

THE Chicago FOODCULTURA CLARION

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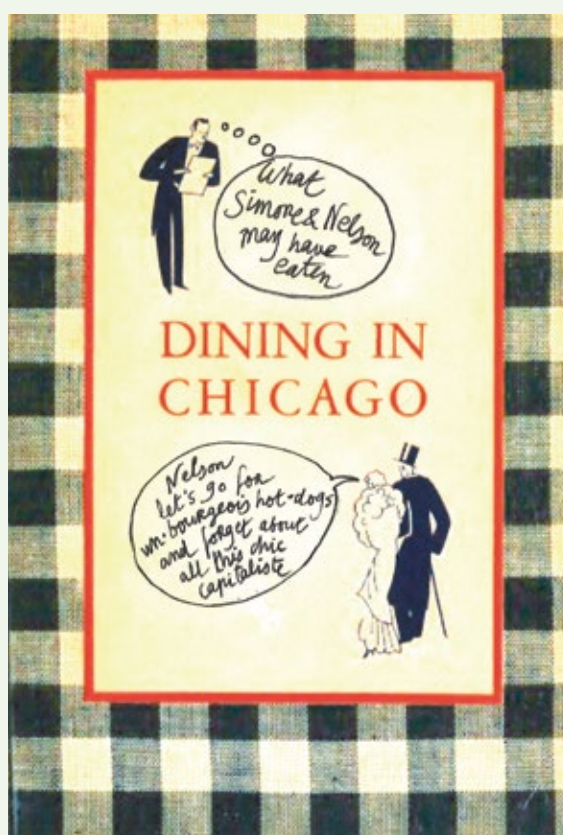
Illustration by Raina Wellman

EDITORIAL

Oyez, oyez! After nary a three month hiatus, the *Chicago Foodcultura Clarion* rings out again. This time for its penultimate number, to be distributed once more across Chicagoland in a 2700 copy print run as an insert in the *Reader*. Not that any of the authors or editors of issue number one ever managed to get a hold of a properly inserted copy! So count yourself lucky if you did, or could make a sandwich wrapper out of it, as per our instructions. But now watch out for the new one in your neighborhood Reader box!

For those who missed the first issue, let me explain. *The Chicago Foodcultura Clarion* grew out of a collaboration between the Barcelona/Miami-based pioneer of food art Antoni Miralda and the University of Chicago anthropologist Stephan Palmié. Under the generous auspices of a Mellon Foundation grant awarded to them by the University of Chicago's Richard and Mary Gray Center for Art and Inquiry, Miralda and Palmié taught an experimental course entitled "Foodcultura: The Art and Anthropology of Food and Cuisine" in the fall of 2019. Together, the two of us sent our students out on ethnographic missions into Chicago's wonderfully variegated food worlds. A number of their projects will be presented in this issue of the *Clarion*. But before editorializing about the cornucopia of Chicago food writing and imaging that awaits you in this issue, gentle reader, let me tell you a story. It is about romance, twentieth century intellectual history, and—you guessed it—food. But let me first thank Hazal Çorak who alerted me to what you are about to read.

On a cold February afternoon in 1947, Nelson Algren, then on the cusp of a literary breakthrough, took the El to the Loop to meet Simone de Beauvoir in the Palmer House Hilton's Le Petit Café. On her first trip to America, de Beauvoir had encountered Algren's long-time friend Richard Wright in New York, and Wright and Mary Guggenheim (who made the contact) suggested that she meet him once in Chicago. As is well known—indeed, the *Reader* carried a good story about it some years ago—it was the start of a passionate (but mostly long distance) love affair that lasted until a somewhat bitter end in 1964. We also know that the evening of that February day in 1947, de Beauvoir's soon-to-be "beloved Chicago man" took her on *A Walk on the Wild Side* through the *Neon Wilderness* of W. Madison Avenue (known as Floptown since the 1920s) and to a number of serious dives: the kind that The Chicago School of Sociology had been studying ethnographically under the direction of Robert E. Park since the mid-1920s (resulting in such memorable ethnographic—now historical—documents on a Chicago that has ceased to exist like Paul G. Cressey's dissertation "The Taxi Dance Hall," Paul C. P. Siu's on "The Chinese Laundry Man," Frederick Thrasher's *The Gang*, or Nels Anderson's *The Hobo*). What we do *not* know is where and what Algren and de Beauvoir ate for dinner that evening. We can speculate on hearty Polish fare or the skimpy bar food that used to be offered for free to happy hour drinking patrons. As de Beauvoir later recalled, afterwards they repaired to his "hovel without a bathroom or a refrigerator, alongside an alley full



of steaming trashcans and flapping newspapers." Good existentialist that she was, to de Beauvoir, this seemed "refreshing after the heavy odour of dollars in the big hotels and elegant restaurants, which I found hard to take." Years later, de Beauvoir (of all people!) wrote Algren that she'd even cook and clean for him. Imagine that! *The Man with the Golden Arm* and *The Second Sex*—two books rarely mentioned in one sentence (shouldn't they?)—appeared two years later.

Such are the known unknowns, as former Secretary of State Donald Rumsfeld once so memorably put it. But, we can have a guess as to that dinner in the winter of 1947. In part this is so because before Algren attained national and international fame as a writer (Hemingway rightly called him the American Dostojevski), this grandson of a contrarian Swedish immigrant who converted to orthodox Judaism in New York and (much to the chagrin of his family) took to itinerant prophecy soon after, earned his first spurs in the context of the New Deal WPA Federal Writers Project. From its inception under the New Deal in 1935 to its shameful destruction by the House Committee on Un-American Activities in 1943, the Federal Writers Project employed thousands of writers, artists, and professionals who had lost their jobs in the publishing industry. Next to Algren, who joined the FWP in 1936, its Chicago office staff alone included Saul Bellow, Arna Bontemps, Jack Conroy, Katherine Dunham, Studs Terkel, Margaret Walker, and Richard Wright—a veritable who's who of youthful Chicago artists who would soon be propelled to national and international renown. A major focus of their work was the Illinois version of the 48 state guides the FWP was compiling, but other projects in which Algren was involved included "industrial folklore," for which he interviewed barflies, gamblers, prostitutes, loan-sharks, drug dealers, boxers, addicts, petty criminals, and other characters in the bars, pool halls, and brothels of "the sleaziest skid row district of Chicago" (as his friend and FWP colleague Jack Conroy later recalled). Elements of these interviews often found their way into Algren's novels and short stories in virtually verbatim form—a poetic ethnography of the multi-ethnic, multi-racial underclass that had formed in cities like Chicago, the kind of "lumpen" that Algren, more so perhaps than any American author at the time, so successfully strove to humanize—in their own language. But Algren also worked on the Midwestern version of the FWP's "America Eats" project, whose stated goal was to "produce a series of regional guides describing immigration, settlement and customs as these factors related the universal language of food." The results, however, remained unpublished at the time.

Fast forward to the 1970s. Algren whose literary fame had sadly faded by then, was going through a rough patch and held a silent auction in his apartment on Evergreen Street. As Chicago's first genuine celebrity chef and friend

(Continued on p. 2)

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of Algren's, Hungarian born Louis Szathmáry, recalled, he immediately spotted a typescript entitled "Am. Eats. Algren", took a quick look at it, decided that he had to have it for his collection, and placed a winning bid (Szathmáry was a monomaniacal cook book collector whose vast library is now housed at the University of Iowa). Algren turned to him and said "Lou, are you crazy? You are bidding too much for that manuscript. The recipes in it are lousy. It was a government writers project. I did it because I needed the money." After Szathmáry had taken a closer look, he had to agree: "I told him that some of them were easy to follow, others sketchy, and a few impossible: for instance, the Flemish booya—60 gallons, with 30 pounds of oxtail, 10 pounds of beef soup bones, 4 fat hens and half a bushel of tomatoes". Algren laughed. "He said the book was his but the recipes were not. He had collected them from various sources—housewives, farmers, sailors, tavern owners, greasy-spoon cooks—and wrote them down as best he could. He wished me luck in case I really wanted to do something with them." Which Szathmáry eventually did. After having cooked and re-written most of the recipes, he published *America Eats* in the University of Iowa Press's Iowa Szathmáry Culinary Arts Series in 1992.

