

Serviette

07

ISSUE No.7
FOOD IS RITUAL





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ON THE COVER

Thinking about this issue's theme, "Food is Ritual," left us at the altar in the company of offerings, superstitions, and sacred ingredients. But rituals are not all serious stuff—they're also about extended happy hours, summer ice cream cones, and indulging in the occasional dick joke. Photographer Joe Bulawan and stylist Chad Burton brought that balance to the table, with a display worthy of both our favourite food traditions and our waning attention spans.

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In our age of biohacking and hustle culture, routine is everywhere. But ritual? Less so. Unlike daily habits, which promote self-sufficiency, rituals are often about rooting ourselves with others in order to move beyond our inward-facing viewpoint.

A treasured ritual of mine is taking myself out to dinner, which almost always begins with the simple request of “one for the bar.” I enjoy occasional bouts of alone time, but these dinners aren’t actually exercises in solitude. Instead, they are opportunities to commune with the art and alchemy of hospitality. These are times to reflect, connect, and indulge all at once.

Within a ritual, things are not consumed or used up, but rather taken in or assimilated. In this issue of *Serviette*, we meet professionals and home cooks alike who abide by that notion. Kristin L. Wolfe gives us a behind-the-scenes glimpse of the staff meal, a necessary pre-service tradition for even the most time-starved cooks. Then, Caitlin Walsh Miller takes us to her father’s house, where the promise of a spectacular meal transfigured hours spent waiting from idle time into the glue that held her diffuse family together.

Women taking to the sea to feed their loved ones share these pages with food superstitions from around the world, post-dinner gossip sessions, and the ceremonies carried out to encourage crops in times of climate uncertainty. These stories come together to show that, unlike with many routines, familiarity doesn’t always breed contempt. When it comes to rituals, repetition gives rise to life-affirming possibilities. —*Max Meighen*

After the Catholic church was all but excommunicated from Quebec culture, its edibles lost some holiness on their way to the snack aisle.

The Leftovers

Before having rounds cut out of them, intact host sheets might bring to mind another unleavened bread. Matzoh, much maligned for its textural proximity to cardboard, is central to the Passover seder. The glorified cracker is also the actual source of inspiration for host wafers, a callback to the very first communion during the Last Supper.

A host placed by a priest on a worshipper's tongue, a sip of wine, thanks given—the eucharist is an act of connection in plenty of Christian denominations. Depending on the believer, those items may or may not be the literal body and blood of Christ, but we're not here to comment on one of history's biggest food fights. In Quebec, once the most Catholic place in Canada, wine still flows freely, but what remains of hosts are mostly scraps.

Starting in the 1960s, the province has progressively left Catholicism behind since the Quiet Revolution: a socio-political reform and backlash to the conservatism, elitism, and piety that kept large francophone families in poverty. Though church attendance slumped, religious orders and their symbols lived on.

Sœur France joined the Carmelite nuns of Dolbeau-Mistassini in the Saguenay–Lac-St-Jean region in 1983. She and other sisters were tasked with making communion hosts—applying thin layers of water-and-flour mixture to a hot plate and scraping off excess, before cutting rounds into sheets with a press.

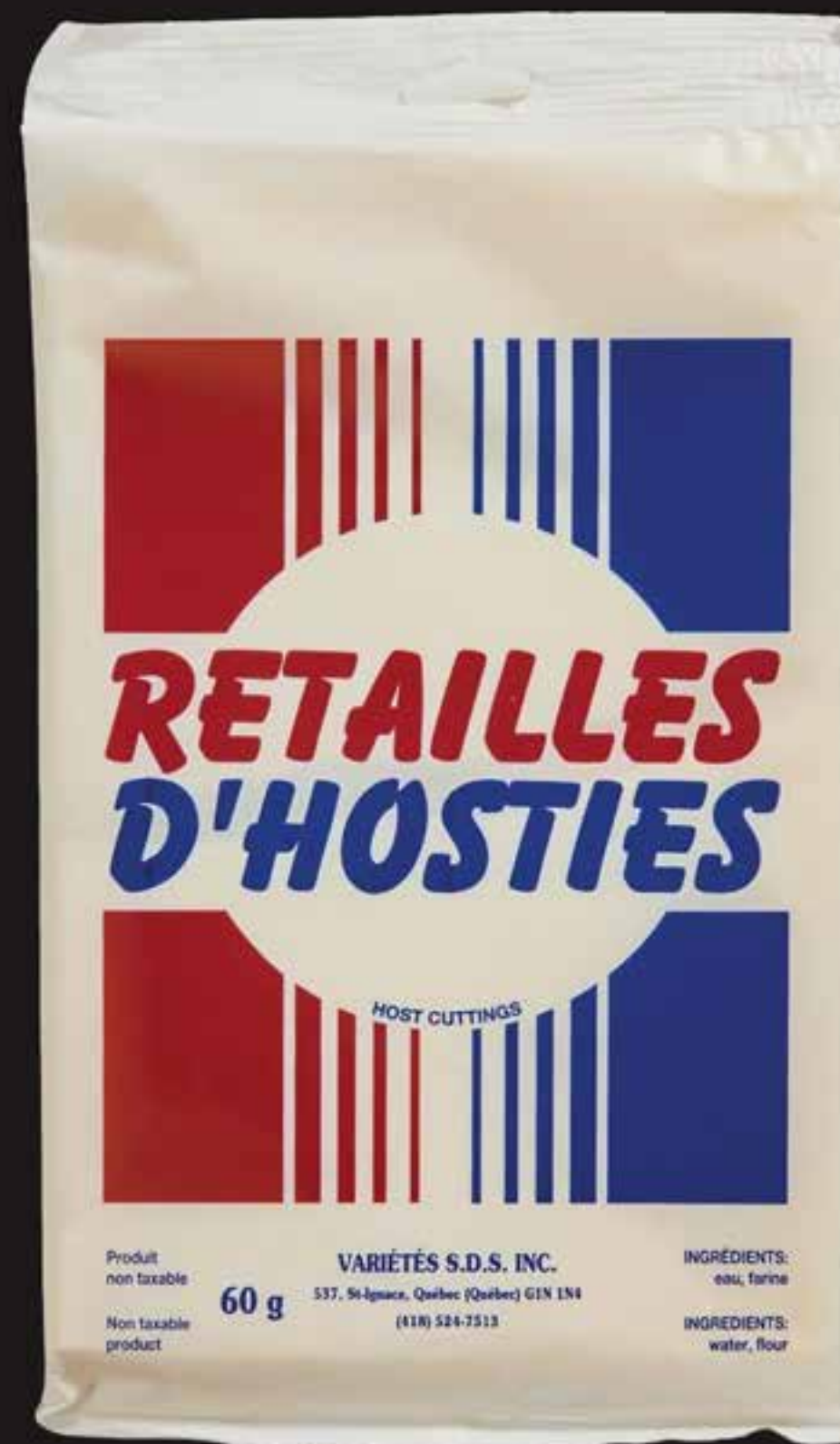
But, even with the holiest productions, there are imperfections. If sheets are lumpy or cracked, they become sold as *retailles d'hosties* (host cuttings) to avoid waste, turning into a staple snack. As churchgoing continued to nose-dive, the Carmelites' sales of cuttings versus hosts increased, landing at an approximately 40–60 split.

A few years before Sœur France started firing up that flat top, other cuttings had hit shelves in the province, sold in red-white-and-blue wrapping in grocery stores, pharmacies, and the odd *dépanneur*. Unlike religious

cuttings, these industrial sheets were never intended for pious mouths, or even produced alongside actual hosts. Instead, the company, Variétés S.D.S. Inc. pumps out whole sheets of styrofoam-reminiscent simulacra, banking on memories of eucharists past. The company was launched in 1981, offending some of the religious community where hosts were cooked for the eucharist rather than to be topped with cheese. Though she doesn't object to their existence, Sœur France sees a difference between Carmelite cuttings and their secular counterparts: "Ours are made with love, and they're still a reminder of communion."

In the early 2000s, religious communities were producing about 60 million hosts. Now, these nuns are the last to make consecrated wafers in Quebec. However, the employee who maintains their stove is set to retire, so production will stop, and the order might turn to Ontario to stock up. As churches become condos, a commercial imitation of host cuttings is also what will remain as a relic of communion.

This ending is not absolute, though. As these nuns face life without host-making, their quarters get more populated. With other branches in the order closing, the remaining sisters find a new home in Dolbeau-Mistassini. Sœur France says that the host-making room, left empty like a round cut out of a sheet, will be filled with their prayers, as the Carmelite nuns will continue to commune. For now, some Québécois snackers hoping to satisfy a craving for crunch will recall communion when they buy copycat sheets enveloped in tri-colour plastic. —Caitlin Stall-Paquet





Matcha has reached icon status, but worldwide popularity whisks up stress for cafes, wholesalers, and tea farmers alike.

