gentle bluff, which the Dutch planted with orchards. Further upland - close to City Hall - was a spring-fed marsh, the *Bestavers Kreupelbosch*, or "Old Man's Swamp." It flowed downhill into the river, carving an inlet through the reeds. If you imagine the cobblestones as water you can feel it still, that clearing in the rushes. It made a good landing point, a haven from the river's turbulence. The Lenape launched and landed their canoes here, and in 1642 the first official ferry of *New Amsterdam* followed this same route.

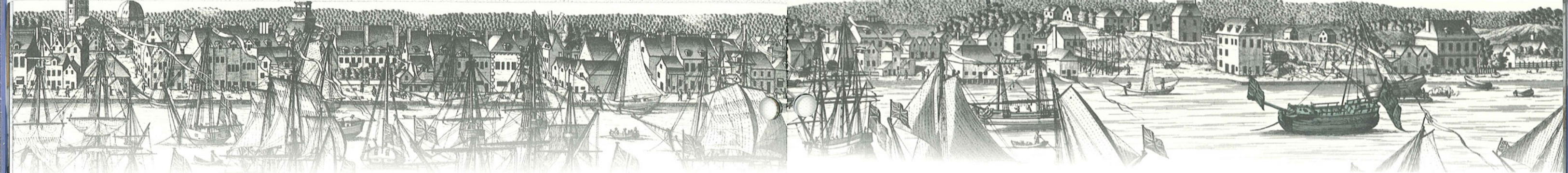
Farmers from Long Island - the "people from the country" - would load the ferry with "veal and pork, cheese and butter, turnips, roots, and straw" - goods not so readily produced by the kitchen gardens of *New Amsterdam*. The ferry landing, at that time on the outskirts of the city, became a little hamlet, and then a neighborhood, the origin of the Seaport. The first ferryman, Cornelis Dircksen, did not keep a regular schedule; he was summoned with a hunting horn, whose sound carried across the silent river and up its grassy banks.

The townspeople walked up the shell-strewn path of Pearl Street, past shingly beaches and rushing brooks to make their purchases. Back and forth the river flowed, sound to bay, bay to sound; back and forth the farmers crossed the river; back and forth the people went to market. Of these rhythms, places come to being. The river made the ferry route; the ferry made the market; the market grew the neighborhood. The Seaport fed the city.

SUGAR, RUM, MOLASSES

Stroll along the Promenade in Brooklyn Heights and look toward Manhattan. This same view was engraved by William Burgis in 1717, his exuberant depiction of the *Flourishing City of New York*. By that time, the shoreline from the Battery to Peck Slip was branched with piers and wharves, docks and slips. Ship by ship, merchant by merchant, commerce flowed sporadically at first, in isolated, unrelated ventures. As business increased, these networks grew and intersected until they burst into a sudden flowering: the *Seaport*. The vitality we associate today with crowded midtown sidewalks, honking taxis, streets awash with neon, was every bit as evident along the 18th century riverfront, a crenelated merging of land and water.

Here New York imported sugar, rum, molasses; lime juice, salt, and ginger; cocoa, coffee, pimento. From these same piers, the region's farms exported sacks of flour, firkins of butter, barrels of pickled meat. The first, informal farmers' market at the Peck Slip ferry landing



was followed by new markets further south and more convenient to the population, whose houses still clustered below Wall Street: at Broad Street, Old Slip, Coenties Slip. In 1699, the so-called *Fly Market* (a corruption of the Dutch *vly* or *valley*) opened at the foot of Maiden Lane. Decade by decade, as the town grew north, its markets moved along the river towards Peck Slip again, where it had all begun.

That first ferry still ran its route. On the Brooklyn side, a pen was constructed to house the cattle awaiting the trip across. They were taken to the public slaughterhouse on the Manhattan side; it stood on piles at the river's edge, near Beekman Street. There, sworn butchers licensed by the city could inspect the animals for health and assure the meat's freshness. The setting was lively, raucous - a bull occasionally escaping into the streets, causing commotion and consternation. Knowing "where one's food comes from" was not the issue in 1717.

EVERY PROFUSION AND EXCELLENCE

Perambulate the block bounded by Fulton, Beekman, South, and Front Streets. The building standing here today was constructed in 1983 and named "Fulton Market" in recollection; a Victorian market hall had been erected here in 1868; and the first *Fulton Market*, once the city's most prominent food emporium, opened on this site in 1822.

Fulton Market was built at the request of local residents as well as New York's first commuters - ferry passengers from the growing neighborhood of Brooklyn Heights. They asked for a "concentrated market where should be sold meats, vegetables, and poultry, in all their variety." When opened, the market included 88 butcher

stalls, 50 stalls for poultry, vegetables and fruit, four sausage stalls, numerous stands for direct sales by the "country people," and a separate wing for fishmongers.

An English visitor in the 1830's remarked that the market "for the richness and abundance of its supply surpasses any I ever saw, especially in fruits and vegetables; and in fish, flesh, and fowl there is every profusion and excellence." An 1854 account describes Fulton Market as it opened in the morning:

A theater of active bustle where piles of vegetables, loads of beef, hampers of fruit, heaps of luscious butter, cages of poultry, canary birds swarming in their wiry prisons, forests of green-house plants, horse-radish grinders with their reeking machines, vendors of hot coffee, root beer and dough nuts, all with men, women and children swarming in, over and among them, like so many ants, hard at work, filled the spacious arena.

ANNE STEPHENS: *FASHION AND FAMINE* (1854)

Neighborhood shops included grocers, flour dealers, biscuit makers, agricultural suppliers, wine and liquor importers, coffee roasters, bakers, coopers. These businesses wove in with the others that made the Seaport: shipping, counting-houses, ship's suppliers; inns and taverns, hostels, churches, brothels; densely woven, diverse, rich, vital. New York, before the big box, before the shopping mall.

FISH

Head down Fulton Street toward the river; cross South Street, passing under the elevated highway. Turn left, and face into the empty market building with red columns. It is owned by the city; it belongs to you. The fishmongers have

been gone three years now, but the smell of fish - seeping for two centuries - still lingers in this place.

This market hall, known as the *Tin Building*, dates from 1908. The site has housed a market since 1836. That year, the butchers, grocers, and other vendors of the original Fulton Market had petitioned for its fishmongers to be removed - the water they used to clean their stalls flooded everywhere, ruining the bread, wetting the meat. The mongers were given their own market shed across the street, built on pilings above the water - and so the Fulton Fish Market was born.

Fish were kept live in wooden tanks that floated in the river just outside the market building. Unsold fish were packed with straw in crates and sent to inland destinations. In time the neighborhood grew less residential; the general purpose of Fulton Market began to fade; the fishmongers sold less and less at retail as their wholesale business grew. The neighborhood morphed into a fish district. By the 1930's fishmongers occupied three public market halls, and sold freshwater fish on the sidewalks at Peck Slip. There were fish dealers, fish distributors, fish smokehouses found on every street. Like the Lenape, New Yorkers congregated here to feast on seafood:

Cod cheeks, salmon cheeks, cod tongues, sturgeon liver, blue-shark steak, tuna steak, squid stew, and fine kinds of roe - shad roe, cod roe, mackerel roe, herring roe, and yellow-pike roe... The fishmongers use Louie's as a testing kitchen. When anything unusual is shipped to the market, it is taken to Louie's and tried out. In the course of a year, Louie's undoubtedly serves a wider variety of seafood than any other restaurant in the country.

JOSEPH MITCHELL: *UP IN THE OLD HOTEL* (1960)

DESTRUCTION

The *Seaport* is a place; it is also a living thing, changing and moving with the passage of time, the furthering of technology. As ships grew larger, more powerful, more demanding, trade shifted to the Hudson, to Brooklyn, to New Jersey, where the Port of New York now stretches nearly 40 miles, from Secaucus to New Brunswick. With each leapfrogging, the older ports took on new roles - but eventually the ships stopped coming. The city's first Seaport, on the East River, was largely demolished through "Urban Renewal" in the 1960's:

The passing of the buildings was for me a great event. It didn't matter so much whether they were of architectural importance. What mattered to me was that they were about to be destroyed. Whole blocks would disappear. An entire neighborhood...no place like it would ever be built again. The streets involved were among the oldest in New York and when sections of some were closed by the barriers of the demolition men, it meant they would never be opened again. Sections of William Street and Beekman Street were removed which were laid out before the 19th century. In 1967 over sixty acres of buildings of Lower Manhattan were demolished.

DANNY LYON: *THE DESTRUCTION OF LOWER MANHATTAN* (2005)

The 18th and 19th century buildings that came down were built in granite, stone, or hand-molded bricks barged to the city from towns like Haverstraw along the Hudson. A few of them survive still, confined to the neighborhood we now call the *Seaport* like a remaining patch of prairie. As the sun sets, the brick glows warm against the white joint marks, which show up like veins on a leaf. The new buildings towering around the neighborhood stare down with mute facades. Efficiency was gained; texture was lost.



FESTIVAL

In 1968, through an unprecedented use of eminent domain, the city condemned the blocks around Peck Slip, the embryo of the Seaport. While the rest of the riverfront was demolished, on these few blocks private property was taken so that it could be *preserved*. The neighborhood could not be sold to developers: the office towers marching north along Water Street were brought to a halt at Burling Slip. Though battered and gap-toothed with empty lots, the Seaport was left standing.

Ironically, this happened just when we were losing all faith in cities, when New York lost faith in itself. Though the buildings remained, their value was not appreciated, and the neighborhood was made to perform for the suburbs. The *festival market* was courted, fresh from its conquest of Faneuil Hall in Boston. Federal, state, and local revenues were pumped in, historic buildings were renovated, streets repaired. Like water onto sand, the *festival market* absorbed. It promised rejuvenation, transformation, substance - but from the Trojan Horse mediocrity emerged.

The fish piers had been demolished to build a mall; somehow the fishmongers persevered for another generation. They're gone now, but the market halls remain, the last patch of prairie. Faded but whole, preserving memory, their fate awaits.