More a poetic evocation of waning rural folklore written in New Deal populist style than an ethnography of the rapidly changing Midwestern foodways of the 1930s, *America Eats* nonetheless is a remarkable document of the diversity of ingredients that were then about to merge into the chunky stew of Midwestern cookery: from Native American, French colonial, American homesteader, and African American elements, to contributions from Scandinavian, German, Polish, Russian, Belgian, Italian, Jewish, Hungarian, Serbian, Spanish, Lebanese, Mexican, and Chinese immigrants. "Such a cauldron" Algren writes, "would come to contain more than many foods; it would be, at once, a symbol of many lands and a melting pot for many peoples." *America Eats* also gives us glimpses into the transformation of immigrant tastes, no doubt under the impact of the rapid industrialization of American food, then already under way for a considerable time. Of the Serbians in Libertyville and elsewhere, Algren tells us how "the parents are used to a well-organized and well-seasoned meal, but the children prefer mostly fried food, sandwiches, sweets and cold soda water... sitting at the same table with their children and holding in their hands sizeable chunks of barbecued lamb, the parents look at their American-born children in wonder and dismay, unable to understand an attachment to cold sodas and hot dogs eaten together." Clearly, even as Algren penned these lines, fast food was dawning on the horizon.

Curiously, what Algren doesn't tell us is what his fellow Chicagoans in West Town, River North, Bronzeville, Back-of-the-Yards, The Delta, Bridgeport, or other working class neighborhoods were eating. That, one would have to extract from his novels—a splendid task for an aspiring future culinary historian. But it brings us no closer to the question of what Algren and de Beauvoir might have eaten on their first date that winter day in 1947. Perhaps it was a steaming bowl of barszcz with uszki, or golabka studded with kielbasa and other smoked meats. Perhaps a plate of chop suey (*America Eats* lists a recipe for "tin suin pai kwe" or "pork with sweet-sour sauce") or chow mein whose slightly *outré* turn of the twentieth century reputation had worn off by then. Perhaps a couple of tamales, which, as Peter Engler demonstrated in the last issue of the *Clarion*, had become a fixture of Chicago's nightlife long before 1947. Chicago's first pizza joint had emerged on W. Taylor Street by 1924, and indeed, when de Beauvoir returned to Chicago in May, Algren took her to Little Italy for pizza and chianti. But that evening in February, Simone and Nelson may well have simply wolfed down some hot dogs—which by that time, had assumed their characteristic "Chicago-style" seasonings and fixings: no ketchup, never!—before they retreated to their love nest for the night.

Further research may help to solve that riddle, but as for me, I am now happy to turn to the contents of this issue of the *Clarion*. Falling, as this issue does, into the first days of Lent, we prepared for you what 19th century Catholic immigrants to Chicago from Germany's region of Suebina would have called a "Herrgotts'scheisserle" (little Good Lord cheater) or more properly "Maultasche" (mouth pocket), the latter term designating a large, ravioli-like stuffed pasta, the former describing its function: hiding morsels of ground meat mixed with spinach between two layers of pasta dough so God wouldn't become aware of one's sinful culinary delight. What we have for you, in other words, is a clandestine feast, hidden, as always, between the covers of the *Chicago Reader*. This time, the ingredients are student projects on upscaled home cooking and street food, and *ofrendas* for the *día de los muertos* in Pilsen; an anthropological meditation on Korean Chinese comfort food, nostalgia, and racism; an interview with the owner and cook of a Little Village *taqueria* that doubles as a shrine to *La Santa Muerte*; an essay by the foremost historian of the Chicago hot dog; another one on a historic raccoon feast; yet another on the "blood buttons" once produced at the Chicago Stockyards, and still one more on our artistic director, Miralda's role in bringing *tapas* to the U.S.; there is work by artists Patty Carrol, Jen Delos Reyes, Eun-ha Paek, Raina Wellman, and a fistful of table scraps concerning such matters as Shrimps de Jonghe, and the geometry common to gyros, döner kebab, and tacos al pastor. Who knew that they all represent instances of the frustum! Think about this when you head to your favorite carved meat stall: there's got to be a mathematical formula for such Euclidian culinary objects, from the first cut to the last! But now enjoy. You have our absolution for indulging in the *Clarion* during Lent (providing you can find a copy).

By Stephan Palmić

FOODCULTURA: THE ART AND ANTHROPOLOGY OF FOOD AND CUISINE ANTH 25320

HOME COOKING

By Daniel Simantob,
Maisie Watson and
Sophia Franzon



Buffet and meal at Sinha Restaurant, Chicago, IL



At the time of writing this article, it has been almost one year since many of us have sat in a restaurant. In the age before lockdowns, I remember hearing complaints of missing home cooked food—after 315 days of domestic confinement, 915 meals prepared and eaten inside my kitchen (this is a very rough, likely inaccurate estimate, given that I have lost the concept of a proper eating schedule), I predict that these grievances will subside in at least two years.

Exactly a year before we were exiled from restaurants and mandated to cook at home, we embarked on an academic exploration into what exactly differentiates the restaurant experience from home cooking. To each of our group members, eating, and more specifically sharing a meal, was understood as a ritual act. Certain customs, tools, and practices are shared across the world, but others are idiosyncratic to one space. There is a certain homogeneity to dining in a restaurant that is contrasted by peculiar family traditions that one only observes when eating in a home environment. The smallest deviation from one's expectation at a restaurant may be enough to ruin a night out, but when grandma serves the same four-ingredient soup she's made for 40 years in mismatched bowls and cutlery, it's somehow the best meal you've ever had in your life. With this in mind, we headed to Sinha, where the home kitchen and the restaurant perfectly coalesced.



Menu

Cheloh-abgoosht with Gondi
(Iranian-Jewish Chicken Soup with
Meatballs) and Matzo Balls.

Timpano

Wine and a Blackjack Hand

Día de los Muertos

By Elizabeth Bec



Día de los Muertos, a period of festivity and observance within Latin America, is a reunion of the living and the dead in service and remembrance. Despite its origins in pan-Roman Catholic dogma, in Mexico this holiday is centered around the more folk and spiritual traditions of altar making, the creative processes of display and performance, and lastly, at the center of my research, the food offerings (*ofrendas*). From chocolate to squash (*calabaza*), sculpted sugar skulls (*calaveras*) to *pan de muerto*, the prominence of sweets in spaces of solemnity made me think about the paradoxes inherent to the festival's historical context and symbolic presence, specifically within Mexican-American culture. My research questions were tri-fold: How does sweetness as a response to death complicate our traditional notion of grief and healing, and does this reaffirm or challenge Mexican stereotypes? During the creation of a sugary *ofrenda*, how does one strike a balance between visual appeal and quality of composition, and is there a loss of intentionality/integrity if aesthetics are placed in the focus? Finally, how does the nature of the *ofrenda* itself change in post-modern Mexican-American society?

Through an ethnographic survey of Pilsen's annual *Día de los Muertos Xicágo* celebration,

I wished to explore how spiritual connections were created by altars. It wasn't until my time observing that I recognized that I should be asking another question as well: *who* was facilitating this connection with the dead? The altar makers, and precisely the bearers of this knowledge, were women and young girls, their daughters and granddaughters. These women bring about healing; to themselves through the process of creation, and to others who can experience what they have created from their knowledge.