It's Not Easy Being Green

Kimmy Xiao will never forget how passersby used to turn up their noses as she offered them a vibrant green liquid. In 2016, the founding owner of Vancouver-based Whisk Premium Matcha was hustling the trade show circuit, hauling her matcha booth to a different convention centre or event hall every weekend. The viridescent beverage looked too healthy (aka, yucky) to her audience. “We’d just repeat ourselves over and over again—how good it is, please try,” she recalls, “but there was not much interest.”

The trade show crowd may not have had a taste for matcha back then, but interest has since seriously boiled over. First, curiosity came in a trickle, then a steady pour, and now, wholesalers like Whisk can't keep up with demand. “What used to last us a month sells out in a week or so,” Xiao shares.

In the early 2000s, the rise of bubble tea introduced Asian flavours (taro, Thai tea, and, yes, matcha) to North American palates. Greg Uyeda, a lifelong Vancouverite, fondly recalls getting matcha bubble tea with his buddies back in high school. In 2022, his love for the green grounds led him to open the matcha-focused Aiyahno Café, in Chinatown.

By then, more locals were familiar with the beverage, but they weren't obsessed yet. Unable to sell out his inventory at full price, Uyeda often marked it down to entice buyers. Those days (and price tags) feel like a distant memory.

Xiao's orders have now quadrupled in the past year, and results of that popularity are as messy as an explosion of finely ground powder. Matcha is experiencing a worldwide shortage, according to the Tea and Herbal Association president, Shabnam Weber, who reps the companies that sell over 95% of the tea consumed in Canada. Her members are likely to continue feeling the heat, as the research firm Market Data Forecast reports that the North American matcha market, worth US\$2.32 billion in 2024, could hit US\$3.34 billion by 2033.

This viral popularity and resulting shortage can be attributed in part to social media—the drink so green it could belt a tune from *Wicked* is caffeinating creators all over Instagram and TikTok. Ordering a matcha latte at a coffee shop or whisking one up at home has become a standard part of influencer “get ready with me” videos, while names of top matcha houses, like Marukyu Koyamaen

and Ippodo, have entered mainstream vocab for in-the-know sippers.

Health nuts and fitness devotees are preaching the green gospel, too. The product's perceived healthiness (the same reason folks wouldn't try a sip at a trade show a decade ago) has the wellness community downing cups on the daily. Matcha checks a lot of boxes associated with that world's ideals: it's plant-based, folds in a meditative whisking preparation, is photogenic, has nutritional value, and delivers a caffeinated kick.

Pedro Villalon, a partner and tea hunter at Vancouver's O5 Tea Bar, sees this trendiness creating a perfect storm for suppliers. In the prime growing regions of Kyoto, Aichi, and Shizuoka, matcha sells faster than producers can grow and grind it. The surge comes as climate change-related erratic weather results in smaller harvests of tencha, the leaf used to make matcha. This year, in Kyoto, a heat wave meant that hand-picked tencha harvests dropped by 40% compared to 2024, and machine-picked harvests reduced by 18%. Japan's aging population also leads to labour shortages for tea farms and mills.

Amid this demand-fueled precariousness, it's becoming more

difficult for Japanese people to purchase high-quality goods, too. The thirdwave café matcha latte mania hasn't taken over Japanese hangouts, instead the ingredient is rooted in traditional tea ceremonies that require the highest grade of matcha powder. Japan has schools devoted to learning the process, and many consider it an art form. According to Xiao, the cultural practice dating back to the twelfth century is stressed by this tea becoming the new it girl.

If there's a green-glass-half-full take to this run on matcha, it's that many think the drink has finally been elevated to a justified status. "Tea is hugely undervalued," says Weber, adding that farming is labour-intensive, and the combination of increased demand and decreased supply means growers are finally getting the pay they deserve. "To see consumers place value on this product is refreshing," she adds.

Canadian matcha drinkers have likely noticed that their Instagrammable lattes have gotten more expensive, too. Local merchants are doing their best to avoid passing on cost hikes to consumers, but at a certain point, there's a price to pay for ultra-trendiness, and it's more than an oat milk upcharge.—*Alyssa Hirose*

Viral popularity and a resulting shortage can be attributed in part to social media—the drink so green it could belt a tune from *Wicked* is caffeinating creators all over Instagram and TikTok.

During a time of uncertainty in Atlantic Canada, a summer cool-down staple with a geriatric twist offered up stability, with staying power to boot.

Inside Scoop

More than 3,500 kilometres separate Nova Scotia and Jamaica, disparate places connected by one unlikely dessert that took a winding journey across great distances, and time. The enduring history of Grape-Nuts ice cream proves that even a breakfast cereal—which feels like its mascot should be your grandpa lecturing you about temperance while asking for help with the sketchy apps on his smartphone—can have mystique.

Before getting sprinkled into frozen treats, fibre-heavy Grape-Nuts cereal debuted in 1897, pitched by the Post company as a health food. It was loaded with every snake oil buzzword of the time, from brain-boosting to digestive aid, proving to be the ice baths and protein maxing of its day.

Neither a grape, nor a nut, but a third, much more esoteric thing grappling with its own identity, the malty, subtly-sweet wheat berry first became a beloved ice cream addition in Nova Scotia in

the early 1920s. Local legend claims the flavour was created in 1919 when Hannah Young, owner of the Palms restaurant in Wolfville, ran out of fruit toppings and tossed a handful of Grape-Nuts onto vanilla ice cream instead.

Over the years, however, historians have uncovered earlier documented mentions predating this claim, including a recipe published by the Post company. Given the state of information dissemination in post-war rural Canada, it's likely Young did stumble upon the idea independently, unaware of its prior crunchy-meets-creamy existence. After all, with cereal doused in milk as a starting point, it's not a far leap to involving its more indulgent bad-boy cousin, ice cream.

Perhaps this was a time when the Canadian province needed that extra sugary boost. Nova Scotia had just lost thousands of men in the First World War, its main port was rocked by a



Regardless of its origin story, Nova Scotia adopted Grape-Nuts ice cream wholeheartedly. The creation was welcomed into a culinary tradition that also includes the gooey meat-and-potato miasma that is rappie pie, and the 2 am drunk-dial brilliance of the Halifax donair.

city-levelling explosion, and its maritime trade practices were hastily and chaotically rewritten during the Prohibition era. But that wasn't going to rob folks of their treats. Grape-Nuts became an affordable filler in ice cream, a way to keep the sweet tradition of summer scoops flowing, just indulgent enough to remind people what normal felt like in a time of upheaval. No matter that its vibe is less "hot summer night cruising with your crush and a cone" and more "getting ice cream with that clueless grandpa while your parents stay home to work out the divorce."

Regardless of its origin story, Nova Scotia adopted Grape-Nuts ice cream wholeheartedly. The creation was welcomed into a culinary tradition that also includes the gooey meat-and-potato miasma that is rappie pie, and the 2 am drunk-dial brilliance of the Halifax donair.

Shortly after its birth, the concoction set sail for distant shores and new palates, crossing the Gulf of Maine to New England. There, companies like Gifford's Dairy in Maine made it a regular on the menu, which is akin to having a teetotaler sit next to the life of the party at a wedding (sup, butter pecan?).

After Prohibition changed the landscape of trade in Nova Scotia, with the boom in bootlegging and rum-running,

North American products, including Grape-Nuts, went along for the boat ride to Caribbean markets. Jamaican ice cream shops began using the cereal, its malty crunch the perfect complement to local rum and condensed milk. The flavour quickly became beloved on the island, where it endures.

Back north in Nova Scotia, a wide-eyed nostalgia and deep devotion to Grape-Nuts ice cream holds steady. Even after Post stopped producing the cereal in Canada in 2021, locals have remained steadfast in keeping the flavour alive, at big brands and indie scoop shacks alike. Whether importing the goods from the U.K. or U.S., or cooking up a Frankenstein's monster wheaty facsimile in an off-the-books cereal lab, Nova Scotia ice cream purveyors continue to source Grape-Nuts, staying tight-lipped on how.

The long, hyper-specific history of this divisive summer classic may seem trivial, but it's a reminder of quiet resilience, from the resolve to carry on in the face of tragedy by leaning on comforts, to the notion of being unapologetically yourself. In the end, just like your grandpa mowing the lawn in his underwear, Grape-Nuts ice cream doesn't care about your approval, and it never will.—*Nicholas Laugher*

Before customers find their seats and orders start pouring in, restaurant staff share a meal, to fuel up and link up.

All in the Family

New chefs at Le B. read Anthony Bourdain's autobiography, *Kitchen Confidential*, which dives into the gritty behind-the-scenes of the restaurant grind. They then sign the book before returning it to the establishment's growing library.

It's 4:05 pm on a Friday at Le B. in the West Village. Chef Angie Mar and 10 of her staff take a break from prep to gather around the marble-top bar. While patrons prepare for an evening at this restaurant dripping with opulence—maybe looking forward to eating what *Vogue* called the Birkin of burgers, under a crystal chandelier—the team gathers for the meal that will carry them through service. The clock is ticking and bookings are full, but this is a moment to savour, connect, and pump each other up for a busy night ahead.