MARKET

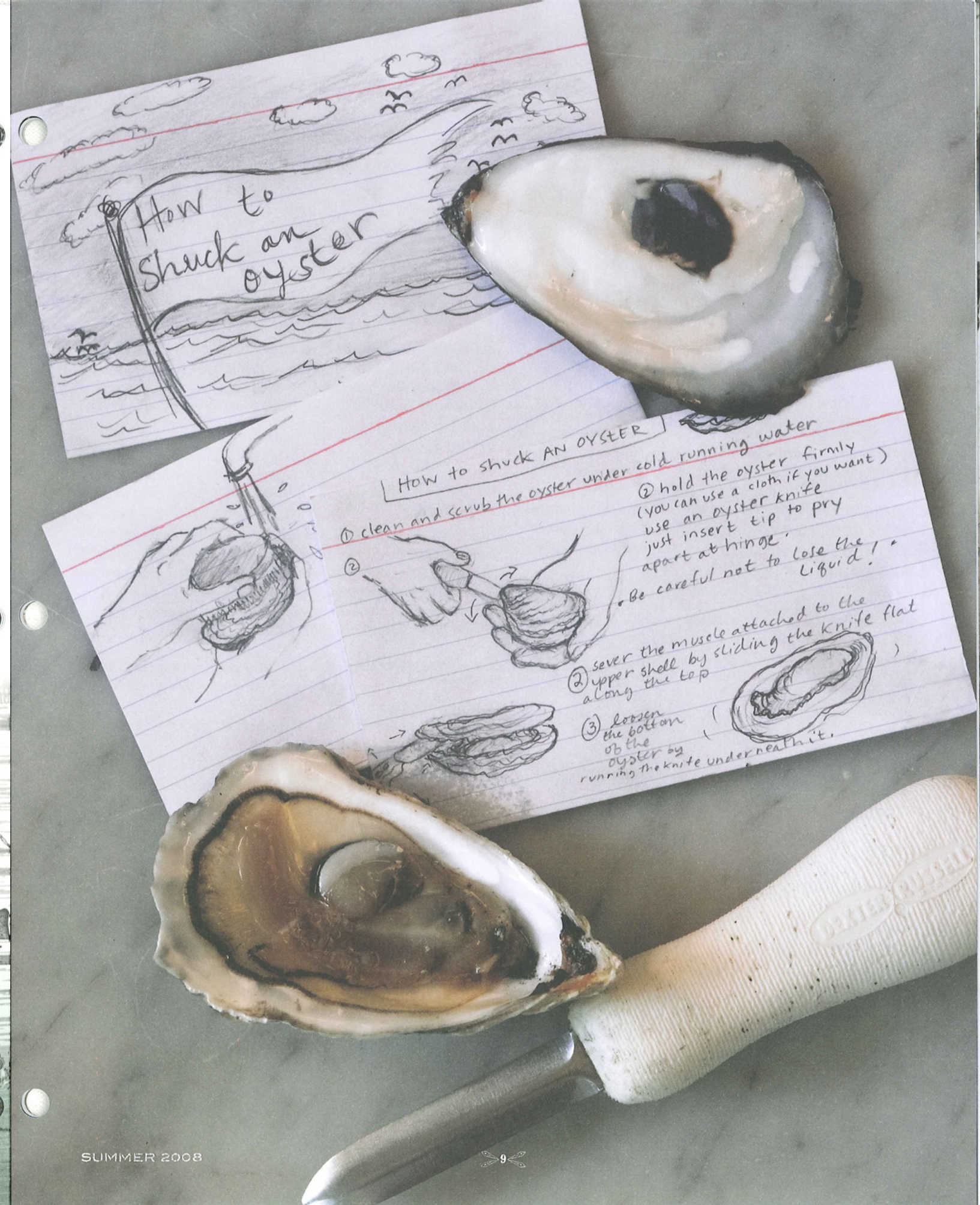
Why was the Seaport spared when all else around it fell? New York has never sentimentalized its past - even in this neighborhood every old building stands on the foundations of another, and then another, and then the mud below the reeds, asphalt paving the river's wake of oyster shells. Nor is this the most intact of historic districts. Nearly every block contains intrusions; no street is long enough to

lead completely into the past; and the elevated highway cuts through its heart, blocking views of the river and the wooden sailing ships.

Yet all this says something. When the highway was built, it was lifted to let the river's commerce flow through unimpeded. *The Seaport speaks of our connection to the water*. The park now emerging along the Hudson lets us contemplate that river as we sink back into a grassy mound, in an imagined natural state. The Seaport - with its piers, its ships, its waterfront market halls - lets us feel the city and the river merging, fusing, making something completely new.

Fish does not arrive by boat these days; fruit is no longer barged down the Hudson to the city's waterfront markets. But oyster beds are being reseeded; fisheries, even when commercially depleted, are not entirely extinct. Water transportation is viewed again as viable. With knowledge, stewardship, commitment, what once was may yet return. And so it is with neighborhoods, with places. What is meaningful is not *what* we preserve, but our very willingness to build upon the past, rather than discarding what it offers.

The two empty market halls - the *Tin Building* and the *New Market Building* - are integral to the making of this place. They form the city's memory of itself. They can never be rebuilt, and should not be destroyed. We should fill them again with life, with food, with people - with grocers who select, butchers who carve, bakers who bake. Overflowing stalls, hanging carcasses, intense aromas, hawking, shouting. Vital, vibrant, accessible to all. A *public market*, in the market district. It pulls at your heart like a bow, the call of something born of the earth, damp and sweet smelling, bridging country lane and city street: a market.



How to Shuck an Oyster

- How to shuck AN OYSTER
- ① clean and scrub the oyster under cold running water
 - ② hold the oyster firmly (you can use a cloth if you want) use an oyster knife just insert tip to pry apart at hinge. Be careful not to lose the liquid!
 - ③ sever the muscle attached to the upper shell by sliding the knife flat along the top
 - ④ loosen the bottom of the oyster by running the knife underneath it.



SUMMER BASICS

Summer foods hardly require much handling. Vegetable, fruit, fish or meat, will need little preparation beyond a grill and a little something to accompany them. Here are a few basics that compliment pretty much anything you would prepare at this time of year.

MAYONNAISE

4 egg yolks
1 teaspoon dijon
¼ cup white wine vinegar
4 cups all purpose olive oil
1 lemon

Place egg yolks, dijon, white wine vinegar and a pinch of salt in the bowl of a food processor. Slowly add the olive oil. If the mixture gets too stiff while it processes add a little water to thin it. Add all of the olive oil and then season with the lemon juice and any additional salt.

AÏOLI

Prepare as above except start with 4-6 cloves of garlic. Purée the garlic and then add dijon, vinegar and yolks. Use a combination of extra virgin and all-purpose oil to finish.

PESTO

1 large bunch basil, cleaned and picked
8 cloves garlic
½ cup pine nuts
1 cup grated parmigiano reggiano
extra virgin olive oil

In a food processor, with a mortar and pestle, or by hand place garlic and pine nuts in the bowl and purée. Add basil leaves and olive oil and whiz until well incorporated but not perfectly smooth. Add parmigiano. Remove and season with salt and pepper.

TAPENADE

2 cups pitted kalamata olives
6 cloves garlic
¼ cup rosemary, picked
8 anchovy filets
1 lemon zested
¼ cup capers
pinch chile arbol
red wine vinegar
extra virgin olive oil

In a food processor, with a mortar and pestle or by hand place garlic, rosemary and anchovies in the bowl and purée. Add olives and whiz until well incorporated but not smooth. Remove from food processor and place in a bowl. Add lemon zest, capers and chile along with a splash of red wine vinegar and enough extra virgin oil to loosen.

TZATZIKI

1 pint Greek yogurt
1 small bunch scallions, sliced on the bias
1 cucumber, diced
2 Tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
dash red wine vinegar
salt

Mix all ingredients together. Season with salt and vinegar to taste.

TOMATO RELISH

2 ripe tomatoes, diced
4 garlic cloves, sliced
1 Tablespoon picked thyme or ¼ cup chopped parsley
¼ cup extra virgin olive oil
2 Tablespoons sherry vinegar
salt

Mix all of the above in a mixing bowl. Allow to marinate for an hour or longer.

LAZY HOUSEWIFE

I like to call my all purpose vinaigrette "lazy housewife". I don't know why that amuses me so. It's a little retro for my general style and maybe even a little too cutesy, bordering on something Rachael Ray might have in her repertoire. But, here it is, it's easy, well balanced and can be made in quantity and held in the refrigerator for a week. After a while the garlic gets weird.

2 cloves garlic, sliced
1-2 teaspoons dijon
¼ cup vinegar
¾ cup extra virgin olive oil
pinch salt

Place garlic, dijon, salt and vinegar in a jar with a tight fitting lid or a take-out pint/quart container with a lid. Stir together with a fork to dissolve the mustard. Pour in the olive oil and shake vigorously until well mixed.

PISTOU

Pesto is Italian, pistou is French. Pistou, the less well-known basil sauce is much lighter and can be used as a sauce for many preparations, including fresh grilled fish, vegetables or grains. It is traditionally used as a garnish for vegetable soups. It can be used as you would fresh basil, as a garnish for many dishes.

1 large bunch basil, cleaned and picked
8 cloves garlic
extra virgin olive oil

Purée garlic and basil in a food processor or blender. Thin with olive oil and season with salt and pepper.

SALSA VERDE

1 bunch parsley, picked
1 bunch scallions, thinly sliced on the bias
1 bunch mint, picked
1 bunch cilantro, picked
¼ cup capers
4 cloves garlic, thinly sliced
extra virgin olive oil
lemon juice
pinch salt
pinch chile arbol, ground

Pick, wash and dry herbs. Place in a large bowl and toss with capers, olive oil, lemon juice, salt and a pinch of chile. Taste and adjust seasoning. Allow herbs to marry and wilt but don't overdress or allow them to sit for too long so that they may retain some of their integrity. Serve with sautéed or grilled fish or meats.

LEMONS

Always have plenty of lemons on hand at all times in the kitchen but particularly in the summer. Lemons are often all you need to elevate a dish from bland to alive and developing a sense about when a dish needs acid is crucial to your success in the kitchen. It is perhaps one of the most essential things to understand. Lemon, olive oil and salt will make anything taste good, particularly grilled fish and vegetables.

SALT

Salt. For a long time I never really thought about sea salt. When I started cooking the thrill of kosher salt, that you could grab with your fingers, was enough for me. It took years before I started to understand that sea salt is a magical thing. Perhaps it was the birth of the chocolate caramel tart that really made me start to think about what salt best complimented what dishes. By extension; which salts complimented which foods, which sea salt did I like the best as an all purpose kitchen salt. It's worth picking up a bag of sea salt. There's nothing better for finishing a salad, sprinkling over raw fish, fresh cheese or a ripe tomato. Again, in the summer when foods need little more than slicing and serving, essentials like salt and olive oil begin to make a big difference in bringing out flavor.



SQUID w/TAHINI and TOMATO CONFIT

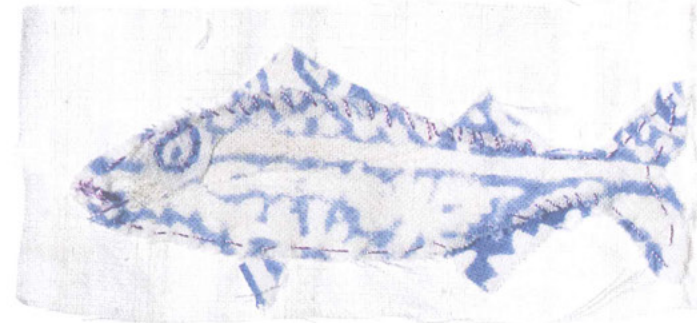
1½ # squid
12 plum tomatoes
8 cloves garlic, thinly sliced
2 Tablespoons thyme, picked
pinch chili arbol
16 oz jar tahini
2-4 lemons
extra virgin olive oil

Clean squid well by removing head and pulling plastic-like cartilage from the cavity. Rinse out the body and the head. Place head on a cutting board and cut off cap with tentacles just above the eyes. Make sure to remove the ball shaped beak from the base of the head. Cut the body of the squid into calamari-like rings and keep the tentacles whole. Rinse everything well and drain of excess water. Keep refrigerated until ready to use.

Cut the plum tomatoes in half the long way and toss with olive oil and salt. Roast in a low oven until wrinkled and concentrated. Remove from the oven and pull off the skin. Place in a bowl and sizzle the garlic in olive oil, remove from heat. Add the thyme and chile arbol to the oil, it will sizzle and release it's oils and flavor. Pour over tomatoes and season additionally as necessary with salt, olive oil and a splash of sherry vinegar.

Prepare the tahini by placing it in a bowl and adding a little water. Stir and it will thicken. Season with a good amount of lemon and a pinch of salt if necessary.