In photographs and interviews, I delved deeper into the visuospatial portrayals of food to make sense of the conflict between the artificial and the real. Many altars exhibited plastic fruits, *conchas* made of fabric, store bought *pan de muerto* and *calaveras* (which are inedible). It is traditionally known that one must put out as *ofrendas* recently prepared mole, tamales, sweets, the freshest flowers and fruits because they are the strongest in essence and aroma, and the souls can take that with them. Though in my interviews, many claimed that there is no difference between store-bought and handmade foods: it is more about the action of placing the bread on an altar, of honoring the deceased life. This transition of the edible to the inedible, the handmade to store-bought, brings

in dimensions of modernity, such as the industrialization of sugar. The rise of consumerism, and thus poor eating habits, produce and commodify the new *ofrenda*. Traditional practices originating from pre-Columbian rituals are pushed into postmodern Chicago society, changing the nature of the *ofrenda* itself. The overwhelming amounts of highly-processed foods such as instant ramen or Cheetos reflected a sort of decay through daily consumption that is commemorated and remembered.

For my final project, I made an altar of sorts, centered around the mouth itself: the place where food meets tongue, where habit begins and destruction may occur, to produce a larger exchange of life and death. Thus, I entered the mouth of a *muerto*, informed by my favorite highly-processed sweet

A Pattern of Pleasure



The story of Tio Jr., a deceased relative of the Gonzalez family, was told through the *ofrendas* of sunflower seeds and Monster Energy drink. In his life before his death, his brother recounted that the habit of drinking this beverage became excessive; compounded with an undiscovered illness, this excessive consumption led to his death. *Why would this drink be commemorated and offered in his life after death, I asked? It is about celebrating his life, not his death.* The response allowed me to think about the symbol of the *ofrenda* holistically, as a spatiotemporal object undergoing cultural negotiation. They are celebrations of the life of the deceased and all that comes with that: their likings, their pleasures, their vices. It is a narrative of the deceased told through their consumption habits. The memories that come along with that are what remind them of the personality of Tio Jr. and his story within their larger family history. Monster Energy drink was a motif in Tio Jr.'s story: a pattern of pleasure through a device of destruction.

Fine Dining and Home Cooking

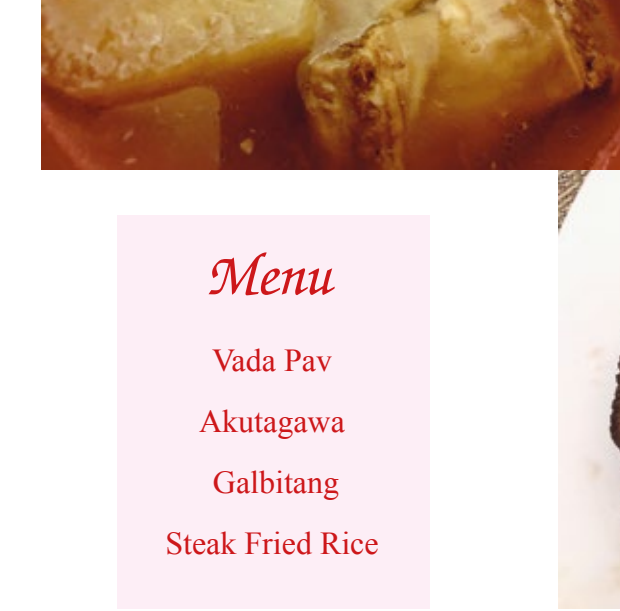
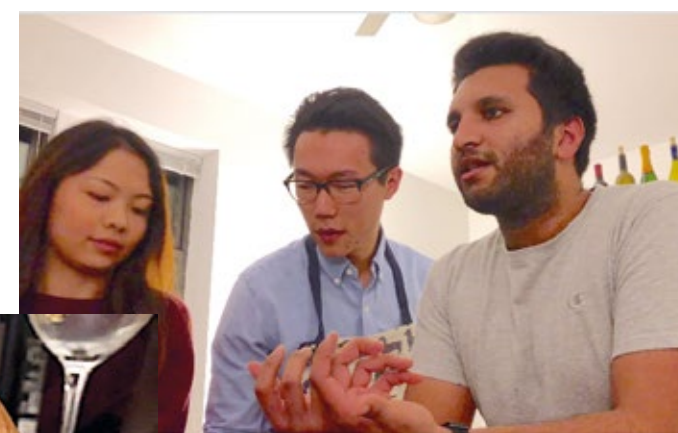
By Anant Matai, Richard Zhao, Michael Shen and Nancy Xue

Through ethnographic surveys of Chicagoland restaurants, including Susie's Noon Hour Grill, Rice and Bread, Superkhana International, and El Ideas, we explored the notions of fine dining and home food, discussing questions of aesthetic, nostalgia, comfort, and belonging. We examined food's relationship to both elevation and comfort in search of concepts of "essence." Our research was strongly driven by a desire for understanding the essentialization of *habitus* into dishes or meals. Our final presentation took the form of a home cooked dinner where we prepared a variety of dishes and their representations in order to evoke the notions of culinary nostalgia we encountered in our surveys and personal experiences.

For this meal, we prepared *vada pav*, a classic street food found across the streets of Mumbai that involves sandwiching a deep fried potato fritter in a bread bun, laced with three different chutneys, tamarind, coriander, and dry garlic-sesame. For one of our ethnographers, as an Indian who grew up outside of India, *vada pav* is the food that first tied him to the space of the country itself.

Another dish we recreated was fried rice, a street food that can be found in every Chinese restaurant around the world. To construct our fried rice dish, we broke down the components of the original recipe and experimented with the aesthetics, forms, and contexts. Rice is the main star of the dish, a powerful ingredient because it absorbs the flavors introduced to it. We decided to cook the leftover rice with Maplewood bacon fat because we wanted the rice to become a carrier of the fatty, salty flavor. Next, please allow us to introduce rib-eye steak; an ingredient that is often associated with western cuisine and luxury, we added this cut of beef to an otherwise economical street food. Through this juxtaposition, we wanted the audience to reimagine what fried rice is and what it could taste like.

As we enjoyed our meal, what struck us was the feeling of comfort in eating street food—this is one area that across cultures creates a sense of belonging, shaping the space of the street into a place in our memories and a place much like home. Perhaps it is the sensation of eating with our hands, or that it is fried and full of flavor, or perhaps it is the shared experience of the dish as it is eaten by so many across the country and world. We felt that to begin the dinner with street food would be a great start for conversation around comfort outside the home, as well as new flavors and foods newly entering the home—an elevation through both its visual representation and existence on the menu. As we welcomed our guests with our recreated street foods, it began our journey to find comfort outside and elevation within the home.



Menu

Vada Pav

Akutagawa

Galbitang

Steak Fried Rice



A TALE OF TWO TAPAS BARS: EL INTERNACIONAL, CAFE BA-BA-REEBA!



El Internacional Bar and Marina Room. Photo credits: Peter Aaron / OTTO and FoodCultura Archive.



Ba-Ba-Reeba Bar counter. Photo credit: Lettuce Entertain You Enterprises.

DAWN OF SMALL PLATES * EL AMANECER DE LAS TAPAS *

By Mike Sula

Bacalao, reconstituted, was on the menu when Café Ba-Ba-Reeba! opened to innocent but curious Lincoln Park diners on December 26, 1985. But dried, salted codfish was also, oddly, dangling amid a curtain of jamon, garlic and dried chilis above the bar at Chicago's first tapas restaurant.

"Whole smoked hams and dried salt cod hanging from rafters add a Spanish note," according to the *Chicago Tribune* in its review of the 21st restaurant in Lettuce Entertain You Enterprises' mighty empire (14 years after founding partner Rich Melman invented the salad bar at R.J. Grunt's). Like many of Lettuce's concepts, it was a hugely popular novelty at the time. It was also one of the very first tapas restaurants in the U.S.; often credited with helping to launch America's obsession with an adapted form of Spanish drinking food. Along with a now defunct Las Vegas satellite, it had no small influence on the small plates trend that arose in the aughts and persisted up until the pandemic (for better or worse).