At many restaurants, including Le B.—Mar's decadent love letter to old New York where she marries French technique with international cuisines—family meal is the center piece of a thriving up-and-coming culinary culture. She knows how hard every chef who enters the kitchen works, putting together her signatures like painstaking terrine or time-sensitive soufflé. For family meal, though, the team gets to stretch their own culinary wings. "They are so creative and talented," Mar says of her cooks, many of whom are fresh out of culinary school. "Not to mention, they cook my food all week."

During family meals, the team temporarily become diners, sinking into chic velvet seats for which many New

Yorkers struggle to get a reservation. They don't shovel bites into their mouths while leaning against the walk-in fridge minutes before service, mind you. Instead, they enjoy the food, joke, and connect. Chef Mar stands and eats among them, like a coach before her team hits the field for a big game.

Well before staff assembles to eat, they're packed into the small kitchen amid fired-up stoves and ovens. At 3:23 pm, three cooks do prep, while others dry dishes and gather silverware. To make the food, everyone amasses spare bits and extra ingredients from service throughout the week, so nothing goes to waste. Fish scraps turn into seafood sausage served with leftover clams and pasta for a spin on bucatini alle vongole. Duck breast is always a showstopper under Mar's watch, but it's the only part of the bird that appears on the menu. While carcasses head into stock pots, legs and wings are up for grabs, becoming dishes like cumin roast duck leg with couscous and aubergine.

Everyone takes a turn to feed the family. On this particular night, Nick Estrella, a *chef de partie*, steps up to the plate. The team had been craving Indian food, and he was excited for the challenge. "How did you do the naan, Nick?" Mar asks as everyone agrees on



The cuisine isn't the only *haute* thing at Le B.—servers wear custom white tuxedos created by celebrity designer, Christian Siriano.

the perfection of the bread's herbaceous, garlicky butter lather. "I was worried I wouldn't have enough time, so I got started on it at home," he answers proudly. The naan is for scooping up masala chicken on tender basmati, served alongside a green salad. Mar leans against the bar and smiles approvingly as she eats, while her team takes a few last swigs of the accompanying Vietnamese coffee served in the plastic deli containers ubiquitous in restaurant kitchens.

At Le B., family meal is also a moment for everyone to reflect on their culinary path. While sitting with their peers, they consider whether or not they can actually

stand the heat, or if they should get out of the kitchen. For Mar, this is a time during which she assesses her chefs. She takes note of their ability to season or put together a cohesive meal. "It shows me where everyone is creatively, and where their palate is," she says. "But really, at the end of the day, I get great satisfaction from just watching my team bond."

After the last bites are gobbled up, fresh garnishes fill trays at the bar, and pristine white table cloths are given a once-over. Mar nods to a server to open the door for a group assembled on the cobblestones out front. It's 5 o'clock. —*Kristin L. Wolfe*





For plenty of Latin Americans, the end of a meal is marked by an extended gossip sesh that takes no prisoners, and where intel is currency.

Slightings of the Round Table

I know a restaurant with a two-hour seating limit hates to see me coming. I'm notorious for turning post-dinner yapping into an Olympic sport. My antics recently caused some friction at Lenny's—a 1950s-inspired deli steakhouse in Toronto's west end—accompanied by an equally gossip-inclined friend. When the server asked for our dessert order, I was instinctually prepared to settle into another hour (or two) of sipping on some proverbial hot tea, even though the next reservation was set to arrive 15 minutes later. That's because my Colombian and Ecuadorian family raised me to make time for a bit of post-dinner gossip *chisme* and relaxing at the table, a tradition called *sobremesa*.

Mid-yap, fueled by glasses of Tempranillo and spoonfuls of chocolate babka, our server notified us that we had to leave in five minutes. Glancing around the half-empty room, I spotted disapproving looks from staff and, directly in front of me, my friend's discomfort. I briefly considered paying my bill and leaving, but all I could think about was how long it took me to lean into the cultural norm I reveled in growing up.

Sitting at the adults table was like winning the golden ticket, except the chocolate was *arequipe* and Willy Wonka was my shady *abuela*. Discreetly working my way through that dulce de leche, I would listen as my family buzzed with rumours of betrayal, romance, and the occasional botched plastic surgery.

Maintaining this ritual lets me relive family memories long-since shared. I continue to host dinners not just to bask in the satisfaction of people enjoying my food, but to rekindle those familial connections. *Sobremesa* is not exclusive to the family I was born into, it also integrated the family I chose.

To the untrained ear, all that shit-talking might sound toxic, but for us, it's an important bonding experience. *Sobremesa* is a way for family and friends to unwind after a meal, over a glass of vino tinto, and throw a little shade. But explaining to a server in a popular restaurant that I needed to spend another hour therapizing my friend about her Labubu obsession was tricky.

As I was on the verge of telling said friend about the love triangle between two local chefs and a barista, our server let us know that, with eight other empty tables, the next reservation didn't need ours. Eventually, the wine ran dry, only crumbs of dessert remained, gossip had reached its peak, and *sobremesa* concluded.

Now, I see the practice evolving, as new generations of yappy latinos learn how to be in less yappy spaces, bringing others along for the ride. In that restaurant, I also saw that with a bit of charm, sass, and a telenovella-inspired persuasive tone, even the most schedule-abiding skeptics can appreciate the indulgence of an extended gab. —Dylan Muñoz

From all-seeing legumes to phallic snacks, people around the world have heaped meaning onto their food for millennia.

Very Superstitious

When we eat, we are not alone, even at a table for one. Around us are ghosts of meals past, spectral cooks, and shadow hungers. Nowadays, convenience has stripped everyday foods of enchantment: sandwiches are made to be slung into backpacks and pub curries ease long weeks with the help of cold beer. But, our culinary habits also recall messier, stranger times, with even the most casual kitchen encounter in quiet communion with ancient rites.

How many diners, who only set foot in church for weddings and funerals, habitually throw salt over their left shoulder? Do they know they're tossing those grains to blind the devil? Consider the host setting out chairs for a dinner party, perhaps wincing when realizing they must seat 13. Odds are, the unlucky seating plan doesn't bring to mind that other famed supper where the thirteenth guest betrayed his holy host to the Romans. There is a story that, in nineteenth-century Paris, this fear was addressed by *le quatorzième*—a professional diner who would round up parties to a happier number.

Some 2,800 years ago, also concerned with luck, the Etruscans in central Italy started splitting wishbones. In honour of Sunday-dinner soothsayers who continue

to wrestle over the bigger piece, and all those who still heap superstition onto food, here are beliefs from around the world, layered onto sustenance and indulgences alike.

Black-eyed peas, West Africa and United States

These nutty, piebald beans were first grown in West Africa around 5,000 years ago and were offered to *orishas*—deities of the Yoruba people. They were also blended into a steamed pudding called *moi moi*, eaten at weddings, funerals, and other feasts where they might bring fertility, luck, and healing. The beans were carried across the Atlantic Ocean to the Americas by enslaved people as seed crops or packed by slavers for rations. In the southern U.S., they're eaten for good fortune on New Year's Day with rice in a dish called Hoppin' John. For that same reason, the legumes were also included in Hoodoo mojo bags, an occult custom that's still around today.

Kanamara Matsuri, Japan

In Kawasaki, the first Sunday in April hosts a procession dedicated to the longstanding tradition of worshipping the male member. The festivities end at the shrine to the Kanamara, meaning



A sweet grape foretells an auspicious month, while a sour one may mean your luck is rotten.



“steel phallus,” which was visited by prostitutes, couples, and businessmen in the Edo period (seventeenth to nineteenth centuries CE). They would leave phallic foods as offerings to boost fertility, prosperity, and protection from sexually transmitted infections. The festival was revived by local priests in 1969 to tackle homophobic discrimination, becoming central to the gay rights movement. Revellers now enjoy lollies, leeks, and sausages on sticks during the cheeky celebration. But this contemporary iteration isn’t all shlong-shaped snacks, it’s also grounded in bringing Shinto rituals closer to home (i.e. the living room). Leaving offerings like rice, sake, and salt in personal shrines has become a daily practice.

Puffed-up tortillas, Latin America
Some 3,500 years ago, the Mayans and Aztecs perfected nixtamalization—soaking, washing, and hulling maize for grinding. In the millennia since, the act of cooking corn tortillas has garnered symbolic status in Mexico and Central and South America.

Tortillas puffing up on the hot *comal* (griddle) is auspicious: Expect luck in love and, if you’re a young woman, imminent marriage. But beware a flat tortilla: It dooms you to live at home, lumbered with the care of your parents. Such burdens don’t disappear with marriage either—drop a tortilla on the floor, and expect a surprise visit from the in-laws.

The Twelve Grapes, Spain and Latin America

At the stroke of midnight on December 31, partygoers scoff grapes, one for each chime, to bring luck in the next 12 months. Eat them all in time (no easy task) and the year ahead will be full of fortune. A sweet grape foretells an auspicious month, while a sour one may mean your luck is rotten. While the ritual may have ties to Bacchus or Dionysus in Ancient Rome and Greece, many believe it actually dates back to a particularly bountiful grape harvest in the Spanish city of Alicante in 1909, with growers pushing to use up surplus crops. —*Poppy Sowerby*

The Shape of Water

Out of necessity to feed their families in times of crisis, a group of Venezuelan women took to fishing boats and got their sea legs.