When ready to eat, place the tahini on the bottom of a large serving plate or onto individual plates. Spread a pretty generous amount of tahini in a circular motion to evenly cover the bottom of the plate. Heat a large saute pan to smoking and add a good amount of all purpose olive oil to cover the bottom of the pan. Quickly cook the squid, in batches so that it doesn't overcrowd the pan, fast and hot allowing the squid to brown and caramelize. Strain off any unpleasant, excess, or burnt oil. Deglaze pan with a squeeze of lemon and pour over tahini. Place tomato confit on top of squid and serve hot.



GRILLED SQUID w/EGGPLANT

1½# squid
2 large eggplant
12 cloves garlic, sliced
4 sprigs rosemary, picked
pinch ground chile arbol
lemons

Clean the squid as before but leave whole. Peel eggplant into stripes and slice lengthwise into ¼" slices. Salt eggplant and strain in a colander until it releases its water.

Sizzle garlic in ½ cup of extra virgin oil. When garlic begins to turn golden add the rosemary and chile arbol and then remove from the heat. Cool and add a squeeze of lemon.

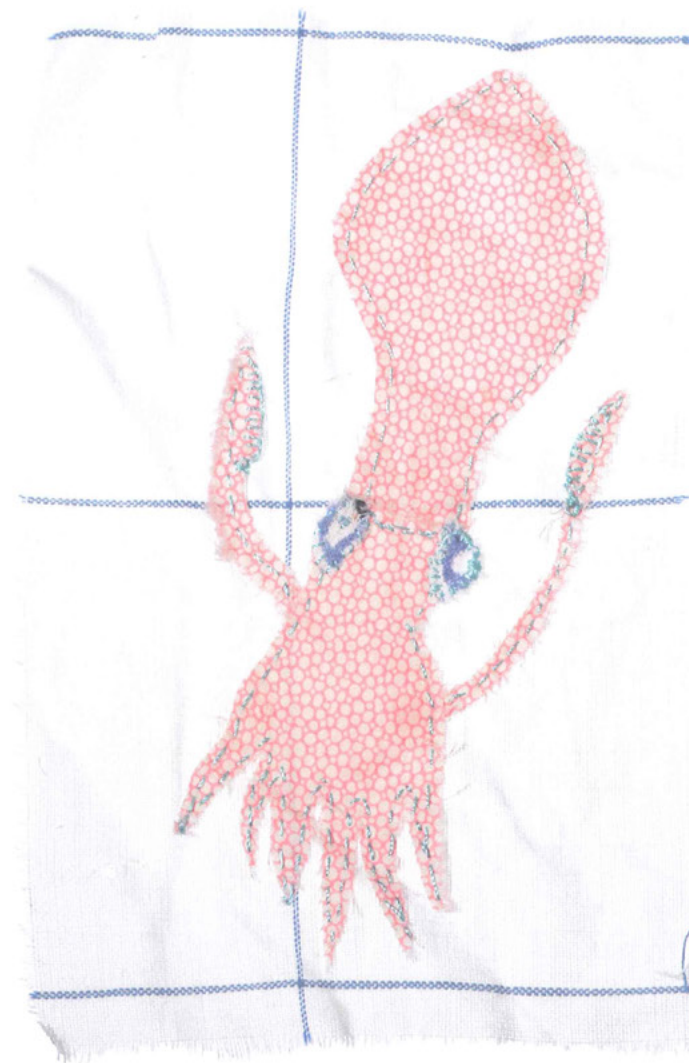
Heat the grill and cook the eggplant first as it is less important that it be hot. It is equally delicious hot or room temperature. When cooked, cut eggplant into quarters or so, so that you have large pieces that are still edible in one bite. Grill squid and when it is nicely charred and opaque remove from grill and place alongside the eggplant. Drizzle squid and eggplant with garlic and rosemary. Serve hot.

SHRIMP, CORN & OKRA w/BOURBON and CREAM

1# large shrimp, peeled, deveined and cut into ½" pieces
2 cups corn, shucked and removed from the cob
1 cup sliced okra
1 cup bourbon
butter
1 cup cream

Heat a large sauté pan with a combination of butter and olive oil and quickly sauté the corn and okra (season with salt and pepper) on high heat until they begin to caramelize and soften. Remove from heat and hold. Heat the pan again with a combination of butter and olive oil. Add the shrimp, season, and cook quickly allowing to caramelize and turn pink. When brown, but not over-cooked, add the corn and okra back into the pan. Deglaze with bourbon, allowing it to cook down and then with cream until the cream coats the shrimp and vegetables. Serve hot.

Shrimp and corn are definitely friends and compliment each other in many recipes. This is a kind of succotash and other summer vegetables could be added.



CRUDO of FLUKE or BASS

2# fresh fluke or wild striped bass
lemons
extra virgin olive oil
sea salt
1 fresh jalapeño

Make sure fish has been skinned and de-boned. Slice the filet of fish in half lengthwise. If using fluke there will be a natural separation in the center of the filet, which yields 2 very manageable pieces.

Lay fish filet flat on a cutting board and with a good sharp knife slice fish on an angle as thinly as possible in one smooth stroke drawing the knife toward you. This is not as difficult to do as it may seem and while it's nice to get a very thin slice, the fish is just as good if it's a little thicker, within reason. Lay slices out in a single layer on a serving platter and squeeze plenty of lemon over the fish and then a round of olive oil. Sprinkle fish evenly with sea salt and minced jalapeno.

SEAFOOD SALAD

2# mussels, cleaned and de-bearded
1# squid, cleaned as before and cut into ¼" rings
1# shrimp, peeled and deveined
1# octopus

For the court bouillon:

1 stalks celery, cut into 2" pieces
1 leek, cut in half lengthwise and into 2" pieces
1 head garlic, cut in half
4 bay leaves
2 Tablespoons black peppercorns
1 Tablespoon coriander seed
1 Tablespoon fennel seed
3 quarts water
1 bottle white wine

For the salad:

the heart of a bunch of celery, thinly sliced with leaves
1 bulb fennel, thinly sliced
1 small bunch parsley (about 1 cup), cleaned and picked
1 small bunch mint (about ½ cup), cleaned and picked
1 bunch scallions, thinly sliced on the bias
red wine vinegar
extra virgin olive oil

Prepare a court bouillon in which to cook the fish by placing 3 quarts of water and the bottle of wine into a pot with celery, leek, garlic, bay leaves, black peppercorns, coriander and fennel. First blanch the squid by lowering the heat to a simmer and cooking until the squid turns opaque. This will not take very long. Remove squid with an implement that can skim the pieces from the water and then cook the shrimp in the same manner, in the same liquid, until pink and opaque.

To prepare the mussels, heat 2 Tablespoons of butter with 2 Tablespoons of olive oil in a pot with a tight fitting lid. When butter sizzles add the mussels and stir around the pot, add 1-2 cups white wine and cover. When mussels open pour them out into a roasting pan or a sheet tray to cool, reserving the liquid. When cool enough to handle remove the mussels from their shells and discard the shells. Taste the mussel liquor. If delicious, hold as is. If it tastes a little winy and loose, reduce. Hold mussels in the cooled liquor.

Prepare the octopus as in the recipe for grilled octopus on page 21. When cooked and cooled cut octopus into ½" slices.

To serve toss cooked seafood with celery, fennel, parsley, mint and scallions. Season to taste with vinegar, olive oil, salt and pepper.

"The food of thy soul is light and space; feed it then on light and space. But the food of thy body is Champagne and oysters; feed it then on Champagne and oysters; and so shall it merit a joyful resurrection, if there is any to be." – Herman Melville, 1852

Melville is certainly not alone in his belief that oysters and Champagne are fit for each other. But why Champagne? Since this is a relatively recent *something or other*, perhaps it can be attributed to the ever-growing scarcity, and thus premium, placed on the bivalve. We may do well here to clarify that we are speaking of raw oysters on the half-shell and extend the definitive to include the generic "dry white wine, preferably from France," even though for the first two hundred years of its existence Champagne was hardly dry and even now not always exclusively white. The point is, many people quite automatically think of Chablis or Muscadet or Champagne as the most suitable accompaniment to their beloved mollusks.

People have been eating oysters since we became "people" which was a very long time before people drank Champagne. As evidenced by the monstrous shell middens discovered on most continents and older than the oldest farms, and therefore beer and wine, people have dined on oysters for millennia without too much care for what they drank with them.

Ironically, since the advent of our favorite bubbly in the late 17th century the availability and quality of oysters has sharply declined. In the early 17th century the coast of France, from Mont-St.-Michel, around her Northwestern-most tip and back down, to the Bay of Quiberon, had been declared an "inexhaustible" supplier of oysters. Scarcely seventy years later the oyster population was virtually nil in some of those bays. Let not the blame for this lay on some monks who knew how to throw a party. Coincidentally, or perhaps not coincidentally, the First Industrial Revolution, the same creeping scythe that was forged to do away with Melville's beloved "light and space" is probably responsible.

Extreme population growth and various upgraded mechanisms paced demand far faster than supply. From the Treguier bank to Chesapeake Bay, the dragging without care for preservation left oyster bays denuded, some beyond the point of renewal. The oyster population vanished in an alarmingly short period. Of the 126 oyster boats working in La Trinite, France in 1881, only 25 were still in business in 1890. In Auray, a drag boat in 1878 was taking around 742 oysters in an hour. By 1900 the hourly haul was down to 69.

The excessive demand and subsequent over fishing at the beginning of our modern time is consistent with the cultural sine wave of our species. Over consumption and the exhaustion of food resources is, perhaps, in our very nature. Seneca wrote that the tendency in a wealthy (and zealous) society to over indulge is symptomatic of its ruin. He asked: "Are you astonished at the innumerable diseases? – Count the number of our cooks!" Like bored Heliogabalus ordering his hunters to Lydia to catch a Phoenix, we go deeper to the sea, faster with the thresher. Do not pluck the oyster, but rather scrape them all, hundreds at a time from their fragile beds.

What, if anything, does this have to do with Champagne? This coupling originates in France where salty Bretons ate their Belons sans anything but a glass of wine the same temperature as the oyster, which had not been on ice, but rather pulled from its shell cool from the sea. Across the Channel, where the oysters tended to be fatter and rounder, equally salty Englishmen downed theirs with ale; in New York City, a city porter did fine; Jack London liked his with Sherry or a dry San Francisco lager.

MFK. Fisher was keen to note:

Oysters, being almost universal, can be and have been eaten with perhaps a wider variety of beverages than almost any other dish I can think of...and less disastrously.

The point is: oysters are great with almost anything. This was reflected in the customs and culinary traditions of all the varied places that oysters grew. However, because of the catastrophic depletion of native beds and the virtual extinction of productive bays, the many charmingly idiosyncratic, terroir-driven pairings have disappeared. Oysters became associated not with place but with class, and quite possibly a kind of placeless class.

Transportation (with its added costs) drives up the price of oysters without adding any value, and in New York now, oysters are a luxury item. It could be argued that the garish tiers and fruits de mer trays count as conspicuous consumption, a phenomenon whose participants seem to exude the opposite of good taste or sense. Here is the quintessential example of a cosmopolitan society given way to something homogeneous and ultimately ruinous.

Perhaps a healthy way to look at the oyster as cuisine is to look far into the past. The mollusk, no matter where it comes from, links us to the sea. It is a shame that today she is no longer the cultural common denominator she once was. However, every time I am lucky enough to eat one (or six or twelve) I feel connected to something ancient and unchanged. It is a fair guess that my Damariscotta is not that different

from the mild, subtle things that Maine's first people ate and left in their middens. In this light, it seems oysters need no accompaniment. "You are eating the sea, that's it," writes Rebecca Clark, "only the sensation of a gulp of sea water has been wafted out of it by some sorcery, and [you] are on the verge of remembering you don't know what, mermaids or the sudden smell of kelp on the ebb tide or a poem you read once, something connected with the flavor of life itself."