It's likely that the majority of mid-80s cool kids—bolstered by nearby DePaul University—who lined up for hours in those early days didn't think anything of the bacalao bobbing above the bar. But it's not a common accent in Spanish tapas bars, where the simple act of placing a piece of bread atop a glass of wine to keep the flies out, evolved into a galaxy of bar snacks and an enshrined, communal eating culture.

But Montse Guillen certainly thought it was strange. And she would know—there was codfish hanging at her restaurant too.

Guillen was a Catalan chef of increasing renown in the early 80s, when she and her partner, *Clarion* jefe Antoni Miralda, opened *El Internacional* in Manhattan's Tribeca neighborhood. Not only was it the very first tapas restaurant in the United States, it was an evolving two-floor art installation with a sidewalk mosaic of Coca-Cola cans at the entrance and an enormous replica of Lady Liberty's crown on the roof (featured in a yearslong opening credit cameo on *Saturday Night Live*). Inside, the Columbus Trophy Bar served blue margaritas, under four large, hanging bacalao, and in the Marina Room, diners snacked on Guillen's *patas bravas*, *orejas de cerdo vinagreta*, and *bumuelos de bacalao* above

four whole salted cod fish on a bed of blue salt sunk in the floor.

Bacalao is a recurring motif in Miralda's work. "I've always been interested by the codfish itself," he says. "Not only for the importance it has in nutrition in the world: it was on all the transatlantic voyages. This was about survival. But also because it has an incredible shape like a triangle. A codfish has a presence, really, a holy presence."

It also has a pronounced olfactory presence. "Their smell is always a trademark!"

For this reason, they aren't a common presence in Spanish tapas bars—at least in uncooked form. Montse Guillen might have neglected to mention this important piece of advice the evening she was summoned to the table of two young men visiting from Chicago who said they were planning to open a tapas bar in their midwestern meat-and-potatoes metropolis. "You need to have somebody from Spain in the kitchen," she told them.

So Guillen was surprised and flummoxed to encounter the bacalao above the bar about a year later when she dropped by the new Café Ba-Ba-Reeba! on a short visit to Chicago. "This I remember very well," she says. "I talked with my friend: 'Look they copied this maybe. They're thinking in Spain they put codfish in the tapas bars.'"

Guillen and Miralda moved on to other projects not long after that, but Café Ba-Ba-Reeba! has endured, recently celebrating its 35th birthday with a \$70 "Tapas Tasting Menu" for carryout or delivery. And just last week Lettuce "temporarily closed" its two-year old River North Spanish wine bar Bar Ramone, replacing it with a new outpost, Lil' Ba-Ba-Reeba! Its longevity is emblematic of LEYE's overall success over the decades, with a number of carefully curated restaurants that present gleaming, easy-to-swallow facsimiles of particular cuisines or environments. These restaurants are both beloved for their theatrics and criticized for practicing a kind of Disneyfication of culture and cuisine.

There was, in fact, a Spaniard in the kitchen when Ba-Ba-Reeba! opened in 1985. Chef

Gabino Sotelino was born in Vigo, Spain, and began cooking at the age of 14 in kitchens all over the world before joining forces with Melman to revitalize the legendary Pump Room. Together they opened LEYE's first fine dining restaurant, Ambria, followed by the French bistro Mon Ami Gabi, before Sotelino convinced the boss to open a tapas bar.

At first Melman thought the chef said "topless bar" (a joke both men still tell). Neither remember visiting *El Internacional* during the research and development phase. Nor do they remember whose idea it was to hang bacalao above the bar. But Melman is open to the possibility that they were inspired by it.

Sotelino and Melman had different visions for the restaurant. The chef wanted a rigorously authentic Spanish experience, and his menu prototype included things like tripe, pigs feet, and barnacles. Melman was sure Chicago wasn't ready for this: "I said 'Gabi there's no way we are opening up. I just don't feel it. I'm telling you we're gonna get killed.'"

Changes were in order. "I'm not interested in the six people who know it's authentic," says Melman. "I said, 'Hey, I don't know how they dress in Spain but I want to get crazy.'" We changed 80% of the menu. We left the paellas and the hams and stuff that were good and then we opened it. And I had a lot of fun." Servers wore capes. Flamenco dancers stamped and tapped among the tables. Chicago ate it up.

It's unclear when or why the hams and bacalao above the bar were retired. It's undoubtedly a good thing that the restaurants that took their inspiration from Café Ba-Ba-Reeba! and *El Internacional* didn't deploy salt fish as a decorative element.

As for Melman, he recognizes that the dangling bacalao was a mistake. "We fucked it up!" he laughs. And *El Internacional*? "Maybe we did get an inspiration for what was going on there." After all, he didn't get where he is today by ignoring inspiration when it strikes. He offers a quote from his unpublished memoir: "Imitators blindly copy an idea. But creative people are often inspired by something they see, or taste, or hear. Take an idea. Make it better. Make it your own. Make it fit your organization and culture."

Mike Sula is a senior writer at *The Chicago Reader* as the paper's resident food writer, as well as the senior editor for *Kitchen Toké*, the magazine of culinary cannabis. His work has been published in *Harper's*, the *Chicago Tribune*, the *Chicago Sun-Times*, NPR's *The Salt, Plate, Eater, Dill*, and more. His story "Chicken of the Trees," about eating city squirrels, won the James Beard Foundation's 2013 M.F.K. Fisher Distinguished Writing Award.



KOREAN
STYLE

A BOWL OF... NOSTALGIA or DISCRIMINATION CHINESE FOOD IN CHICAGO'S KOREATOWN

By Heangjin Park

As a Korean living in Chicago, I cook and eat Korean foods at home. To be precise, I have learned to create a culinary version of "Korea" in my kitchen over the years. Still, there are a few dishes that I cannot cook at home, often making me feel a terrible craving. Then, I dine out. When I venture out to cure my cravings and homesickness, I am doomed to have higher expectations. I am doomed when I find that my beef blood cake in broth is flakey. I am miserable when I find my cold noodles are chewy and don't have a hint of buckwheat. I feel lost when I drive an hour and a half to get a bowl of Korean pork sausage soup, only to find that it is never close to what I imagined. I drive home for another hour and a half, feeling the distance between Seoul and Chicago in my mouth.

Nevertheless, there are exceptions. There are places where I know with certainty I can be cured of



homesickness. I can feel closer to the home I left almost ten years ago. There are foods I think are even better versions of the dishes I have eaten in South Korea. However, it can be slightly complicated to explain when the food I crave is "Chinese." Dishes like *jajangmyeon* (noodles with black bean



Jajangmyeon, *jampong*, and *tangsuyuk* are undoubtedly the most popular menu items in "Chinese" restaurants in South Korea. Unless it claims regional specialties or authenticity, most "Chinese" restaurants in South Korea serve Chinese dishes adapted to Korean preferences. Chinese food is not only popular, but also affordable and accessible in South Korea. A bowl of *jajangmyeon* or *jampong* costs about 5 dollars, and *tangsuyuk* for two or three people is about 15 dollars. More importantly, Chinese restaurants are everywhere, both in urban and rural areas. In South Korea, there are about 20,000 Chinese restaurants, one for every 2,500 Koreans. Most of them offer delivery services. To be more accurate, they almost exclusively rely on delivery. Food is delivered hot in less than half an hour, often with no extra delivery fee. Since Chinese food is such an affordable and accessible luxury, most Koreans grow up eating Chinese food once in a while, learning to love the greasy, spicy, and sweet delicacies delivered to their homes.