Written and photographed by the Solunar collective
(Freisy González, Andrea Hernández Briceño, and Lety Tovar)



“They say I am a daughter of the sea,”

in Venezuela. The women in this group joined forces at the beginning of the pandemic, after years of the country’s humanitarian emergency defined by hyperinflation, unemployment, and food shortages. Beginning after the 2015 drop in oil prices and production, the crisis pushed millions into poverty, particularly women and children.

In 2024, the Solunar collective (made up of Venezuelan photographers and feminist activists) began a project called *Luna de Agua*, documenting ties between these fisherwomen, the moon, and the sea. Their work dives into the feminization of Venezuela’s fishing, peeling back layers of inequality, gender-based violence, and maritime superstitions that exclude women: Just a few years ago, they weren’t allowed to board boats when menstruating because men believed the sea would get angry. The organization’s leader, Vanessa Machado, saw that the status quo could only be broken by a strong female alliance and deep understanding of natural cycles—theirs and the ocean’s.

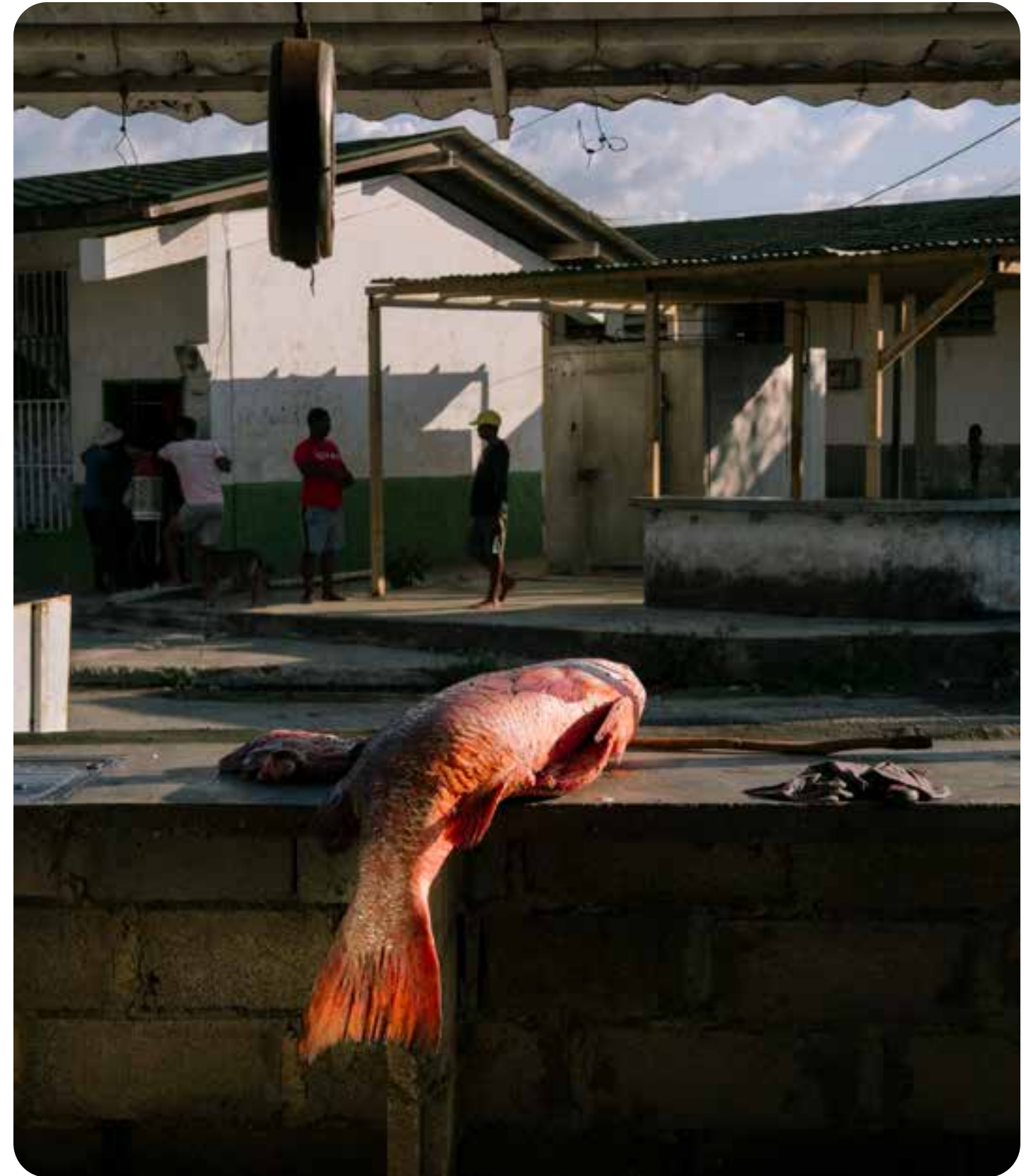
Since transitioning from weaving nets to using them, the fisherwomen of Ocumare de la Costa, as well as others in villages along the coast, have gazed into the vast mystery on which they float, seeing their reflection in the waves. Alvarez believes that women are like the sea: You can swim into its depths, but you will never get to know it completely.

declares fisherwoman Rina Alvarez. “I enter it and ask for its blessing: ‘Mother, I am going into your waters. Put fish in my nets.’” The former paramedic and single mom decided to board a fishing boat four years ago, when her 12-year-old son became sick with a malignant tumor and she needed more money for medical treatments.

Alvarez is part of an organization of fisherwomen called El Sol Sale Para Todas, (the sun rises for all women). The group mostly includes heads of single income households who took on the male-dominated fishing trade in Ocumare de la Costa, a small ocean-facing town

After boats return following a morning of casting nets, the community gathers to prepare the catch for sale at Ocumare de la Costa’s pier. The work table becomes a meeting point where stories, labour, and sustenance flow together like the tides.

Fisherwomen exchange everything, from data to gossip. Knowledge about who left their husband or where to find the biggest schools of fish is laid out alongside the *pargo* (snapper) on the gutting table, for all to consider.



Sisterhood has a way of surfacing aboard, drifting back to land once the day is done. On solid ground, the women of Chuao take care of each other's children, sharing clothes, tools, and experience from their countless hours at sea. Some family ties among them are literal. Sisters (from left to right) Francis Chavez, Perielia Chavez, and Jennifer Bacalao sit at the Chuao pier, waiting for the truck that takes them home. Even after a long day on the same boat, they stick together.



Inside the fisherwomen's homes, it's easy to become immersed in their world of stories woven together like nets, via knick-knacks and books lining shelves, and pictures on the wall. At Maria Dugarte's home in Ocumare de la Costa, her daughter and husband hold up an image of the matriarch surrounded by her younger siblings—a leader of the brood back then, just as she is today.





These women's hands work hard for sustenance, but they don't leave femininity on the shore. Vanessa Machado says taking care of her hands is essential to fishing—if she doesn't buff and polish her nails, seaweed will begin to grow beneath them. This care balances Vanessa's relationship with the ocean, while also allowing her and her colleagues to challenge stereotypes about their roles within the community. Though the acrylic nails are as hard as their time out on the water, they're also a reminder of softness and womanhood.

Alongside her male peers, Cindy Gonzalez pulls in nets, strong and skilled after years of labour. When she first learned to fish as a child in her father's boat, the nets tore her hands and made them bleed. Now, her palms are calloused and rough, transformed into tools of her trade in the same way that her body has become powerful and agile from standing atop the undulating water. For Cindy, the cure to sea sickness is the right mindset.



Etched in ink over Cindy's heart is the name of her late fisherman father, Rodolfo Gonzalez, next to an emblem of their shared practice. Like many in the community, Cindy was taught to fish by her male relatives. She learned the rhythms of the sea from her father at the same time as her mother, Maria Sanchez, one of Ocumare de la Costa's most enduring fisherwomen. Maria is known as the queen of the *picúa* (great barracuda) and, in her home, the scent of salt mingles with memories. Stories, skills, and devotion get passed down like nets cast at dawn, as past, present, and future entangle in the waves.



GOLD MEDAL PLATES

Gearing up for the Olympic Winter Games Milano Cortina 2026, Team Canada athletes give us a front-row seat to their tried and true food practices, during game time and down time alike.



Written by
Aman Dosanj

Photography by
Chris Amat,
Yvette Cakpo, and
Evaan Kheraj

“Food is fuel” might be a truism, but for elite athletes, getting the right nutrition is a sport unto itself. From high-level carb-loading to after-practice indulgences, food is a shape-shifting topic of consideration, and conversation. Sure, plenty of athletes are content with sticking to meals designed for performance over pleasure (hello plain chicken breast and steamed veggies). But that simply won’t do for the flavour-curious food lovers on Team Canada who are always down for a culinary adventure. With the Olympic Winter Games around the corner, we asked three hungry hopefuls to share their amped-up drinks, customized orders, favourite ingredients, and plenty more.





CASSIE SHARPE

SPORT
Ski Half-Pipe

HOME BASE
Squamish, B.C.