The sea is light and space, isn't it?
By enjoying our connection to that sea when we are having an oyster we might feed ourselves very well indeed.

Go OYSTERS with LOVE by PETER HALE



THE BROTHERS

written by JESS ARNDT • illustration by STEPHANIE TAMEZ

Dark water. Made darker by weeds and discarded shells. The island is oblong and musty. Smearred at the edge. Trailing off. The shape of a fingerprint of the often incarcerated. One used to rolling on the blotter.

-All that is loathsome, drooping and decayed is here, says Dickens. Meaning New York. Meaning his Victorian body. Meaning an island full of plague and asylums that hide in the trees like large concealed fruit.

Under the shade, glass tonic bottles drape the shore. Rotten leaves. Frogs. The footprints, foxtrots of escaped convicts circling an old shed where Typhoid Mary once baked cakes.

At night one can still see the gassy fireworks, the rank flame of the party boat General Slocum and her 1,200 lost. Bodies that washed up blacked and swollen with song books in their church-going hands. The captain went blind. The life-jackets were filled with cast iron.

Cholera, Typhus, Yellow Fever, AIDS.

The mouth of the East River gapes. Hellgate is the Dutch word for bright passage. Aghast at the color. No one was prepared, not even the doctors.

It is important to have a place to put things. An island; a body. Making room the way a bone hollows with its little spoon, makes room for marrow. Then for the perpetual soreness of centers-poultices of abasement, cayenne pepper, hot vinegar.

Bataille said it best. A dog devouring the stomach of a goose, a drunken vomiting woman, a slobbering accountant, a jar of mustard represent the confusion that serves as the vehicle of love.

North Brother is an anus. Also a recluse, a sinkhole. Everyone is here. Sent here as soon as there was a word for what was happening to their sprouting buckling bodies. Not even a word, an acronym. There was never a word. There is still not a word except boats aflame.

Underneath, South Brother is plump and clean, the opposite of a shadow. The problem has always been leakage. The convict escapes. The bottle empties down the gullet. The tides cause the Brothers to touch themselves, then each other.

Still, little spoons massage the cavities again and again. Making room in the leaf moldered soil, the nose, the sand. In droves they kept coming until North Brother was full of birds, Black-Crowned Night Herons coating the trees, calling out with their harsh dusk-throated survival.

And always, there was the growing HEAT.

It was the flicked butt of a deckhand in the boiler room. It was the Atlantic wind. It was preparing food for the rich while still Irish, while still woman, while STILL not sick.

Communist workers appear to the bourgeois to be as ugly and dirty as hairy sexual organs, or lower parts;

The captain turned course from South Brother, place of rejoicing and church picnics, to North Brother where eternally sequestered, Mary sold cakes. "Is it in the oysters?" All the talk was about symptoms. Fever, rash, muscles, aches and swollen lymph nodes and glands.

"If it's in the oysters, it's in the sailors." Pants snugged. What was the deckhand doing, before he flicked the butt.

Sooner or later there will be a scandalous eruption in the course of which the asexual noble heads of the bourgeois will be chopped off.

The clothing of the day made swimming impossible.

They forsaked the bathhouses, the saunas. Not knowing why, except that they grew listless there. Not the little death, le petit mort, but in apocalyptic proportion. How is it that half the population perpetually resides on South Brother, and half, North?

She was a side wheel boat. Her lifeboats were painted to the deck. The fire hoses burst as water surged through them. The preservers were full of powder. Seeing North Brother, the captain, his eye clouding, ran her into the beach.

The five stages of drowning. Surprise. Involuntary Breath Holding. Unconsciousness. Hypoxic Convulsions. Clinical Death. In the sun, South Brother watched the nets drag out from the shore. Watched the vines suffocate the sanatorium in which Mary, and her passenger typhoid, were confined.

An abandoned shoe, a rotten tooth, a snub nose, the cook spitting in the soup of his masters are to love what a battle flag is to nationality.

It is important to have a place to put things. A body; an island. They cleared the filth, spread lime and instructed survivors in proper sanitation. Handfuls of condoms crammed in weak fists.

An umbrella, a sexagenarian, a seminarian, the smell of rotten eggs, the hollow eyes of judges are the roots that nourish love.

They breathe each other—one fetid, one fair. Tiring of his darker representations, the convict packs a bun, swims South and then away. Aside from the forlorn and hidden husks of buildings, the islands appear identical, inhabited only by vast flocks of birds.

They are bivalves sutured together.

Forming the shadow of a bigger island that the East River slugs brackish by. We are all both brothers. We are all a case of mixed cutlery, tossed haphazard on the shore.



SUMMER NIÇOISE

This is a niçoise salad made with tuna that has been cooked confit-style in olive oil and fresh marinated anchovies.

For the tuna confit:
2# fresh tuna
extra virgin olive oil
1 Tablespoon fennel seed
1 Tablespoon coriander seed
3 bay leaves
6 sprigs thyme

Season the tuna well on all sides with salt and pepper. Place in a container small enough to hold tuna relatively snugly so that you don't have to use too much oil. Just cover tuna with olive oil and then add fennel, coriander, bay and thyme to the oil. Cover tuna with aluminum foil and place in a 250° oven allowing it to slowly poach in the oil. When cooked through remove from the oven and allow to cool in the oil. You can and should use this oil to dress the anchovies as well as the rest of the salad.

For the anchovies:
12 fresh anchovies
3 lemons, juiced
¼ cup extra virgin olive oil
sea salt
4 cloves garlic, thinly sliced
6 sprigs thyme, picked

Rinse the anchovies to remove any blood and goo from them. Filet and eviscerate the anchovies by laying the fish on a cutting board and scraping the guts out of the belly. Once clean push the viscera off to the side and filet the anchovy by running a paring knife along the bone in one smooth stroke. Pull out the bone and remove the head. Lay the filets out in a single layer. Season with sea salt and pepper and squeeze the lemon juice over them. Heat a small pan with ¼ cup olive oil (you can re-use the tuna oil) and the sliced garlic. When garlic begins to sizzle and turn golden remove from the heat and add the thyme. Allow oil to cool and then pour over the anchovies. Let anchovies sit and cook in the marinade. This can be done in the refrigerator.

For the salad:
1 head crisp romaine
6-8 eggs
2 handfuls string beans
½ cup oil cured olives

To cook the eggs, place in a pot just large enough to hold them in a single layer and just cover with cold water. Add a pinch of salt to the water and then bring to a boil on high heat. As soon as the water begins to boil turn it off and time the eggs for 7

minutes. In 7 minutes run cold water over eggs until they are completely cool. For best results peel eggs sooner rather than later.

Blanch string beans in plenty of well-salted boiling water. Shock in an ice bath and hold chilled.

To pit olives place them in a kitchen towel and whack them with a pan. Remove from the towel and peel olive from the pit.

Wash and dry romaine and cut into 1" ribbons.

To serve:

I rarely appreciate a salad that hasn't been dressed and tossed for me. The nicoise however is a composed salad, not a tossed salad. Arrange the romaine on a plate and scatter string beans and olives. Cut eggs in half and arrange. Add chunks of tuna and lay anchovy filets on top of strewn salad. Drizzle with "lazy housewife" vinaigrette.

FISH SOUP au PISTOU

2# wild striped bass
18-24 littleneck clams
8 cloves garlic, thinly sliced
2 large ripe tomatoes, diced
8 small new potatoes
2 handfuls string beans
1 cup dried flageolet beans (or chick peas)
1 cup white wine
extra virgin olive oil
pistou, see recipe pg. 11

Soak the flageolet in water overnight. Strain the beans and place them in a pot with plenty of fresh water. Bring to a boil, skim, toss in a bouquet of thyme and bay and simmer beans until tender. Season beans with salt and then cook a little longer until they are tender for sure. Hold the beans in their liquid as they cool.

Toss the potatoes with olive oil, salt and pepper and then roast, covered until tender. Allow to cool and then dice into bite-sized pieces.

Cut the stem end off of the string beans and then cut them into ½" pieces.

Heat a large pot with olive oil and sizzle the garlic until golden. Add the tomatoes, season with salt and stir to incorporate. Deglaze with the white wine and allow it to cook down and reduce. Add the prepped string beans, stir and then add the cooked potatoes and the flageolets with their cooking liquid. If there is not enough liquid add a little water. Place the bass and the clams into the pot and cover. Simmer until the clams open. Serve in bowls and drizzle with plenty of pistou and some toasted bread.

GRILLED OCTOPUS w/GIGANTE BEANS, DRIED OREGANO and TAPENADE

To prepare the octopus you must first braise it and then grill it. The braising could be done a day in advance and the grilling is quick, mostly there just to impart char and flavor.

To braise the octopus:

1-2 whole large octopus, approx. 1# each, defrosted (as it will probably be frozen)
2 cups white wine
4 cups water (use more if cooking 2 octopus)
2 lemons
1 head garlic, cut in half
4 bay leaves
1 small bunch thyme
2 Tablespoons each whole coriander seed, fennel seed, black peppercorn
2-3 Tablespoons salt
2 cups cooked gigante beans
2 Tablespoons good quality dried oregano

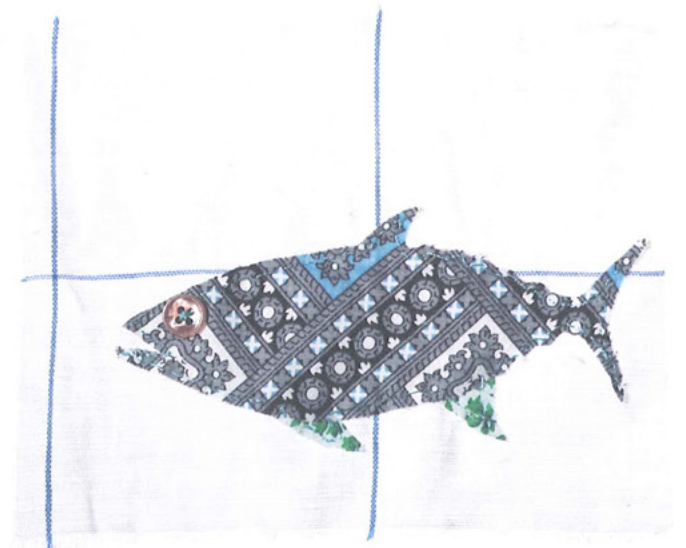
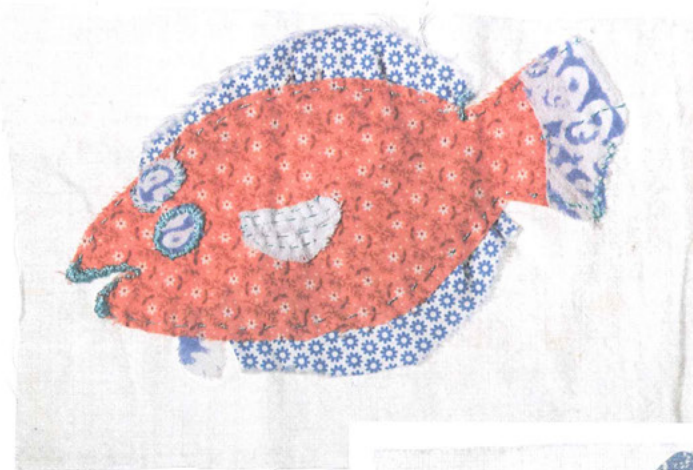
Place all of the above ingredients except the octopus into a large pot and bring to a boil. Slowly lower the octopus into the pot and reduce to a simmer. Cook until the octopus is tender (about an hour). To test the octopus taste the meat around the base of the head, not the tentacles which will cook more quickly. Remove octopus from cooking liquid, cool and refrigerate. Cut the tentacles off of the octopus and heat up the grill. Toss the octopus with olive oil salt and pepper and place on a hot grill allowing octopus to char. Remove from the grill and slice into bite-sized pieces. Toss with tapenade (p.10) and serve on top of the gigante beans. Sprinkle with dried oregano.