So it was no wonder many *hwagyo* moved to the United States to avoid political, economic, and social discrimination in South Korea. Many *hwagyo* chose to become chefs in Chinese restaurants in the U.S., even those who didn't originally work at Chinese restaurants in South Korea. Their visa and residency application review would be expedited if they were qualified as "special technicians." Those who did not have any cooking experiences opened Chinese restaurants for (white) American customers, who would enjoy simple, easy-to-cook Chinese dishes. Those who had some cooking experience in South Korea opened Chinese restaurants for Koreans, joining Korean American communities. Their Korean-style Chinese food reminded Korean Americans of their homes and childhood memories, thus mediating the relationship between Korean Americans and *hwagyo* in many American cities, including Chicago.

Chicago proudly hosts a few Korean-style Chinese restaurants. Old restaurants are located in Albany Park, where Korean communities thrived between the 1970s and 90s. Peking Mandarin (*Aseowon*) is one of the oldest Korean-style Chinese restaurants in Chicago, which opened in the early 1980s. Among Koreans in Chicago, Peking Mandarin is known for its spicy *jampong*. VIP (*Gukbinbanjeom*), closed in 2016 due to the owners' retirement, was loved for its *tangsuyuk*. Great Seas (*Daeyangjang*) is probably the best-known Korean-style Chinese restaurant among non-Korean Chicagoans, obviously for its lollipop chicken wings, *kanponggi* in Korean. Like the owners of VIP, the Great Seas' owner retired in 2016, but the restaurant (along with its chicken wing recipe) was purchased and now run by another *hwagyo* who ran multiple Chinese restaurants in Michigan.

Albany Park is no longer considered Koreatown, as most Korean Americans moved to northern suburbs for better education and

sausage), *tangsuyuk* (fried pork with sweet and sour sauce), and *jampong* (noodles with spicy broth and seafood). The best way to label them is Korean-style Chinese, but the only way to explain what they are is through history.

In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, many Chinese immigrated to Korea to avoid natural disasters and wars, or find work opportunities. Some of them opened Chinese restaurants for other Chinese migrants and travelers, as well for local Koreans. The Chinese restaurants in Korea adapted to Korean customers, which often resulted in the creation of new dishes. For example, *jajangmyeon* is a Korean adaptation of Chinese *zhajiangmian*, a noodle mixed with black bean sauce popular in the Shandong region. Over the years, the black bean sauce for the noodles became sweeter, and onions and potatoes were added. The Korean version is now completely different from the original Shandong dish, and can only be found in South Korea and overseas Korean communities. *Jampong* is a Chinese noodle adapted to Japanese tastes and ingredients, and later introduced to Korea through an overseas Chinese network. Various seafood is added to Japanese *champon*, the main difference from the original Fujianese noodle (*taingrousimian*). Korean *jampong* is different from both Fujianese and Japanese versions with copious amounts of pepper oil and *gochugaru* (chili pepper flakes) added. *Tangsuyuk*, on the other hand, is not so different from the Cantonese dish *guloujuk*, made of fried chopped pork with sweet and sour sauce. But the dish does not have as long of a history, as it was invented to accommodate the tastes of Englishmen in China, and later introduced to Koreans and others all over the world.

Illustration by Eun-ha Paek. From "Eating Memories: Eaters of the Past, Present, Future - Jajang Myun Edition," 2012

larger houses. Albany Park functioned as the commercial center for Korean communities after the exodus, but many restaurants eventually moved to or opened in suburbs where many Koreans now live. Great Beijing (*Daebukkyeong*) in Lincolnwood, one among the oldest Chinese restaurants in Chicago, is known for its *jajangmyeon*. Yu's Mandarin in Schaumburg and Chef Ping in Rolling Meadows are popular Korean-style Chinese restaurants for family gatherings.

When you enter the restaurants, you are immersed in a fantastical world created by food and decoration that evoke nostalgic sentiments. Photographs, calligraphy, lanterns, and dolls are all mobilized to represent a version of "China" for customers. You are served hot jasmine tea without asking. Upon your order, you will be served a few side dishes: chopped raw onions with black bean sauce, pickled yellow radish (a Korean adaptation of Japanese pickle), and cabbage kimchi (not the Chinese cabbage for typical Korean kimchi). These are a combination of side dishes unique to Korean-style Chinese restaurants. Chinese food is meant to be shared; scissors, unusable utensils to see on restaurant tables except in Korean restaurants, make sharing noodles a little bit easier and less messy.

A perfect recipe does not make great Chinese food. A chef with knowledge, techniques, and experiences does. You can taste the differences between Chinese food cooked by experienced *hwagyo* chefs and the one made by non-*hwagyo* cooks. Every detail in the dish—temperature, texture, balance between flavors, and colors—indicates the gap between them. Chicago's Korean-style Chinese restaurants have served great Chinese dishes with *hwagyo* chefs in their kitchen. But their chefs, who came to America and worked at restaurants for almost 40 years, are reaching retirement age, if not already retired. Can other people in the kitchen cook the same food? If so, who?

The owner-chef of VIP restaurant confided in me when he decided to retire: his kids are all pursuing professional and successful



ideal temperature and slightly undercooked for a long trip. This level of care and attention is a great virtue, especially during the pandemic, when we cannot fully enjoy hot Chinese food in restaurants anymore.

Korean-style Chinese food has adapted to people's tastes and local conditions outside China, cooked by people moving across borders for political and economic reasons. For many Koreans and Korean-Americans, it has a magical power to bring a bowl of "Korea" where they grew up, curing their homesickness. For many *hwagyo* who are working 10 hours a day every day, however, it symbolizes the social discrimination that forced them to move across the continents and marginal socioeconomic positions both in South Korea and the United States. For many non-Korean customers, it is just delicious "Chinese" food cooked by amazing chefs, some of whom are not from the *hwagyo* family anymore. In the end, Korean-style Chinese food in Chicago's restaurants is multiple things for various groups of people, being served through the connections and tension among them.

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LA CHAPARRITA

By Antoni Miralda and Stephan Palmié

ANGELINA

Angelina Méndez is the owner and watchful culinary supervisor of one of Chicago's most unique taquerías, La Chaparrita ("the short little lady"), situated in Little Village, just off 26th Street at 2500 S. Whipple. In operation for the past 20 years, La Chaparrita could be described as a bastion of exceptionally good Distrito Federal-style tacos (no lettuce, tomato, crema, or other nonsense, please), expertly cooked to Angelina's specifications (no griddling the meat, *ever*) by the Veracruzano César Castillo, were it not for the fact that La Chaparrita doubles as a public shrine to Mexico's folk saint Santa Muerte ("Holy Death"), replete with a massive altar to what devotees often affectionately call "la dama blanca" or "la flaquita." As Angelina told Miralda and Palmié, it all started

out as a grocery store financed with the help of her mother—the pioneer tamalera on 26th street—who refinanced her home to give her recently immigrated daughter a start as an independent culinary entrepreneur. Given the role Santa Muerte played in Angelina's coming to the U.S., right from the start, her altar originally inhabited a space behind the counter, but about 10 years ago, Angelina and the saint decided that it was time to offer devotees a space of public veneration and pious offerings. Ever since then, people have been coming to La Chaparrita both to eat and to pray, or to leave offerings at the now prominently displayed shrine to "la flaquita." Up until the time of Covid-19, Angelina hosted a public ceremony and feast in honor of Santa Muerte's saint's day on November 1st every year.