Do you have a favourite recipe you like to make at home? “When I’m on the road, I have a harder time cooking for myself because I’m so busy—there’s a lot of eating out and pre-made meals. So when I go home, I am obsessed with these shrimp bowls: it’s just sushi rice, garlic, shrimp, mango, avocado, cucumber, and pickled red onion, which I usually have stocked in the fridge.”

And how does your diet change when you’re injured or in recovery mode? “I’ve torn my knee, my ACL, MCL, broken a femur—big time ouch. After surgery, I was eating lots of blueberries, salmon, all the things that can help your body process inflammation. So definitely that shrimp bowl, but with salmon instead, and just pounding back the omegas. My doctors were saying, ‘Don’t have coffee,’ but I’m a coffee fiend. So I would have a cup in the morning and then, instead of a second one, I drank turmeric ginger tea I’d made and kept in a big vat in the fridge.”

WILLIAM DANDJINO

SPORT
Short-Track
Speed Skating

HOME BASE
Montreal, QC

How has food shaped the athlete you are today?

“My dad learned how to cook from my grandmother, who lives in Côte d’Ivoire. When I was six years old, she came to Canada to visit us for the first time, which was also the year I started skating. She showed my dad some old recipes he had never learned and, when I moved out of his house, I stole some of them. One was for a drink called *yamankou*. You know how the taste of ginger is very concentrated, so it wakes you up? I always drink it before competitions and make my own mix. Nowadays, I modify it by adding electrolytes, giving it a little kick to get my supplements. It makes this mixture of colours— it’s a running gag with my teammates because they’re like, ‘Will’s taking his magic potion again!’”





DAWN RICHARDSON WILSON

SPORT
Bobsleigh

HOME BASE
Edmonton, AB

After being on the road, what's the first thing you like to feast on at your family's restaurant?
"We own a Cora franchise, so it really depends on what I'm feeling. After a competition, I like to splurge a little bit. When I want a variety of flavours, but I don't want to just stick to one food group, I go for "Louis the Undecided." It includes a crêpe with chocolate, bananas, strawberries, and whipped cream. On the other side of the plate, there are potatoes, and I usually add caramelized onions, mushrooms, and beans to it. Then, it has some sausages with scrambled eggs, too. I love eggs! As an athlete, I feel like eggs are the easiest form of protein in the morning, afternoon, whatever. Because it's my family's restaurant, I get to ask the kitchen for whatever I want."

Written by
Payal Pereira

Photography by
Aashim Tyagi



REAPING WHAT WE SOW

As the changing climate becomes a source of uncertainty for coffee growers in southwestern India, the time-honoured rituals they perform to ensure a good harvest remain a resilient constant.



The air is thick with the smell of damp soil and incense. In the hills of Malenadu, along India's Western Ghats, my family gathers on our coffee farm under a full November moon, like we do every year. The women, draped in jewel-toned *sarees*, lead a slow procession. Balanced on their palms are brass plates piled with offerings that include *neru*—carefully rolled pipal leaves tied with strips of wood fibre—a glass of milk, and flickering oil lamps. The elders follow, singing stories of our ancestors who once walked these fields. The men are dressed in *kupya chele*, black-and-white tunics with red sashes at their waists, as ceremonial *odi kathi* knives glint at their sides. My uncle ties the *neru* to a nearby coffee plant and pours milk over it. As he does so, the chanting begins: "Poli, Poli, Deva"—let us prosper, O God. The voices rise slowly, steadily, and gutturally, until a crack slices through the chant: celebratory gunshots. The sound marks the beginning of harvest. The first coffee beans of the season are ready to be picked.

It's *Puthari*, the harvest festival celebrated by my family's Kodava side (natives of the Kodagu region in southern India). Traditionally, the practice marks the beginning of the rice harvest. As our fields shifted from paddies to coffee bushes, the ritual followed. And, though the crops we grow have changed, the stakes haven't.

Like rice, coffee yields only once annually. If the rains arrive too early, too late, or not at all, a year's income can vanish overnight, so these first moments of harvest are not taken lightly. They are a celebration of making it through another year of instability.

Uncertainty wasn't always the norm, though. Malenadu, which translates to "the land of rain," once saw farming rituals that were purely joyful, honouring the land, ancestors, and rivers that fed its fields. The

monsoon used to arrive like clockwork. Families celebrated its start by dancing to the beat of drums beneath umbrellas adorned with flower garlands and beads, as if welcoming royalty. There was reverence, but not fear. In recent years, as seasons stopped following old patterns, the land of rain has become a land of insecurity.

Coffee doesn't deal well with uncertainty. In his farmers' guide *Ecofriendly Coffee*, Dr. Anand Pereira (also known as my dad) describes the crop's delicate balance: "Coffee is extremely sensitive to its environment. Arabica only grows well between 18–22°C, and Robusta between 22–28°C," he writes. "Its growth depends on a delicate chain of processes, where even a small disruption could cause the harvest to fail."

The majority of coffee growers in India operate on a small scale, working with very limited land and resources to produce about 4 percent of the world's supply. So, when things go wrong, it isn't just a setback, it's a threat to their survival. Climate change has also made plants more vulnerable to pests like the berry borer, and pushed wildlife into closer contact with humans. With forests shrinking and food sources dwindling, elephants wander into coffee farms trying to feed themselves, often trampling crops and the security of the farmers who planted them.

Krishna Gowda, whose 20-acre farm borders ours, half-smiles as he watches the sky. He shrugs with the weary patience of someone who's seen too many seasons go wrong. "Growing coffee is our life, but when everything is out of our control, all we can do is put our faith in God," Gowda says, accustomed to living with the unknown.

In Malenadu, there's a ritual for every worry. With each new crop cycle comes stress for what the season might bring, so we pray to Chamundeshwari, the Hindu goddess of protection. On every coffee farm, a tree said to hold her spirit is carefully chosen. At the start of the season, women drape the tree in a vibrant silk *saree*. Red bangles are strung on branches, while garlands of marigold surround the area. Bells ring in a steady rhythm, their chime carrying through rows of coffee bushes, as prayers rise to the sky.

Over the following months, farmers watch the skies and land, keeping customs at the ready. When the monsoon delays, farmers pull out a ritual called







Laughter tangled with the clatter of cookware,
as we sang old Kannada songs from
a time when we never doubted the harvest.

Manduka Kalyanotsava. Two frogs are caught from the fields, adorned with tiny flower garlands, and wed in a full ceremony, in the hope that the skies will open. If the rains pour too long, they are divorced, no lawyers involved.

Amphibian nuptials might sound like folklore, but they're rooted in ancestral wisdom. Frogs have always been a hint that rain is near because their calls increase just before the approaching monsoon. Today, they're known as bioindicators. But, long before the term existed, our ancestors knew that silent frogs meant bad news.

In Malenadu, where generations have treated the land as a mother, we perform *Bhoomi Hunnime* a few weeks before harvest, celebrating the crop-to-come like a baby shower for Mother Earth. During a recent visit, the farm came alive on the night before the ceremony. Neighbours drifted in through the backyard gate, carrying something the land had offered—leafy greens, sacks of rice, bunches of foraged herbs. We sat in a circle, everyone taking on a role: chopping vegetables, rinsing rice, tending the pot bubbling over the wood fire. Laughter tangled with the clatter of cookware, as we sang old songs in the regional Kannada language, from a time when we never doubted the harvest.

By sunrise, we were all giddy from the sleepless night. Carrying the meal and other offerings in brass pots and bamboo baskets, we walked quietly to the edge of the farm, as if about to

spring a surprise on Mother Earth. A patch of soil was swept clean and cooled with water. The aunty with the steadiest hand took charge of drawing the *rangoli*, her fingers confidently tracing intricate patterns in white rice flour across the ground.

The offerings were laid on banana leaves: a little of each dish prepared the night before, along with turmeric, bangles, sugarcane, milk, coconut, and, of course, coffee. We bowed to the earth, chanting prayers for a good harvest, and then sat cross-legged in a circle, honouring the meal with the same reverence we gave the soil that made it possible. These gatherings are as much about sharing burdens as sharing food. They remind us that we're not facing uncertainty alone. The rituals are foundations that we lean on, protect, and pass down.