MACKEREL or BASS ESCABÈCHE

Escabèche is a preparation whereby you cook a piece of fish and then marinate it. Kind of like a reverse ceviche. There are many things that are wonderful about escabèche; for one it is very tasty and can be prepared in advance, eaten room temperature or cold and, finally, it is very versatile. It can be part of an elegant meal or a picnic or even be used in a sandwich.

2# mackerel or wild striped bass (skin on)
1 red onion, thinly sliced
1 bunch scallions, thinly sliced on the bias
1 cup parsley, rough chop
½ cup mint, rough chop
4 lemons
extra virgin olive oil

Cut fish into smaller portions than you might normally, about 1½ -2" wide. Season fish well with salt and pepper. Heat a large sauté pan and cook fish pieces skin side down in olive oil, allowing the skin to get brown and crispy. Flip fish and cook for another minute or so on the other side but don't overcook the fish, leave it a little rare, it will continue to cook in the marinade. Remove fish from the pan and place in a dish with tall sides that can hold the fish and the marinade. Scatter onions and herbs on top of the fish and then squeeze the juice of 4 lemons over everything and a good round of olive oil so that the fish is sitting in about ½" of liquid. Let marinate, basting the fish with the marinade every once in a while. Allow to sit at room temperature for a couple of hours. Serve the fish using the marinade as a sauce. This makes a great lunch with a cold rice salad.



FLUKE FRIED SCHNITZEL STYLE w/BITTER GREENS and ANCHOVY VINAIGRETTE

2# fluke (or cod)
1 cup flour
2 eggs, lightly beaten
1 cup breadcrumbs
1 bunch dandelion greens
6 anchovies, minced
3 garlic cloves, sliced
1 Tablespoon dijon mustard
¼ cup red wine vinegar
¾ cup extra virgin olive oil

To make the vinaigrette:

Place anchovies, garlic, mustard and vinegar in a bowl with a pinch of salt. Stir the ingredients together. Slowly whisk the olive oil into the vinegar. Season and taste.

To prepare the fish:

First, dredge the fish in the flour, shaking off any excess then dip it into the egg and finally the breadcrumbs. Repeat until all of the fish is ready to fry. Heat a large skillet with olive oil and cook the fish in batches until brown on both sides. If you are using fluke it should easily cook through on the stovetop but if you are using cod or a thicker fish you may need to finish it in the oven. Plate the fish and then toss the dandelion greens with anchovy vinaigrette. Serve salad on top of fish.

GRILLED RAZOR CLAMS w/GARLIC and PARSLEY

1-2# razor clams
8 cloves garlic, minced
1 bunch parsley, minced
1 fresh red chile, minced or a very small
pinch chile arbol
extra virgin olive oil
lemon

This dish will come together very quickly. Right before you are ready to grill the clams mix the garlic, parsley and chile with ¼-½ cup olive oil and a pinch of salt allowing the garlic and parsley to macerate a little bit. Place the clams on the grill and when they have opened and turned opaque, remove from the grill and toss with the garlic and parsley mixture as well as a squeeze of lemon. Serve immediately.

MUSSELS COOKED w/TOMATOES, GARLIC and PARSLEY

1-2# mussels
8 cloves garlic, sliced
2 ripe tomatoes, diced
1 cup white wine
1 bunch parsley, picked
crusty white bread, sliced
Extra virgin olive oil

Wash the mussels and remove the beards. Heat ¼ cup oil in a large pot with a tight fitting lid. Add the garlic to the oil and allow it to sizzle and turn golden. Add the tomatoes to the garlic and let them wilt. Add the mussels to the pot, stir and add the wine. Cover the pot and allow the mussels to open. Toss in the parsley. Slice the bread and brush or drizzle it with olive oil. Either toast the bread on a baking sheet in a 400° oven or grill it. If you toast the bread in the oven rub it with a garlic clove when it comes out. If it's grilled it doesn't need the garlic. Serve the mussels with the toasted bread.

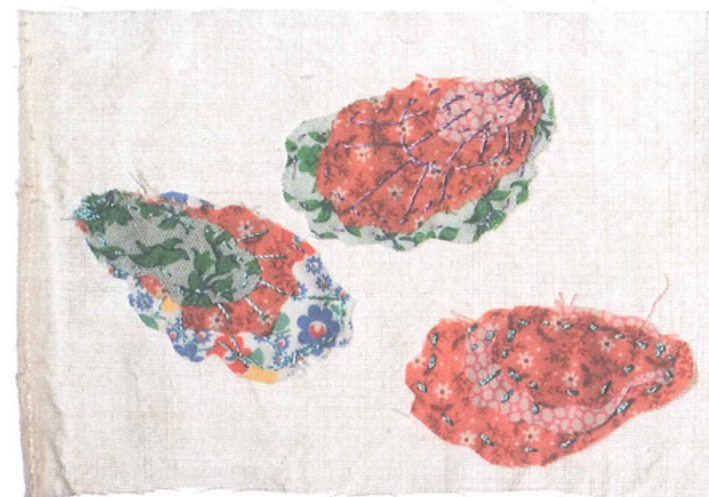
FRIED OYSTER SANDWICH w/BACON and BUTTERMILK DRESSING

24 oysters, shucked
(about 6-8 per sandwich)
4 strips thick cut bacon, cut into lardons
2 cups buttermilk
1 cup crème fraîche or sour cream
1 bunch frisee or arugula
1 bunch scallions, thinly sliced on the bias
hot dog buns

Lay out the oysters and season them with salt and pepper. Pour 1 cup of buttermilk into a bowl and place the oysters into the buttermilk. Remove the oysters from the buttermilk and dredge them in the flour, shaking them off to remove any excess. Place 1" of oil into the bottom of a heavy skillet. Fry the oysters in the oil allowing to brown on both sides. Remove oysters from the oil and season them with salt. Meanwhile render the bacon in a skillet until crispy and brown. Strain and hold. Mix the remaining cup of buttermilk with the crème fraîche, add a dash of red or white wine vinegar and season with salt and pepper.

To assemble:

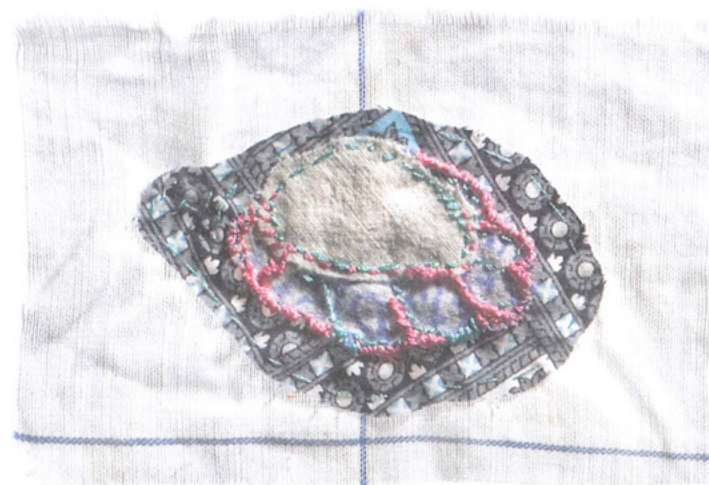
Place the oysters into the hot dog bun (you could toast this in a buttered skillet). Place the frisee, bacon and scallions in a bowl and toss with the buttermilk dressing. Place tossed greens on top of the oysters in the bun and drizzle with a little additional dressing. Serve.



OYSTER PAN ROAST

24 shucked oysters with their liquor
4 Tablespoons butter
4 shallots, thinly sliced
1 teaspoon smoked paprika
1 cup sherry
½-1 cup cream
nice crusty bread

Heat the butter in a large skillet and add the shallots. Season them with salt and allow them to soften and get a little golden but not brown. Add the paprika and stir. Add the sherry and reduce. Add the oysters and their liquor allowing them to cook just long enough to plump up and curl around the edges. This will only take a minute or so. Add the cream and allow to reduce without over cooking the oysters. If there's a lot of liquid in the pan remove the oysters and let the sauce reduce without them, then add them back when the sauce is ready. Season with salt and pepper. Serve over a piece of toasted bread.



HANGTOWN FRY 2 WAYS

Here are 2 recipes for a dish that no one will probably ever make but it's a great idea. Alive in this dish is the notion that oysters were once so abundant they would be eaten scrambled with eggs. These days oysters are usually eaten only on special occasions. We would never cook them at home. We don't even have a place to buy them. But there was a time when oysters were eaten at many a meal, and here is a dish that reminds us of that. The first preparation is essentially MFK Fisher's recipe for Hangtown Fry.

24 oysters, shucked
1 cup flour
2 eggs, lightly beaten plus 8 eggs beaten
with a little milk or cream and
seasoned with salt and pepper
1 cup breadcrumbs

Lay out the oysters and season them with salt and pepper. Dredge them in flour, followed by the 2 beaten eggs, and then the breadcrumbs. Heat a large skillet with butter and add the oysters, allowing them to brown on one side. When the oysters are brown flip them over and then add the rest of the eggs to the pan. Move the eggs around by pulling them away from the sides of the pan as if cooking a large frittata. When cooked on the bottom flip the eggs onto an inverted plate and then slip the eggs back into the pan to cook on the other side. As MFK says, this should look like a big oyster pancake. She also says it should be served with breakfast sausages and shoestring potatoes. Sounds just about right.

TAKE TWO:

24 oysters, shucked
1 cup flour
2 eggs, lightly beaten plus 8 eggs beaten
with a little milk or cream and
seasoned with salt and pepper
1 cup breadcrumbs
4 strips thick cut bacon, cut into lardons
½ cup scallions, thinly sliced on the bias

Prepare oysters as above. Render the bacon in a large skillet. When brown remove the bacon from the pan and fry the oysters either in the bacon fat or in butter. Allow the oysters to brown on both sides. When the oysters are brown add back the bacon, pour in the egg mixture and toss in the scallions. This time cook the egg more as a scramble, be sure to leave the eggs creamy and soft, not hard and over cooked. Serve with fancy toast.

RAW OYSTERS with REGULATIONS

WRITTEN BY SASHA DAVIES

I was sitting in a hard plastic chair in the back room of a bar out on Avenue P and Flatbush on a Friday morning the first time my eyebrow was raised by the regulations around tagging shellfish. All shellfish sold in the U.S. must come from a box, bag or lot with an official shellfish tag with the following information: harvester, harvest location, quantity, date, purchaser, and oyster type. In the era of wanting to know where our food comes from, my curiosity was piqued by the idea of these tags. I say "the idea" because it sounded too good and too high maintenance to be true.