LA DAMA BLANCA



But let us have Angelina tell the story in her own words—how it all started back in Mexico City, Distrito Federal:

I became a devotee of Santa Muerte when I was married to the father of my daughters, my first husband, in Mexico. I had a lot of problems with him because he judged you a lot, he was a very jealous man. It wasn't a good life, was it? So, among the needs of wanting my husband to change, and, in this case, the son to change for my mother-in-law, she and I happened upon the topic that a woman had bewitched him. It was why he was like that and why he acted like that. Because of the beliefs

of my mother-in-law we went to look at a person who cured witchcraft, right? The healer told me, "Ask the saint. Ask the saint to help you." Obviously, I began to ask of her and ask of her. It didn't change my husband because he was a liar. But Santa Muerte gave me the strength to get out of this cycle, out of this toxic relationship. In these years, my mother was already [in the United States], therefore I was practically alone in Mexico with my family. But, ultimately, my mother, my main support system, wasn't here. So, I began to ask the saint for the strength to leave this bad relationship. That she would help me to change my daughters' lives, and I decided to

get rid of my husband. I spoke to my mother, "Ma, I don't want to live with Luis. I don't love him anymore, I want to be with you." And let me tell you, when I came, I came with my two daughters and in my bag I brought Santa Muerte. I brought my daughters and Santa Muerte. And in truth, it was her who opened the path for me. I prayed to God, then to Santa Muerte. I prayed, "God, if it's for my benefit, please open the doors of the United States to me. If you think I'm doing something wrong by destroying my marriage please do your will." I stopped praying when I crossed the border. My mother was my coyote, or the one who helped me cross the border. We

didn't need a coyote, my mother was mine. She traveled from here from Chicago to Nogales to bring me. When I was crossing the border, I entered through the exit. As people came out, I went in. And let me tell you something, instead of people pushing me out because I was going the other way, people made their way for me to pass. So there I prayed, "My little saint, my little saint helped me, she comes with me." And so, God knows, he opened the door of this blessed country for me and I arrived to the United States. I arrived with my friend in the bag. As I've said, I have a lot of faith in her. Santa Muerte will not solve all of our issues because Santa Muerte is a being of light that intervenes for us with the all powerful. It is not that Santa Muerte is a god and God is another god, no. There is only one God, but God has his servants.

Since then Santa Muerte has been Angelina's faithful protector and companion:

I think of it like this: I tell the truth to Santa Muerte. In the morning I pray to her here inside my house. I light incense every day, and when I get to the business I do the same. I do the sign of the cross, and I light her incense. My faith in Santa Muerte is as if she were like a living person. I talk to her like I'm talking to you, right? I say, "Mother, we're going to do this and this and this and this and this." As if you feel the answer yourself, as if we will or not. When I said to her "Comadre, I'm going to change your party because it's cold." And as when one is left with this doubt, am I doing it right? It's like an answer, no—right? When making a decision, she says, "okay." We start to speculate. Because like the way you go to people so much in the cold, because you will be more comfortable. So it is like an affirmation. That is the way I manifest it, right? But many people have told me that Santa Muerte has presented herself, that they have seen her at the foot of her bedside, at the foot of her bed.

But, of course, Angelina is not only a devotee of La dama blanca; she is also a savvy businesswoman who designed the beautiful tabletops and much else in the restaurant. She also is someone with very clear ideas of what a good taco estilo DF should taste like. As she explained,

I'm the one who has the ideas. I like to stay in the store after closing and I like to program or plan. I like to program how to change the business. I've always had this thing where I like to stay and design mentally the changes I'm going to do. And little by little the taquería has become a product of my imagination. It is my source of income, it is the place where I feel happy, where I am comfortable, where I do not mind working, where it does not disturb me. I feel very here in this business. I'm very grateful to God above all for so many blessings, for so much he gives me. After arriving here with only the clothes that I was wearing, and well, I have been very blessed. Thanks equally to the support of my mother, who has always been there to protect me in my decisions, right? And in my aspirations. No, right now my mother is old, she can't work anymore.

We asked her if the menu in La Chaparrita has changed over the years, but she was adamant that it hadn't—nor would.

What I like to be careful with in this regard is that the taste needs to always be the same. We don't change it, nor do we vary it because what I want is that people, when they come, taste the flavor that is closest to Mexico City. Because that's what I represent, D.F., tacos in the style of D.F. Therefore, this is what I try to preserve in the taste of the meat. The preparation of the meat is always the same so that when the client comes back, they find that same flavor, right? It's one of my concerns, the day that I or my mother dies, what's gonna happen to La Chaparrita?

Because none of my daughters want to learn the preparation process.

If I die or I don't want to work anymore, I can't work anymore or something like that, what will happen to that business? My daughters are going to take care of it, but they are going to completely change everything because they don't know how to do anything. They don't know how to prepare, but they don't want to learn. Then, no. Because I am one of the people checking, I eat a taco and say "I lacked salt," and I talk to the person who is preparing. "You know that you need to add more salt, you are not putting the salt that I told you, the portion of salt that I told you." Right? So, I try to take care of these points. The taco sauces, these sauces, no one else makes but me. Now it's the same. I have great support from César. Actually, César is a man who supports me, helps me, takes care of me. He is a super worker, really.

I have many clients who come from faraway places. They come from New York, Los Angeles, Las Vegas, Atlanta. Every year, their favorite taquería is La Chaparrita. They say, like always, "Everything is really good." This

is what I like to maintain. That's why, in the taquería, there aren't extras, no lettuce, no tomato, no avocado, no cheese. There's nothing. The easiest thing is to buy it and sell it to your client. Right? But then what happens? Then there's not going to be tacos in the style D.F. Because in D.F. you don't eat tacos with extras, nor with lettuce, tomato, cheese, cream, or avocado. My mind has never been fully set, so if the client wants cream, even if it is D.F. style, I'm going to sell him the cream. I like to be authentic.

The recipes are mine, yes. César when he came to work for me he already was a taquero, of course. But he was working a style on the griddle. So I told him, "Look César, here you work in my style, not in the style of 'La Chiquita.'" because he worked in "La Chiquita." Everywhere, they work with the griddle, regularly in all the taquerías. And he accepted my way of working, right? From the beginning I had to correct several things that are required, but now there's no need for that anymore. And no, César loves making tacos, he is making tacos and he is singing. He doesn't sing well, but with lots of sentiment. That's what counts.

and CÉSAR the TAQUERO

César agrees:

I've always said that every worker working in any type of work, as long as he does it with gusto, the things come out well. Because there's some people who don't. Like in a restaurant if you order something from one person who doesn't like their work, it'll come out alright. But, if you order something from a person who actually enjoys their work, it'll come out differently. It really does count if you enjoy it or not. It's like putting your own seasoning into what you do. You have to do the things with gusto and enjoyment. Because really, if you do something that you like, you'll do it right and you'll put your effort in it. Even if the ingredient is only a pinch of salt because they're doing it with gusto.

According to César, the two bestselling fillings at La Chaparrita are *tripa* (tripe) and *carne al pastor* (pork sliced off a rotating cone) of which they sell up to 50 tacos each on a good

day. Other popular items include *cabeza* (head), *sesos* (brain), *molleja* (sweetbreads), *lengua* (tongue), *suadero* (boneless chuck), *longaniza* (minced meat sausage), and *carne asada* (skirt steak). We asked whether American customers would eat organ meat. "That's one of the things I thought too," replied César. "Well, the American doesn't eat food with guts or the head... they don't eat the brain. But that's what I thought. There are those who really eat the tacos with tripe, tacos with brain, with all of it!" We commented that he was educating them, but César saw it differently:

It's that us Mexicans, we have a way of thinking where we see something we don't like and we say we don't like it. But we try

it and then we say whether we like it or don't like it. One time, well a few times I know, some chefs have come here to eat and they told me that what looks the ugliest is the best to eat.

Of course, he makes fillings for vegetarians, too: *nopales* (cactus), *hongos* (mushrooms), *calabacita* (squash). Not that very many of them visit La Chaparrita, but César will fix a meatless taco, *huarache*, or *tlacoyo* according to the customer's specifications.