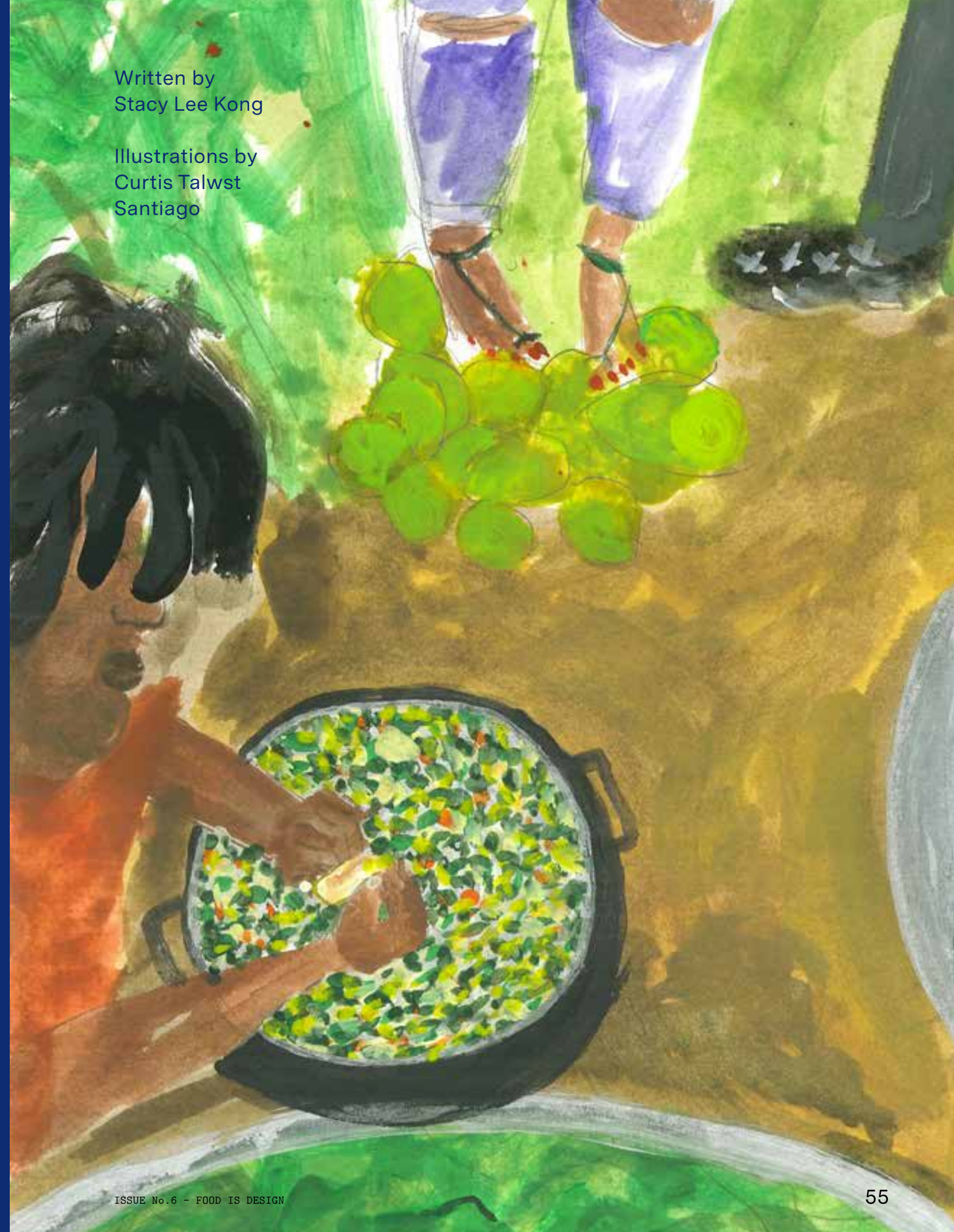
In 2020, I moved to New York City, far from the farm that shaped me. Here, the closest thing to a sacred ritual for many is a daily cup of coffee. Uncertainties seem smaller but are no less real: the subway running late, rent hikes looming, and the stress of chasing a paycheck that's never quite enough. Our daily \$8 latte helps us get through it.

Soon, that reliable cup could be harder to come by. Climate scientists warn that by 2050, half the land suitable for coffee could become unfit. Even though its prices are at a record high, farmers like my dad are starting to consider other options. "If we want to keep farming, we have to be realistic and pivot to crops that are tough enough to survive what's coming," he admits.

Every morning, as I bring my coffee to my lips, steam rising like a prayer, I'm reminded of the faith it takes to keep filling that cup: prayers whispered in soil, baby showers for Mother Earth, trees wrapped in silk, and frogs married off. Faith has carried Malenadu's farmers through countless seasons, each one harder to endure than the last. As I digest the bitterness of that struggle with every sip, there's also a warmth that lingers, a reminder of resilience. **S**

DON'T STIR THE POT

Ingredients from across the globe bring together history, discovery, and people, via the layers of Grenada's national dish.



Written by
Stacy Lee Kong

Illustrations by
Curtis Talwst
Santiago

THE cast iron pot is so big that if I were to wrap my arms around it, my fingers would barely touch. The smoothness of the black sides is broken by uneven handles made from the same material, while a shiny silver lid with a rustic wooden knob covers the pot. The uneven bottom makes it rock gently on a makeshift stove—rebar welded into a rectangular grid, perched on two cinderblocks—with a wood fire blazing below, built on a patch of grass. Inside, root vegetables, meat, leafy greens, and coconut milk are alchemizing into oil down, the rich stew Grenadians proudly claim as their national dish.

I'm in Paraclete, a tiny village in Grenada's northern countryside, to learn how to make the most authentic oil down. In other places, "countryside" might call to mind rolling hills and fields, but here, rural means mountainous thanks to the island's volcanic origins. This outcropping overlooks lush peaks and valleys where brightly coloured houses pepper the greenery, but the scenery takes a backseat to what's happening in front of me.

My hosts are members of Paraclete Jab, an organization that celebrates Jab Jab, a traditional form of carnival masquerading that exists on many Caribbean islands, including my homeland of Trinidad and Tobago. Marvin Archibald is the band leader, or Capital—and in a fitting parallel, he also leads this cooking demonstration for a group of journalists. Given his respect for Grenadian traditions, it's no surprise he believes oil down tastes better when ingredients and preparation are "natural [and] original." For the most authentic flavour, Archibald insists the coconut milk shouldn't come from a can, it should be homemade from hand-grated coconuts. Similarly, he doesn't use store-bought spices, instead grating knobs of turmeric that give the dish its iconic golden hue.

Archibald shows us how to pack the pot, stacking ingredients to ensure everything cooks evenly and gets infused with flavour. First, peeled and sliced breadfruit and green figs are arranged

in an even layer. Then, seasoned chicken wings go into the pot (traditionally, the meat in oil down is salted pig tail or snout, or cod, but our hosts opted for chicken as a concession to dietary restrictions), followed by enough coconut milk to cover everything. Later, they'll add Caribbean-style dumplings (tubes of lightly salted dough), sliced carrots, chunks of pumpkin, Grenada sweet peppers, dasheen leaves, and fresh thyme and oregano.

"You never stir the pot," Marvin states firmly. Instead, oil from the coconut milk and meat will drip down through the layers over the next hour or so, imparting flavour and preventing sticking. I'm watching a familiar process: Trinis make oil down, too, so I grew up eating a version of this dish. But the method—prepared over an open fire, and with such emphasis on tradition—is entirely new.

Many Grenadians will tell you this is the country's national dish because its colours reflect the flag: green dasheen leaves, red carrots, and golden turmeric. Whether that's true or lore handed down through generations like a culinary retcon, it tells Grenada's story. Oil down would be impossible to make without colonization and slavery, therefore providing both a history lesson and lasting example of Grenadians' resilience. Though every family and restaurant has a slightly different recipe, starchy root vegetables and fruit, which Caribbean people call "ground provisions," always form the dish's core. Most often, it's green fig, also known as cooking bananas, and breadfruit—neither of which are indigenous to the Caribbean, instead arriving with Portuguese sailors in the 1500s. All types of bananas originated in Southeast Asia, and then spread to the rest of Asia and parts of Africa before travelling to the Americas. There, they became a food source for enslaved people who worked on sugar plantations throughout the West Indies.



While the pot simmers for the next hour or so, we talk more about what oil down means to Grenadians, and how it reflects the island's rich history. Yes, it speaks to colonization and oppression, but also to strength and cultural sharing.

Similarly, Polynesia's native breadfruit was brought to the Caribbean in the late 1700s by William Bligh, a British navy captain. Bligh's mission was to transport thousands of breadfruit trees to the region, again, as an inexpensive staple for enslaved people. In 1793, he landed in nearby St. Vincent with hundreds of breadfruit saplings, and the produce eventually made its way to other Caribbean islands, including Grenada. According to research by Kenneth M. Olsen, a plant evolutionary biologist at Washington University, coconuts followed a similar trajectory.

Earlier, as he was adding the chicken to the pot, Archibald told us that each of the dish's elements is rooted in the island's history, spanning pre-colonization to slavery and independence. Salted pig tail or snout would have been scraps that slave masters didn't want to eat, while cod was often imported from Newfoundland as another cheap food source for enslaved people. Our host shares that even oil down's one-pot preparation can be traced to plantations and the cookware African people used in their homelands. Meanwhile, the inclusion of dasheen, a leafy green vegetable indigenous to the Caribbean, folds in influence from the Kalinago (Carib) and Taino (Arawak) people, the island's first inhabitants. And turmeric arrived in the mid-1800s with Indian indentured servants, brought to the Caribbean to work on plantations following the abolishment of slavery.