How could one possibly attach a tag to a shellfish? And even so, were restaurants reliable enough to hold them at all- let alone for 90 days? A restaurant could open and fold or have a complete turnover of their staff in ninety days. So I was wowed when I toured our walk-in the following day and I found oysters, still in their shells, mounded in buckets, each pile topped with a square printed tag stating all the required information and bearing a real live person's signature. As Bob Rheault, the president of the East Coast Shellfish Growers Association, put it the protocols they follow are intended to provide, "full traceability from harvester to plate." My eyes scanned all the other products peering out around the white buckets- eggs, beef, vegetables, herbs, juice- none bearing anything nearly as detailed as the oysters. This sort of made oysters look safer but also made them seem riskier and I bet the truth is somewhere in between.

There are a number of good reasons for the thoughtful handling of oysters starting with the invention of our friend the flush toilet in the late 1800's. Raw sewage flushing out of restrooms, through pipes, and into the nearest body of water-

in New Amsterdam it was the East River. Also situated on that river was an active seaport. Oysters and other shellfish were often "floated" or hung over the sides of rafts docked in the estuary waters nearby. There were two benefits to floating; oysters stayed fresh without refrigeration if they were kept in water and the oysters would take on water, plumping up because the estuary was less saline than their saltwater beds. Those oysters were flooded with waters carrying untreated sewage, and thus began our clammy education, not only about food safety but also water treatment and waste management. Diseases like typhoid were identified as transmittable via oyster consumption earlier in the 1800's, leading some early oyster states like Connecticut to develop their own oyster regulations or to ban specific areas for growing.

FATHER'S FISH CO., INC. 800 Food Center Drive, Units 4-6-8, Bronx, NY 10474 Tel: 718-620-8600 Fax: 718-620-8607 CERT# NY 221 SS	
ORIGINAL SHIPPER'S CERT. No. IF OTHER THAN ABOVE: 17893-85	SHIPPING DATE: 1/9/08
HARVEST DATE: 1/9/08	HARVEST LOCATION: 15-2
TYPE OF SHELLFISH: OYSTERS <input type="checkbox"/> HARD CLAMS <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SOFT CLAMS <input type="checkbox"/>	
TO: <i>L. Berk</i>	
QUANTITY OF SHELLFISH: BUSHELS <u>100</u> COUNT _____ LBS _____ OTHER _____	
THIS TAG IS REQUIRED TO BE ATTACHED UNTIL CONTAINER IS EMPTY OR IS RETAGGED AND THEREAFTER KEPT ON FILE FOR 90 DAYS.	
TO: <i>Madaw</i>	RESHIPPER'S CERT. No. _____ DATES RESHIPPED: 1/10/08

The federal government, under the leadership of Theodore Roosevelt, began to get involved with food safety around a decade later with the passing of the Food and Drug Act of 1906. The impetus for this legislation was the increasing use of technology in food production, food-borne illness outbreaks and the release of Upton Sinclair's book, *The Jungle*, which provided a detailed account of conditions in Chicago's stock-yards, slaughterhouses and packing plants. This legislation changed the way all meats were packed, handled and shipped- including shellfish. Walt Canzonier, of the New Jersey Aquaculture Association, explained that these regulations were defective by design because they didn't consider the growing areas at all- only what happened after the oysters were harvested. Even with increased attention to food safety, the focus was still on how to fix "contaminated" products- not how to prevent contamination outright. The public's concerns mounted and the consumption of oysters continued to decline steadily. The decline triggered a banding together of the growers to form the Oyster Growers and Dealers Association of North America. Growers worked to educate the public on the merits of oysters and improvements made to the industry's sanitation practices.

BAILEY'S OYSTER'S, CRAB'S & SOFT CRAB'S L.L.C. P.O. Box 107, Port Norris, NJ 08349 (856) 785-1919 NJ 89 SS	
ORIGINAL SHIPPER'S CERT. No. IF OTHER THAN ABOVE: 01/01/2008	SHIPPING DATE: 01/07/2008
HARVEST DATE: 01/01/2008	HARVEST LOCATION: MD - 192
TYPE OF SHELLFISH: OYSTER	WILD <input type="checkbox"/>
QUANTITY OF SHELLFISH: 100	COUNT
THIS TAG IS REQUIRED TO BE ATTACHED UNTIL CONTAINER IS EMPTY OR IS RETAGGED AND THEREAFTER KEPT ON FILE FOR 90 DAYS.	
TO: BLUE RIBBON SEAFOOD 1-2-3 Fulton Fish Mark NY 10038	RESHIPPER'S CERT. No. _____ DATES RESHIPPED: _____

In 1924, a typhoid pandemic exacerbated existing concerns about the oysters relationship to the disease and also confirmed the severity of water pollution in New York and New Jersey. The Association, now called the Shellfish Institute of North America, asked the federal government to assist them in developing tighter controls for the harvesting, processing, and selling of oysters. These guidelines, including shellfish tags, are now called the National Shellfish Sanitation Program (NSSP). Ironically, the basis for the first drafts of the NSSP guidelines was the existing guidelines for testing raw milk- another product now under scrutiny from the public and government. NSSP guidelines are only mandatory for states who wish to sell their oysters to other states. In this way, oysters regulations are still similar to those for raw milk in that some decisions are still made at the state level. Unfortunately, for raw milk, many states have outlawed the sale of it. So how did oysters squeak by on a similar set of regulations?

None of the growers or researchers I spoke with had a singular reason why the right to consume raw oysters has remained intact. All of them were confident that the construct of their regulations, a state/federal cooperative program, has made their industry stronger and possibly impervious to swift and overly restrictive regulations. The cooperative construct means that decisions about the industry are made with input from all involved- growers, the technical community (researchers) and regulators. Without the participation of all the stakeholders the risk, as Canzonier stated perfectly, is high that important decisions would fall into the hands of, "Some guy sitting behind a desk, polishing the edge of it with his fat belly, who doesn't know an oyster from a rock in the bay." Losing any one of those advocacy groups and the concerns they voice might mean faster progress but would almost certainly lead to less practicable regulations.

As an outsider, I think the power in their industry lies in the decision of the participants to focus on the primary source- the growing areas, and to hold all oyster growers to the same standards whether they are harvesting oysters for raw consumption or for cooking and canning. This is not the case in other segments of the food industry. Take milk for example- looking at the primary source would mean identifying universal standards for raising and milking dairy cows, whether the farmer sells pasteurized or raw milk. Currently raw milk producers are scrutinized much more heavily because of our confidence that

pasteurization will take care of anything harmful in the milk. Feels like a bit of a cop-out really.

Granted, oyster growers and packers are not saints. They are unified reactionaries who, in the face of a major downturn in their industry, did something hopelessly logical- they made everyone along their production chain accountable- not just the packers and shippers. Growers are responsible for ensuring that shellfish are harvested from safe waters, packers and shippers are on the hook for proper transport, and the seller must keep a written record of all shellfish sold on their premises for three full months. The three months gives a wide enough berth for oysters harvested in cooler months that may be kept for upwards of three weeks before they are even sold to a purveyor, as well as the incubation time of possible food-borne illnesses in consumers. I want to think that the oyster industry did this because the idea that Americans would be willing to live without raw shellfish seemed like a real possibility, unlike the prospect of a dairy boycott, but at the time this was happening oysters were a huge part of American culinary tradition- not the gourmet indulgence they have become today. Unfortunately, it seems that the reason for the growers' willingness was simply that their industry was rapidly approaching rock-bottom and in a free market this seems to be the most powerful motivator.

Like any good republican would tell you, the free market will work out all kinks in due time. The problem is that the free-market also has been known to give an advantage to those who cut corners in safety, sanitation, etc., because those things cost money and add to the bottom line of production costs. This continues until there is some kind of outbreak that brings the whole thing grinding to a halt. We're also in an era where the federal government feels that it is easier to force producers to pasteurize, cook, or irradiate as their final step in food production rather than to find and prevent the origin of contamination. The FDA's official recommendation on oysters is to cook them- so why do growers continue to advocate for better aquaculture programs and honor the NSSP guidelines? Well, many of them have great affection for raw oysters but more importantly they will tell you plainly, as Bob Rheault did, "I firmly believe that the key to improving the market is to stop getting people sick."

J.P.'S SHELLFISH MI 332SS P.O. BOX 666 ELIOT, MAINE 03903 (207) 439-6018	
ORIGINAL SHIPPER'S CERT. No. IF OTHER THAN ABOVE: NB0414SS	
Harvest Date: 3/25/08	Ship Date: 04/01/08
Harvest Area: BEDEC	
This Package contains: 80 CT VILLAGE BAY COCKTAIL	
Method of Production: WILD HARVEST	
Country of Origin: CANADA	
Reshipper's CERT. No. _____	Date Reshipped: _____
THIS TAG IS REQUIRED TO BE ATTACHED UNTIL CONTAINER IS EMPTY AND THEREAFTER KEPT ON FILE FOR 90 DAYS.	

DUXBURY MUSSELS & SEAFOOD CORP. PERISHABLE KEEP REFRIGERATED 8 B Joseph St., Kingston, MA 02364 MA 4995-SS (781) 585-5517	
ORIGINAL SHIPPER'S CERT. No. IF OTHER THAN ABOVE: MA 4695 SS	
HARVEST DATE: 3/18/08	SHIPPING DATE: 3/20/08
HARVEST LOCATION: SC 53 MA USA	
TYPE OF SHELLFISH: MUSSELS (WILD)	
QUANTITY OF SHELLFISH: 10 LBS	
THIS TAG IS REQUIRED TO BE ATTACHED UNTIL CONTAINER IS EMPTY OR IS RETAGGED AND THEREAFTER KEPT ON FILE FOR 90 DAYS.	
TO: 3396	RESHIPPER'S CERT. No. _____ DATES RESHIPPED: _____

OFTEN WHAT'S NOT THERE IS WHAT BEGINS
an interview with

BARBARA WHEATON

illustration by Bella Foster

Barbara K. Wheaton speaks often of the ocean. It seems to be her universal measure or, perhaps, a thematic foil to our life here on earth. I first came across an interview with Barbara in the Schlesinger Library's newsletter. In the article she deftly states, "I learned that foodways embody culture just as fine arts do. We swim in a river of time, but we are like fish who don't know much about water."

Barbara is now the honorary curator of the culinary collection at the Schlesinger Library. The institute began with an astounding women's rights collection, featuring the likes of June Jordan, Adrienne Rich and Amelia Earhart. The library at Radcliffe grew during the 1940s and 1950s to include a culinary collection featuring the significant papers of Julia Child and, our guiding light, MFK Fisher.

Barbara also spends her time traveling and teaching a class, to mostly professionals in the food industry, on how to read cookbooks as cultural informants. Spending the afternoon with Barbara at a seafood shack just outside of Boston turned out to be a truly lovely and inspiring experience. Her eyes light up when she is about to inform or amuse, which proves to be often as she seems full of joy, light and encyclopedic knowledge. Barbara Wheaton is truly the historian and, in the best sense, the mischievous buddah.

DJ: What does it mean to teach food writers to read cookbooks?

BW: Well, I've created a system for reading cookbooks, which is really interesting, but the really interesting stuff is widely scattered. I recently organized just the ingredients of three very small cookbooks and I came out with 12,000 records and then I started to feel myself drifting in and out of my mind. It's like going to the beach and finding that the sand is full of interest, but first you have to sort it out.

DJ: Have you always taught this class?

BW: Yes, I made it up. Each person in the group reads a different book every day for five days, for five different sets of qualities. The books span from the 1300's to the 1900's and everybody gets a difficult Medieval English book to read once.