In the end it all boils down to the crucial question: "the quickest and cheapest?" To which César's answer is: "tacos!" Done well, of course, just like at La Chaparrita.

LA CHAPARRITA TABLES

But, of course, Angelina is not only a devotee of La dama blanca; she is also a savvy businesswoman who designed the beautiful tabletops and much else in the restaurant.



CEREMONY



Menú del banquete de la Ceremonia de la Santa Muerte.

Recipiente izquierda: Pozole (carne de puerco, grano de maíz, chile guajillo, ajo, cebolla y sal con epazote).

Plato derecha: Mole Rojo con Pollo, Frijoles refritos, Tinga de Pollo (pechuga de pollo desmenuzada y cocinada con cebolla, tomate, sal, aceite, chile chipotle y laurel), Tortilla de Maíz.





By Bruce Kraig
Photos by Patty Carroll

Like all cities, Chicago is composed of neighborhoods. Mostly defined by ethnicity, Chicago has been the classic example of immigration and settlement in America. It used to be said that if you wanted to see Chicago's ethnic mosaic, travel down Halsted Street. Poles on the north side, followed by Greeks, Italians, Jews, Czechs (called Bohemians in Chicago and later supplanted by Mexicans), Chinese, Irish, Lithuanians, African Americans, Bulgarians, and Serbs and Croats, among others. Many of these neighborhoods developed around industries large and small that made Chicago an industrial powerhouse. Drab as factories and housing might have been, grimy from industrial pollution and poverty, every neighborhood was enlivened by public art. Mostly in the form of store signs and décor, this vernacular art signaled to a visitor the identity of the neighborhood they were in.

First things first: what is a Chicago hot dog? It is a sausage normally made of finely chopped beef stuffed into a "natural" casing made from sheep's gut. The hot dog is heated by steaming or poaching in a hot water bath, then placed in a top sliced bun and, when fully loaded, is adorned with a slip of mustard, chopped onions, sliced pickle, bright green relish, thin tomato slices, small pickled hot peppers, and optionally a sprinkling of celery salt. Some hot dog stands serve an older style called "Depression Dogs." These are more plainly accoutered with mustard, onions and perhaps relish. One thing joins all stands, or rather the lack of one thing: ketchup. Upon pain of banishment from the city, there is never ketchup on a hot dog—though chili is permitted, grudgingly.

From the 1930s until recently, hot dogs stands were a main vehicle for identifying and signifying the nature of each neighborhood. The signages of these stands told stories about the stand owners, their ideas and aspirations, visions of an existing and imagined world. Smiling dachshunds set into buns, giants holding up hot dogs, huge Chicago-style hot dogs overflowing with toppings, hot dogs with legs and arms dancing and marching, and hand painted menus crowded with items in bright colors adorn the hot dogs stands. Over a number of years, Patty Carroll has photographed these stands, documents of local

cultures and themselves pieces of art. They are the core of our book *Man Bites Dog: Hot Dog Culture in America*. Now just a few years old, the book is sadly more of a historical document, as gentrification and changes in taste have caused a decline in the numbers and variety of old hot dog stands.

The architecture of the traditional hot dog stand is influenced by the kind of food served. These are basically single-food eating establishments, stationary versions of pushcarts or temporary stands. Many are simply small boxes which have remained the same or have been embellished

over time. They are typically not like cafeterias or diners; sit-down, multiple food outlets. Some stands do have a few outdoor tables or, more commonly, counters, but they are not dine-in places. Form and function come together in the practical, folk architecture of the hot dog stand.

Of the décor, there are two basic styles. One is a utilitarian eatery, its signs more descriptive of the food served. The other is a form

of entertainment, with signs and symbols meant to amuse and lift the visitor from the ordinary world. The styles can be graded from spare to baroque. Here, again, the style is a mixture of neighborhood and individual visions. If the hot dog stand represents its neighborhood, then often the décor emanates from the local cultural style and from the individual operator who may or may not come from that locale.

Signs, figural art, and even the architecture of these stands reveal a number of influences. Some are nostalgic. Others are fanciful and celebratory, meant to remove us from this specific time and place like a carnival or street fair. Some are clearly the work of a highly individual character, still others emulate modern corporate feeding places. There are other categories, but all work within circumscribed forms and colors—depictions of the hot dog in particular, food in general, and a red and yellow color scheme. What follows are some of the categories of décor and perhaps meanings of several classic hot dog places.

Neighborhood and Family

Unlike corporate fast food restaurants, Chicago hot dog stands mean more than just places to get food. Here, hot dog stands are symbols of time and place,

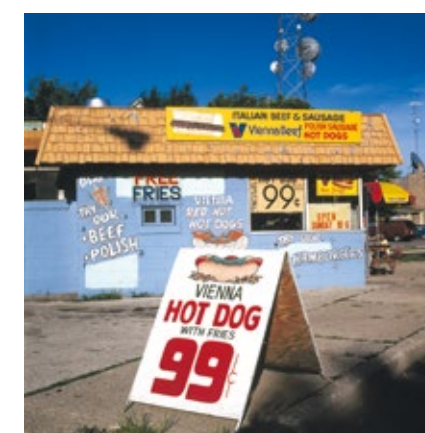
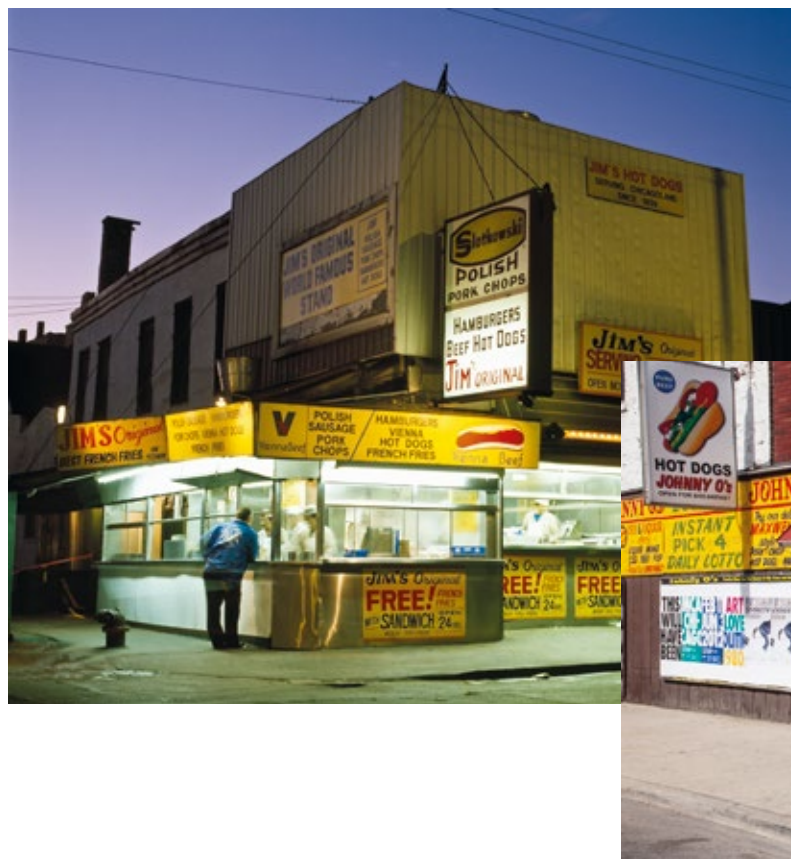
where one-time children recall their family, friends, home, and neighborhood. By its signage and very existence over time, the neighborhood stand represents just that place. It is on these grounds that people argue about the qualities of hot dog stands, the intangibles of warm memory and of taste memory as well. For those raised on the local hot dogs, biting into one evokes the past. And the ones people remember most fondly usually have an antique quality about them, often a kind of grunginess—antithesis to the national chains—that adds to the physical and imagined flavors. It is this quality that creates a fellowship of hot dogger, one reason for the powerful attachment of Chicagoans to their hot dog stands, especially those with which they grew up. It is also the reason why in the past Chicagoans have been resistant to any other kind of hot dog, such as New York style.