While the pot simmers for the next hour or so, we talk more about what oil down means to Grenadians, and how it reflects the island's rich history. Yes, it speaks to colonization and oppression, but also to strength and cultural sharing. Archibald and other members of the band talk about this dish almost poetically, telling a story about creating something that is greater than the sum of its parts. The back-and-forth recalls a conversation I had with Keja Valens, a professor in the English department at Salem State University whose work focuses on food, cultural memory, and the Caribbean. She helped me understand why and how oil down achieved cornerstone status. "How something becomes a national

dish is so interesting. It's always a back-formation, and it always happens around independence time, [when] the nation is in the process of being formed," Valens says. "It does come up organically, kind of, but around this moment when people are wanting to say, 'This is our national culture. We have a national culture. It belongs to us.'"

When the oil down is finally ready, Helen Thomas Briggs, the village matriarch, wields her pot spoon. She serves up plates not just for us visitors, but for about two dozen people from the community, making sure we all get an equal share of breadfruit, fig, dumplings, and chicken. Before I take my first bite, I pause to let it all soak in: I'm standing around a huge pot of food, surrounded by fellow Caribbean people, and it feels as comforting as the fragrant meal I'm about to dig into. I think about what Valens says about how, during Grenada's cultural and political nascence, a national dish emerged that speaks to its African, Indigenous, and Indo-Caribbean heritage. The recipe, and how Grenadians speak about it, feels very familiar—this is how we talk about food in Trinidad, too. According to Valens, the sentiment is particularly Caribbean. Not all West Indian islands have a national dish, but those that do tend to celebrate a stew, often with similar base ingredients: ground provisions, salted meat, and vegetables. "Foods that represent melding or coming together," Valens adds.

During the course of reporting this story, my tie to these layers strengthened when my mom told me I have a personal connection to them: her great-grandfather, who everyone called Bap, was born in Grenada. The two island nations have been deeply connected for decades. Working class, as well as some educated, middle class Grenadians migrated to Trinidad in search of better economic opportunities, particularly during the Second World War. Some of them, like my great-great-grandfather, stayed, started families, and infused their culture into their new homeland, like coconut milk infusing breadfruit.

Between bites, I consider the connection between different Caribbean islands and their people. This oil down wasn't like the one I'd grown up eating, which had likely been brought to Trinidad by Grenadian immigrants like Bap. This version was less saucy, more vibrantly yellow. The dumplings were new to me, and so was the chicken. But somehow, it still tasted like home. **S**

MAKE YOUR OWN OIL DOWN

INGREDIENTS

- 1 large breadfruit, washed and peeled
- 2 large green figs, peeled and cut in half
- 1 coconut, grated (or look for pre-grated coconut in the freezer section of your local ethnic grocer, we won't tell!)
- 2 knobs of turmeric, grated
- 2 cups of water
- 2-3 lbs chicken wings, marinated overnight in green seasoning (a blend of culantro—a tropical herb similar to cilantro—scallions, thyme, onion, garlic, hot peppers, and vinegar) OR substitute for 1/2 lb salt meat or salted cod
- 8-10 dasheen leaves, washed and chopped
- 2 medium carrots, peeled and chopped
- 1 small buttercup squash, peeled and chopped
- 3-4 Grenada sweet peppers, sliced
- 2-3 sprigs of thyme and oregano

DUMPLING INGREDIENTS

- 2 cups all-purpose flour
- 1 tsp salt
- 3/4 cup warm water (for kneading)

STEPS

1. Cut your breadfruit into 8 even sections to help it cook evenly. (Remember to remove the centre core before cutting in half lengthwise.)
2. Combine grated coconut and turmeric in a large bowl, then add two cups of water and mix well. You're looking for a deep golden colour; if it's more of a sunshine yellow, add turmeric! Once you're happy with the hue, strain liquid and reserve.
3. Make your dumplings by combining flour and salt in a medium-sized bowl. Slowly add water and knead to combine. Shape the dough into long tubes about the length of your palm and thickness of your thumb.
4. Now, it's time to pack the pot. Layer ingredients in a large cast iron pot, starting with breadfruit and green fig.
5. Next, add seasoned chicken in a single layer. Pour coconut milk into the pot until it just covers the chicken.
6. Cover and cook over medium-high heat until the provisions are halfway done.
7. Add carrots, squash, peppers, thyme, and oregano, cover and let simmer until your vegetables are cooked through.
8. Add dasheen leaves and dumplings, cover and simmer on medium heat until the dumplings are cooked and there is no remaining liquid (about 40 minutes).

Serve hot in bowls and enjoy!

Bain de Soleil

Written by
Jessica Beauplat

Photography by
Giulia Frigieri

*With golden
hour cocktails,
shareable plates,
and beachside
bottles, Marseille's
happy hour is
a sunny delight.*





In France's oldest city,

who have given the city a patchwork of unfussy wine bars, sun-drenched terraces, and offbeat restaurants that feel more like well-kept secrets than must-visit food destinations.

Despite recent popularity, Marseille has retained its gritty charm, according to seasoned food journalist Ezéchiel Zérah. After living in Paris for 15 years, the author of the culinary guide *Marseille : un jour sans faim* returned to his hometown. Now the editor of a beloved food-focused newsletter, *Pomélo*, Zérah shares his favourite spots for apéro, France's ambling pre-dinner hangout spiked with natural wines, clever cocktails, and the local staple, pastis. (The anise-flavoured spirit is traditionally sipped diluted in cold water with a five-to-one ratio. Listen to purists and only add ice at the end). Grab your sunglasses and clear your afternoon, because we're off on a slow drift across Marseille, stopping wherever the drinks are cold, as sunlight turns golden and olives hit the table.

past and present mingle, as ever-changing haunts share cobblestoned streets with Romanesque–Byzantine style churches and views of the Old Port. Founded by Greek colonists in 600 BCE, Marseille has been overlooked for far too long. However, this underdog town has found its spot in the Mediterranean sun post-pandemic, fueled by a wave of creative chefs



In that sweet spot between lunch and dinner, La Restanque likes to shake things up.

La Restanque

Done up with terracotta pots and soothing matcha green walls, the atmosphere here shifts with the sun: Morning coffee crowds drinking *café allongé* give way to lunching locals, before cocktail sippers settle in for happy hour. “I first came here while working on a story. How does someone go from being just another customer to a regular who greets the owner with a kiss

on the cheek?” Zérah asks, “I started stopping by every day.” Founded by four friends, either Gianni or Jean-Baptiste are behind the bar, mixing spur-of-the-moment cocktails like a pear martini, or a tropical concoction of spiced rum, lime, cane sugar syrup, and guava juice called *Le Touriste*. Please your inner snacker by getting shared plates of pulled pork topped with garlic cream or *œuf parfait* nestled in butternut squash velouté.
1 rue d’Alger, 6th arrondissement





La Caravelle

“You can see the restaurant from the outside, but few people know how to get in, since the entrance is through the Bellevue Hotel,” Zérah explains. “Stepping inside feels a bit like boarding a boat, swaying gently above the Old Port.” Once aboard, the dining room serves up panoramic views of the bustling harbour and Notre-Dame de la Garde basilica. The intimate layout with long tables and live jazz means the space hosts chance meetings, too. Order glasses of Provençal wine alongside nibbles like patatas bravas and dishes of seared octopus with melon, fresh raspberries, and house-made harissa, as apéro stretches into dinner.
34 Quai du Port, 2nd arrondissement

When kicking back in La Caravelle’s cozy waterside dining room, there’s no need to choose between laid-back fare and solid sights.





Longchamp
Palace

Just past the lively Réformés district, the energy shifts as you approach a quiet corner with little around other than this restaurant, which contrasts the area's calmness. A classic Marseille small hangout

that's been around since the 1930s, the unchanged Art Deco spot is packed by 6 pm. You'll see regulars elbowing their way to the bar for their glasses of pastis. Zérah offers up one piece of advice to anyone hoping to blend in: Don't ask for a pastis, "Name the brand instead—Ricard or 51."
22 boulevard Longchamp, 1st arrondissement



Take it outside at Longchamp Palace for a local pint, booze-free ginger lemonade, or eternally classic pastis, the affectionately nicknamed *petit jaune* (i.e. little yellow one).





Mademoiselle

Wine

If you're after a quieter slice of Marseille, head to the Anse de la Fausse Monnaie in upscale Malmousque, and watch the Mediterranean stretch as far as the eye can see from a pebble beach. There's no bar, but a two-minute walk takes you to this sleek wine shop, where coastal vibes complement natural wines by producers

from the Loire, Burgundy, Beaujolais, and Luberon regions. "They also carry a small selection of apéritif-style preserves, perfect for pairing with charcuterie boards," Zérah says, alluding to mini cured sausages to go with crackers and the über-popular La Pique spicy chili sauce. The move? Grab a chilled bottle and claim a spot on the rocks for an apéro with your toes in the water. *146 Corniche Président John Fitzgerald Kennedy, 7th arrondissement*



Get in line at Mademoiselle Wine for beach-ready bottles that quench afternoon thirsts.