As they read, their task is to think about what ingredients they find; how do they fit into the cycle of the year, how long are they available, what are the preservation issues, what things are made by people who are going to eat it and what food is traveling long distances. Whenever the class is over my students always agree they know less at the end than they did in the beginning.

DJ: So you begin to imagine culture by what people are eating?

BW: Exactly. We start with something that seems very simple but is already really complicated. I teach, not information, but technique.

DJ: Do you have a definitive list of books you like to teach?

BW: Oh yes. Practically any cookbook will have ingredients but I want them to have cookbooks with interesting ingredients, or without. Part of their task is to notice what's not there, because what's not there is often what begins to tell you something.

DJ: What's an example of that?

BW: When something arrives in the text that's new, you suddenly realize you haven't been seeing it. Like in American cookbooks you don't see pineapples or bananas until you have refrigerated transport.

DJ: You're kind of sleuthing.

BW: Yes. Who would expect the first American cookbook, published in Hartford in 1796 to list, as things you might roast, the peacock? I think she's just showing off.



My students are also supposed to read looking at the world-view of the four people in every cookbook: the writer, the reader, the cook, and the diner. What would the conditions of their respective lives be while they are preparing, presenting, serving, carving and passing the meal? Then we talk about the performance of the meal and the cookbook as a form of writing. What are the varieties and how does the language change? What constitutes a recipe?

DJ: I am recently interested in how we can connect a more intellectual or thoughtful contextual relationship to what we do in the restaurant business, outside of getting dinner out of the kitchen and on to people's tables? Which is wonderful work.

BW: But very intense. An interesting example of that convergence of experiences is the Plimoth Plantation.

DJ: That's true. It's a bit like being in a diorama, immersed in culture and history.

BW: It's better because dioramas don't have a conversation with you. The Plimoth Plantation has a moment, for lack of a better word, when you forget you're talking to an interpreter and you think you're talking to a real 1627 person. I had this experience when I went there first without children and this woman was pounding something in a mortar. I asked her what it was and she said, "I would be pounding some pepper and ginger for my husband for he'd be somewhat phlegmatic." This is a reference to the humoral system. Everybody is choleric or sanguine or melancholy or phlegmatic. And I said, "Well, you certainly wouldn't give it to him if he were choleric." And we just went off and had a conversation.

DJ: It's nice when you don't notice you're imagining something and you're just in it.

BW: Yes and they are a great community and a bunch of free spirits. A lot of the initial thinking for that place happened in the American Studies program at Brown. James Deetz was there. He wrote a wonderful book called, *In Small Things Forgotten*, basically about interpreting remains of material culture.

DJ: What do you make of contemporary cook book writing?

BW: I think we're at a wonderful age for food writing. The amount of good food writing in proportion to good food being cooked has tipped. One really good thing that has happened is that there were always a lot of people that hated to cook and didn't do it very well. Now they don't have to do it so much. That's a real improvement. People now get to eat more food cooked by people who do it well and perhaps enjoy it.

DJ: But don't you think there is something lost in that.

BW: Do you feel that way about sewing?

DJ: I like those domestic arts. I don't want to sew my wardrobe but I can hem my pants.

BW: If you had to sew your wardrobe and your family's you might feel different.

DJ: Is that part of our evolution? That we give up cooking as we give up having to sew and wash our clothes in the river? Doesn't cooking also offer community?

BW: I mean I've seen women pounding laundry in a river, not recently of course, but I'm sure they'd gladly trade community for a washing machine. I don't think it's a moral thing. I think it's your skill set you evolve.

DJ: It's a similar argument to: if I am going to eat meat should I be able to kill the animal? Some people traditionally were not hunters.

BW: I could kill a chicken.

DJ: Well do you hate chickens or?

BW: No, I just like to eat them. And I grew up where there were chickens that were killed and eaten. I never saw them get killed. I loved to watch the cook take the innards out. I thought that was neat.

DJ: I don't think I could kill an animal.

BW: Oh, it's easy. I couldn't kill a horse. You'd have to plan ahead. I'm not sure I could shoot a gun. I would have to use a knife.

DJ: Well, why then are we so curious about food? There is so much questioning and so much written about it. People love to read cookbooks but they don't actually make the food. It's fetishized. All we talk about is food and real-estate. Well, I guess you need to eat and you need shelter.

BW: And a new president. I do think people read about food because they want to be sure there is going to be food. I think right now there is far more anxiety around food than is good for us. I am for anything that is life affirming. I think in an ideal society people should be able to do what they're good at. Unfortunately, there aren't enough people who want to do the things I don't want to do! Ha.

DJ: There must be something lost in that anxiety and yearning.

BW: Well, I love good food and I would like everyone to eat good food. It doesn't have to be complicated and it doesn't have to be expensive but, to make it well, even the simple stuff requires time and, even worse, some attention. Even if it's fast it's still going to take ten minutes at the end of the day, and you've done a days work, and you have a lot of stress, and you've got credit card debt, and a rent, and a mortgage, and screaming children and your feet hurt. I think people

are very hard pressed. If I could do anything to make the world a happier place, I would teach everyone how to make an omelette.

And I have always cared a great deal about skill. I like to do things as well as I can, which is often not wonderful, but someone once said anything worth doing well is worth doing badly. I had that experience with Asian ceramics. I had beautiful stuff in my mind, but what came out was mortifying. As a person who weeps at the sight of an equal sign and couldn't crunch a number to save my life, I don't think you should be made to do what you're bad at. It's humiliating. I think that's different than not making an effort.

DJ: In a past article, Ed Behr quotes you as saying, "Time doesn't equal progress. Time just means movement."

BW: Recipes have always grown out of place and class and interactions between classes. Think of southern cooking. They've grown out of the industrial revolution. Cooking has been changing in a very inevitable way since the first iron bridge was built in northern England in 1779. Then with the coming of the steam engine we see Point A emerge where food is produced, and Point B where it is sold.

Then you get cast iron buildings and the Worlds Fair, which makes new technology known, just like with the coming of the internet, everything is happening faster. Everyone begins to use the same kind of flour so you start to see exact measurements.

You see the first brand names in cookbooks before the civil war and it's yeast. The war accelerated the building of railroads, which wars tend to do if they don't destroy them. We have all this carrying capacity, and markets. Hearth cooking gets replaced with cast iron-ranges. All staple cookbooks of the second quarter of the 19th century go out of print because they become obsolete. The methods change, the materials

change. So we're not going to change, change that is. You have to do things well with what's at hand. I believe in skill, but there is always more skill to learn than skill will have.

In that wonderful historical novel, *The Leper*, the protagonist says, "things will change so that they can remain the same." I think you have to choose the things that are most important to you. Is it skill? Is it nurturing? Which I think is what cooking is at its best.

We are at an interesting place right now where there is a lot of good food and wine and a lot of badly manufactured food. Some of the worst food is very fancy and expensive, made with 300 ingredients and half of them endangered fish species.

I think we have a awful lot of sorting out to do and we seem on the verge of reinventing problems in the food supply by burning it all up in our gas tanks and incidentally making the toxic area in the gulf of Mexico bigger than its ever been due to agricultural run off.

DJ: There are sort of crisis issues at the production level and then crisis issues in terms of people really not knowing how to take care of themselves. Michael Pollan seems to be taking that on: nutrition as prescription.

BW: I mean we know some things. I read science news and I know I can't go down to Brattle Street and make up a diet entirely of expensive cava. Or even wine and chocolate.

DJ: Maybe throw some strawberries in the mix.

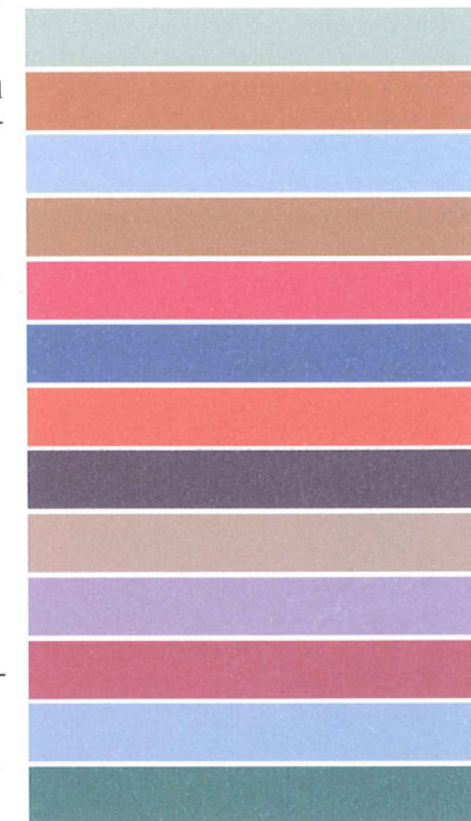
BW: Ah, but not this early in the season. Even if they smell good they are still white in their soul.

DJ: It's funny our menu being seasonal has kind of allowed for me to not keep great a record of it. I used to keep a day-to-day kitchen log but then I got better at knowing what I was doing. I found I could just walk in do things more spontaneously.

BW: You should try hard to keep them or photograph the chalkboard. It will be the work of a moment.

Cooks in Britain and Western Europe through the 18th century were generally illiterate. Cookbooks were not for cooks, but the people managing cooks, the bosses in the household, the butlers, housekeepers etc. They needed to know what kind of things were suitable to buy. The cooks didn't need them. They learned standing next to someone. The bosses bought cookbooks when they needed to make something out of the ordinary so you could argue that most early cookbooks are records of what people did not eat. You see, you already know less than you did when you sat down.

Many people consider cookbooks as comic or trivial but if you consider even just our menu collection the library has two that unarguably stand out: the menu for Windows on the World, which was in one of the towers, and we have a collection of menus from New Orleans. These things become ephemeral.



HERB SALAD

2 cups baby arugula
1 cup parsley
1 cup cilantro
½ cup mint
½ cup dill
1 cup tarragon
1 bunch scallions
1 bunch chives
lemons
extra virgin oil
sea salt

Place the greens in a bowl and toss with lemon juice, extra virgin oil and sea salt.

EGGPLANT DIP w/SESAME SEEDS

2 whole firm eggplant, if you can find white, even better
6 cloves garlic, sliced
extra virgin olive oil
lemon
¼ cup toasted sesame seeds

Leave the skin on and rub the eggplant with olive oil. Ideally grill them whole but if you're not grilling you can place them on a baking sheet and into the oven. Cook eggplant until they deflate and soften, rotating as they go. When eggplants are cooked, remove from the heat and let cool. When cool enough to handle peel the skin off. Sizzle the garlic in a little olive oil until golden. Place the eggplant and the garlic in the bowl of a food processor or blender. Purée. Place eggplant in a bowl and season as necessary with olive oil, salt and lemon juice. Serve with sesame seeds sprinkled on top.



RADISH and YOGURT SOUP

2 large bunches radishes
1, 16oz tub plain yogurt
1 small bunch mint, picked

Clean radishes and either on a box grater or in a food processor with a grating attachment, grate the radishes. Place radishes in a large bowl or a pot and season with salt until they start to wilt. Add the yogurt. Thin with water and season additionally with salt and some fresh ground pepper. Serve soup well chilled and garnished with fresh mint.

AVOCADO and CUCUMBER SOUP

4 large cucumbers
1 avocado
water
ground coriander seed
cilantro

Peel the cucumbers and remove the seeds. Cut into 1" pieces. Place cucumber, avocado and coriander into the bowl of a food processor or a blender and purée, adding water as necessary to thin the mixture. When desired consistency is reached add cilantro and purée. Season and serve well chilled.

SKORDALIA

Skordalia is a traditional element of the Greek meze. There are a few different recipes for it. Sometimes it's made with bread and almonds, sometimes potatoes and garlic. I happen to like this version the best. This is a great accompaniment to grilled meats or vegetables or just as part of a spread of summer treats.

8 medium yellow potatoes
12 cloves garlic, minced
extra virgin olive oil
lemon juice
salt

Peel, slice and place potatoes in a pot and cover with cold water. Add a small handful of salt to the water and simmer until tender. Strain potatoes through a colander and mash with a potato masher. Add the garlic and a generous amount of olive oil to the potatoes and mix them with a wooden spoon to season. Keep adding olive oil, salt and lemon as necessary until you have a creamy, lemony, rich product. Serve room temperature.

DESSERT

CHOCOLATE CARAMEL TART

For the dough:

4oz unsalted butter, softened
½ cup plus 1 Tablespoon confectioners sugar
1 egg yolk
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
1¼ cups flour
¼ cup unsweetened cocoa

Cream the butter and the sugar in the bowl of an electric mixer. Add the egg yolk and the vanilla. Sift the flour and the cocoa and add to the butter. Mix until just combined. Wrap and refrigerate the dough for at least 1 hour.

When dough is well chilled, roll out into a large circle on a lightly floured surface. Place the dough into a large 12" fluted tart pan with a removable bottom. Press the dough into the tart pan. This dough is not elastic; it is rather crumbly almost like shortbread. It may seem hard to work with but it is very forgiving, just patch up any cracks in the dough and it will come together when it is baked. Prick the dough all over with a fork and chill the tart before baking. In a 325° oven, blind bake the tart halfway with pie weights or beans. Remove the pie weights for the rest of the baking time and bake until the tart looks dry and set.

For the caramel:

½ cup water
2 cups sugar
¼ cup corn syrup
4oz unsalted butter
½ cup heavy cream
2 Tablespoons crème fraîche or sour cream

Place the water, sugar and corn syrup in a large saucepan and cook on medium-high heat, stirring occasionally with a wooden spoon until the sugar turns a dark caramel. Remove the caramel from the heat and, using extreme caution (stand away from it) as the caramel will bubble and splatter, slowly add the cream to the caramel followed by the butter and crème fraîche. Stir until the mixture is smooth. Pour the caramel into the baked tart shell and allow the caramel to cool and set first on the cooling rack and then in the refrigerator.

For the chocolate ganache:

½ cup heavy cream
3½ oz bittersweet chocolate, chopped

Place the chocolate in a bowl. Scald the cream and then pour it over the chocolate. Let the chocolate sit for a couple of minutes to melt. Whisk chocolate and cream until smooth. Pour the chocolate over the caramel and refrigerate until set.

Remove the tart from the refrigerator 5-10 minutes before you are ready to serve it. Cut the tart into slices and sprinkle each slice with Fleur de Sel.

FLOURLESS CHOCOLATE CAKE

1⅓ cup sugar
½ cup water
12oz bittersweet chocolate
8oz unsweetened butter
5 eggs

Place 1 cup of the sugar and the water into a large saucepan. Heat until the sugar dissolves. Add the chocolate and the butter and cook on low heat, stirring with a wooden spoon until melted.

Meanwhile, in the bowl of an electric mixer beat the eggs and the remaining ⅓ cup of sugar until quadrupled in volume, coming halfway up the side of the bowl. Slowly add the melted chocolate mixture to the eggs and whisk until just incorporated, they can even be a little streaky. Do not over mix. Pour batter into a 9" cake pan that is buttered and lined with parchment paper. Place cake pan into a roasting pan and pour hot water into the roasting pan until it comes up the sides of the cake pan ⅔ of the way. Bake at 350° for 1½ hours.

Serve with whipped cream or crème fraîche.

PIRACY

BY
CAROLINE
FIDANZA

Long a controversial issue, inspiring cries of outrage by some self-important chefs and cookbook writers, recipe stealing is an unpunishable crime and everyone knows it. It can, however, be embarrassing. I will admit it right now, I steal recipes and ideas from other people. Maybe it's because I'm not so clever, maybe it's proof that I lack the creative brilliance that the superstars of the culinary world possess. Maybe it's because over the 10 years that I've been doing my own menus I've run out of ideas. I have twice been busted serving a dish that I had directly lifted from a colleague who came to dinner in the restaurant when his dish was being served. On one of those occasions I wrote a confessional note and sent it out after his meal. I assume he was flattered that the dinner I had at his restaurant inspired me to steal and that my confession amused him. It is rare though to directly steal a savory dish, usually I just take an element or an idea rather than lift the whole thing.

The exception is when it comes to desserts. Desserts are a place where you need a recipe and the recipes come from books. If you want to know how to make pie dough, you look up the recipe and decide whether you are going to use butter, crisco or lard and then proceed accordingly. With the exception of a few molecular nerds out there reinventing dessert there is really nothing new under the pastry sun. Our signature desserts at both Diner and Marlow and Sons are stolen.

This recipe stealing controversy is nothing new. There are sporadic lawsuits and daily accusations flying all over the restaurant industry. It extends well beyond recipes to entire restaurant concepts. Who made the first and best lobster roll in the city? Who stole it from her? How many do we have now? What constitutes ownership of a recipe? We are not scientists and inventors, there are no patents to protect us. I can go to your restaurant and take everything you have. There are people who have opened dozens of restaurants on this notion. In the end what protects us from being usurped by someone else is the fact that stealing ideas is easy but having ideas is not and more than that really having what it takes to execute a good dish, to be inspired, to have a vision and opinions cannot be impersonated. Success only comes by being genuine. That's why ownership of recipes is meaningless. I can't take anything from you.

We originally chose our desserts because they fit the aesthetic that we were working in. They meant something to us. They formed part of the basis upon which other ideas were built. They anchored and inspired us. One stolen dessert in the context of an entire restaurant, the menu, the wine list, the cocktail list, the atmosphere, is inconsequential, who would even recognize it as their own? I therefore feel completely at ease to serve them forth. If we opened the Diner today we would choose a different signature dessert, we would even try to come up with something original (again originality being relative, it would certainly be based on something tasted before, a memory, a quality). But as long as the Diner is open we're serving Chocolate Nemesis. And I know that we're not the only restaurant in the city serving the flourless foe.

MARLOW & SONS' CHOCOLATE CARAMEL TART

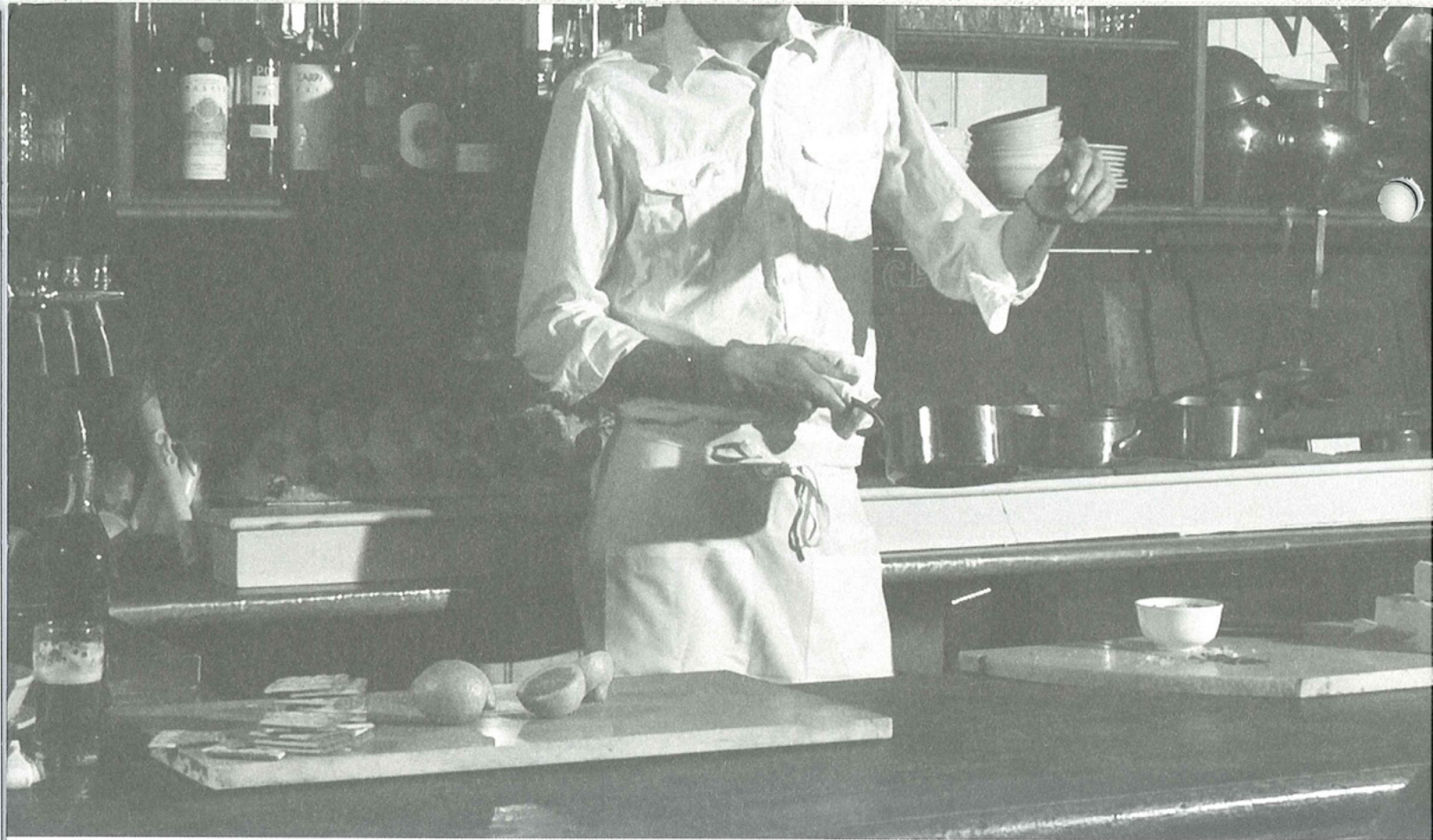
This recipe is taken from Claudia Fleming's, The Last Course: The Desserts of Gramercy Tavern. It seems complicated because there are a lot of steps, but if you take it one step at a time it is quite straightforward. The hardest part is the caramel and the worst thing that could happen is that the caramel could come out too soft or too hard or that it could over caramelize and taste burnt. If it's too hard, just let the tart sit at room temperature for about 10-15 minutes and it will soften up. If it's too soft it hasn't caramelized enough and won't have the same depth of flavor. Just pay close attention during the caramelization process and .

DINER'S FLOURLESS CHOCOLATE CAKE

This one was looted from The River Cafe Cook Book, by Ruth Rogers and Rose Gray. I think it's from their first book, the blue one, which has inspired us again and again. They call it Chocolate Nemesis and I must say that we certainly felt that way about it in the early days. We got it down though.

Recipes for both signatures found on page 31.





As soon as the butter had frothed and settled he poured it quickly over the oysters and started skimming them around and around in the pan, like an old woman making an omelette at Mont Saint-Michel. In about one minute not three or even five as so many recipes will say, he whiffed them past his questioning nose and then into the hot milk, which was just on the point of steaming. He put in red pepper and salt in a flash, and before I knew it the oyster stew I had so long talked about and waited for was under my own nose, and the young-old man stood watching me. -MFK Fisher