Les Lumières

"Before heading home, I like to pop in at one of my favourite late-night spots, which is run by a Venezuelan mother-and-son duo." This specialty coffee shop in the historic Panier district moonlights as a wine bar and restaurant. Humberto lends his quiet charm to the space, while his mother brings in warmth and carefully selected natural wines that share the spotlight with vegetable-forward bites, like sweet potato ceviche and black beans in chimichurri sauce. *34 Grand Rue, 2nd arrondissement*



Then Let Rest

Her father never served a meal on time. In the end, the waiting was worth it.

Written by
Caitlin Walsh Miller

Illustrations by
Shimeng Jiang



My dad was on nobody's schedule but his own, and that held true right up until his final breath.

A stroke had left him totally unresponsive, and his advanced care directive called for comfort measures only, which, in this case, meant a special mouthwash to keep his lips moist, and morphine in generous supply. No water. No food. The palliative care team told us most patients, without nutrition or hydration, pass after a day or two, maybe three.

At around 4 pm on day four, one of my sisters was desperate for a shower and

a meal that didn't come from a vending machine. She had just left the hospital when my dad's colour changed. He was suddenly grey, like a dead tooth. "He looks...different," I said to my brother, who agreed. We called our sister, who sprinted back to make it on time.

But our father had never been too concerned with the idea of "on time." When I was a kid, I was always the last little tutu left lingering after dance class, and he'd routinely be hours late picking me up from daycare. A few years ago, he showed up three days late for a visit in Montreal. And when it came to dinner at his house, we all knew better than to arrive hungry.

My dad loved cooking beef-forward feasts—prime rib, Wellington, filet mignon with a bordelaise sauce that took three days and every pot he owned to make. And he was good at it. For a long time, I wouldn't eat steak anywhere but his place, because there was just no point. He'd pour all his focus into advance planning, obsessively compiling sauce-splattered notes and recipes into binders stacked high in the basement office. But all that prep didn't translate to punctuality—his first course would inevitably hit the table three or four hours late, just as guests were starting to think about going home.

This was as true for dinner parties as it was for family meals, which were as rare as the roast beef my dad served. He had a bunch of kids, with nearly as many women, from a decades-long string of overlapping relationships. I have four half-siblings (that I know of)—including one I found out about at 27, and another I've never met—though the actual size of our cohort is perhaps not a number known to man or science. Family time wasn't a regular thing.

The two siblings I knew growing up were a decade and a half older, and out of province by the time I was done preschool, making me a de facto only child. Around then, my parents split. I mostly lived with my mom, who was dealing with a deep post-divorce depression. Every second weekend, I was with my dad and his third wife, who was dealing with being a special kind of cruel-for-sport asshole.

Every so often, though, my siblings would blow through town like a breath of fresh, emotionally supportive air. This would call for a meal to mark the occasion—I looked forward to those evenings with the same starved anticipation I had for a new episode of

Buffy the Vampire Slayer. A good deal older and wiser, my brother and sister, meanwhile, were learning to dread these dinners. They had school, then jobs, then eventually small children, and eating at 10 pm on Sunday was not ideal. I had none of that, and the only thing I craved was their company.

My siblings would arrive—the tingle I'd get from the crunch of gravel in the driveway—and glance at the kitchen, despite knowing they'd find it untouched, unmanned, no whiff of dinner in the air. "Dad, am I right?" I'd say, rolling my eyes like a pro as I took their coats. "Ha ha." But secretly, I had no complaints. As far as I was concerned, the later the meal, the longer they would stay.

We'd move into the living room. My sister would ask me about school, my dreams, how I liked to spend my time, with whom and where. My dad would finish his first Dubonnet, on the rocks, pour another, then meander outside for a series of cigarettes. My brother would tell stories that made me laugh until I cried. My father would vanish into the basement—to do what, I had no idea. (I do now—he was smoking weed.) My siblings played Gen X Canadiana I didn't know but soon loved: The Tragically Hip, the Skydiggers, Sloan. He'd emerge, and they'd ask if there was anything they could do to help. "Nope, almost there," came the invariable reply, as he lit the barbecue coals. We'd play a whole game of Scrabble. The meat would hit the grill as the stars came out. And then, at last, a roar from the kitchen: "Supper!" We'd sit down to eat. (How the fuck could cooking a ribeye take this long?) We'd finish. The night would end, they'd leave, and I'd be left with my dad, a few scotches deep, and his third wife, busy cleaning up the preposterous mess while not-so-silently rethinking her life choices.

As my dad's health declined in recent years, I started to wonder what my relationship with my siblings would look like once he was gone. He wasn't the glue, really, but he was the knot in the wood, the reason our family tree grew so many sideways branches. And he was the host: the one who gathered us, brought us into his house, always on his terms and timeline.

So, it surprised no one that he wasn't adhering to the palliative care team's suggested schedule, or that we found ourselves waiting for him on that January evening. In his hospital room, we did what we always did while in dinnertime purgatory. My brother made us laugh.



My sister made space for everyone's feelings. Our other sister—a newer addition, but not new to waiting on our father, given the quarter-century it took him to acknowledge her—made us strangely grateful for his infidelities. Eventually, our bellies started making grumbling sounds. Around 9 pm, someone said what needed saying: "Pizza?"

When it came, my brother popped out to get it. I watched my father's mouth form a near-perfect O. A tell-tale sign, I'd been told. Then, he died.

"Pizza!" my brother announced, stepping back into the room.

"He's gone," someone mouthed.

"Figures," he said with a small smile.

Our father never hosted a meal on time, not once in his life. To be fair, he only missed this one by two minutes. Now that he's gone, we still gather—on our own schedule, but we gather. Turns out all that waiting was its own glue. **S**



Written by
Jessica Gingrich

WHEEL OF FORTUNE

Photography by
Ashley Houghton

Thanks to bites and insights, a snack-loving witch is bringing cheese divination back to life.

“You’ve got a penis in your cheese right here,” says Jennifer Billock, pointing to the lower left corner of my soft wedge of Humboldt fog. This isn’t an insult, it’s an insight.

The phallus represents me trying too hard. It’s perched atop what Billock calls a “chunky little lighthouse,” symbolizing my search for meaning. Her diagnosis is clear: My stubborn effort is blocking my path forward.

Billock is the world’s only professional tyromancer: a fortune-teller who swaps a crystal ball for cheese. By studying the veins in blue or the cracks in aged cheddar, she taps into hidden truths and a long history of dairy-based divination. Tyromancy dates back to Ancient Greece and flourished in medieval Europe, where it was used to forecast harvests, catch criminals, and predict romances.

Today, Billock revives the tradition, reading cheeseboards like tarot spreads

in Chicago shops or over Zoom. Clients bring four cheeses representing the past, present, future, and a personal question. Billock scans them for symbols. Some cheeses reveal familiar signs—hearts, arrows, letters—while others deliver pop culture surprises like Ninja Turtles or Skeletor. The art is in the translation. “I’m making interpretations based on my intuition,” she explains. “Sometimes the intuition turns into this channeling experience where I’ve got whole body chills.”

Billock’s journey to tyromancy began with a lifelong fascination with the mystical. She grew up improvising spells and devouring books on witchcraft, gradually building her own magical practice. She stumbled upon tyromancy while researching food-based fortune-telling methods and was instantly hooked. She spent the next years scouring historical references—from second-century CE Greek texts to seventeenth-century occult dictionaries—and developing her own system.

“As long as there’s been cheese, [it’s had] some sort of sacred or magical meaning,” Billock tells me. Before modern science, the coagulation of milk—a temperamental process reliant on invisible forces—seemed otherworldly, its outcome often attributed to supernatural influence. Traditionally, women oversaw this enigmatic craft, cloaking it in an aura of reverence and suspicion. Fear curdled into paranoia: A mishap wasn’t an accident, but deliberate spiritual sabotage, often sparking accusations of witchcraft.

Now, Billock, who playfully calls herself a kitchen witch, is reclaiming and reinventing this legacy. Her readings blend insight and irreverence. They’re spontaneous, snackable, occasionally phallic, but leave room for reflection. “Most people want either clarity and guidance or the opportunity to do something they think is ridiculous,” she notes, “and everybody comes for the cheese.”

For Billock, this food’s power lies in its transformative nature. “You’re combining the desire to want to control or to understand the future with a product that is changing,” she explains. Perhaps that is the point. Cheese, like the future, doesn’t sit still. It crumbles, melts, and ferments, resisting tidy truths, even as we search for them. **S**



Serviette is a magazine about all the ways food is tangled up with culture, science, history, and design.

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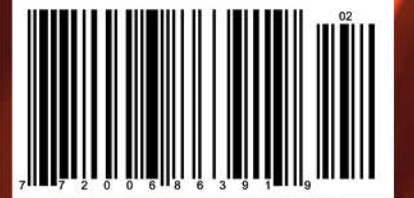




Beef, cod, date, pear, potato... there were plenty of food terms on Shakespeare's list of nearly 100 words to allude to the male member. (Vagina havers, don't feel left out, the Bard conjured almost twice as many creative ways to hint at female bits.) But we haven't left our shlong-spiration back in the Renaissance. The Green Dictionary of Slang—which compiles over 1,500 words for penis from as far back as the 1300s—includes more contemporary food-based terms, like candy cane, green banana, ham bone, and twinkie.



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