Entrepreneurs

Historically, hot dog vendors do not live in the world of large scale food processing and marketing. They are people who live at the fringe of the greater market, and as such an entry-way for immigrants into the American economy. Travel through the city, in the well-worn urban neighborhoods that have not been subjected to gentrification, and there will be stands where they have been for more than fifty years. And so we see the vendors in their businesses, hopeful and at the same time hopeless. Often their signs are crude expressions of those hopes set amid a fading urban life. They await the next customer, most knowing that their dreams stop here. Far from expressing the reality of hard economic facts, many exist as a state of liminality, a world of expectation beyond this one. It is a kind of anti-modernity in a world determined to be modern.

Iconography and Mythologies

To aficionados, the proper preparation of a hot dog is a skill, and the hot dog itself is a work of art. So are the places from which they are sold. Many hot dog joints in their design and décor are forms of vernacular art. The iconography means more than art for art's sake, though it may be that, as well. There are cultural attitudes here often expressed as myths



and symbols. In the traditional sense, anthropomorphized hot dogs and depictions of giant food are all standard themes in folklore. Here they are symbols of the American cornucopia. Hot dog stands and carts, the food itself, and the contexts, represent some of them.

Baroque and Fantastic

Utilitarian design, spare and to the point with simple décor, becomes fanciful and then explodes into baroque artifice. Since hot dog carts and stands have class distinctions inherent in them, the décor can as well. That may mean not elegant décor but *horror vacui*, that is, a desire to decorate every possible vacant space. The interior walls of many stands are covered with pictures or have shelves and glassed in counters filled with knick knacks. Usually they depict neighborhoods in times past, old commercial signs and the local sports teams. Neighborhood community expressed in nostalgia is the main underlying theme. It is one of the enduring ideas that make the Chicago hot dog what it is: part of the city's cultural fabric.

Carnevale

Borrowing Mikhail Bakhtin's definition, hot dog eateries might represent Carnevale, alias Mardi Gras. In traditional European societies, it is a time when the ordered world is turned upside down, and representative of all that is rude, base, and vulgar. Many a hot dog stand expresses this theme. The painted décor, figural and sculptural art is often

Functional

The simple stand is a box with a cut-out window. The vendor remains inside and pushes the product out through the window. The methods of selling reflect differences in culture. The street cart stands in the open, the seller hawking his product, a part of the street crowd. It is the oldest form of selling and the roughest. The stand purveyor to the contrary is sheltered from the crowd, almost anonymous within their dark box. Shielded and permanently fixed, the stand owner's status in these lower reaches of the economy is greater than that of the street hawker. The barrier between seller and customer adds to a sense of ownership and pride of place. This begets art and so stands are decorated in bright colors and plastered with colorful banners.

Hot dog stands and carts that deliberately decorate themselves as throwbacks to another era, latching onto a familiar popular sentiment. That is, they are no longer old neighborhood eateries, bearing naive art, but have

been transformed into some imitations of what they once were. grotesque: smiling Dachshund dogs encased in buns, ready to eat, giant hot dogs dressed as Hercules and his mate with glowing eyes. The loaded up Chicago hot dog is itself a grotesque figure and so are the many representations on stands. Some are more crudely made than others, but the idea is the same: hot dog stands are often places where modernity has not penetrated. Here the old Carnevalesque holds sway, places where formal categories of our culture are ignored. Carnevale represents the wild side, and that is why so many stands are not standardized, why hot dogs are "rude," and why we think of them as "fun." They are.

Abundance

If Carnevale means the grotesque in spirit, it also means huge amounts of food. Street and fast food purveyors tapped into a main American idea: abundance. The quality of food is not necessarily what matters, but the amount, especially large quantities of meat. Hot dog imagery is heavy on the idea of abundance. A statue of Paul Bunyan holding a gigantic hot dog used to stand before a hot dog place in Berwyn, a near Chicago suburb. Pictures of giant hot dogs in buns and "loaded with everything" are everywhere, on and in stands. Windows of stands, whether in strip malls or freestanding, are routinely plastered with so many signs offer-

ing hot dogs specials and other foods that one hardly knows that these are windows at all. The Chicago hot dog often is BIG, and when the primary offering is not, the operator will lay two in one bun for the hungry customer. For Americans, traditionally, more is always better, and cheap is better yet.

Visiting a Chicago hot dog stand is not just about eating a quick snack. It is kind of anthropological immersion into the core of Chicago's traditional culture. This was a place of ethnic working class neighborhoods filled with petty entrepreneurs whose vernacular art represented their ideas about the world. Of all these ideas and myths, those

about food are clear: abundant food based on meat, at low cost, served and eaten quickly, is the American ideal.

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Patty Carroll has been known for her use of highly intense, saturated color photographs since the 1970's. Carroll has exhibited internationally and has won multiple awards including Photolucida's "Top 50" in 2104 and 2017. Her work featured here resulted in the book, *Man Bites Dog*, with Bruce Kraig, a cultural history of the Hot Dog published in 2012 by Alta Mira Press.



BLOOD BUTTONS A STOCKYARDS FASHION TREND REVIVAL

By Paige Resnick

Before nose-to-tail was a fad embraced by guilty meat-eaters who couldn't bear to give up the satisfying marbling of a good rib steak, the notion of using the whole animal was a capitalist venture with the aim of attaining maximum profit. Now, you can find an abundance of nose-to-tail cookbooks lining the shelves of Barnes and Noble; hard-bound, embossed covers, complete with glossy pages, encouraging their readers to find an interested neighbor or three to split the cow with, as if this were a reasonable suggestion for the book's target audience. This showy trend is just the sequel. We have to return to the blood-soaked kill floors of Chicago's former stockyards, where the original, practical whole animal butchery began.

When rail lines began to materialize around the country beginning in the mid-1800s, stockyards sprang up around them, as the transportation of live animals and butchered meat became much more efficient thanks to the newly invented refrigerated train cars. As Chicago became a major railroad center, it also quickly became the epicenter of the meatpacking industry, processing more meat than anywhere else in the world between the Civil War and the 1920s. Known as the "hog butcher for the world," the 375-acre Union Stockyards could accommodate 75,000 hogs, 21,000 cattle and 22,000 sheep at any one time, butchering 400 million livestock between 1865 and 1900.

Meat wasn't the only product to come out of the Union Stockyards. Nearly every part of the animal was somehow used to minimize waste and maximize profit. Hooves were made into glue, livers turned into free lunch for the stockyard workers, and intestines were used for sausage casings and the production of violin strings. But with an average of 39 liters of blood in a single cow and millions of livestock butchered every year, the Union Stockyards had a blood problem; hemacite solved it. Invented by a Dr. W.H. Dibble in the late 1800s, hemacite is a material made from the blood of pigs or cattle mixed with sawdust and subjected to hydra-

lic pressure. Inexpensive, versatile, and virtually indestructible, hemacite was used to make a number of common household products; doorknobs, roller skate wheels, telephone receivers, jewelry, and, perhaps most intriguingly, buttons. These small, dark red fasteners decorated the shirts of millions, carrying the remnants of the slaughterhouse along on a daily basis. Department store advertisements boasted about their hemacite products, encouraging customers to ditch the "plain black" variety.

Despite its widespread use and enticingly creepy aura, hemacite is noticeably absent from much of current and former writing about the stockyards. In the almost 400 page *Illustrated History of the Union Stockyards* (1896) by W. Joseph Grands, there is but one mention of blood buttons on one page: "A percentage of the blood is used for blood sausage; also for a coloring matter for dark colored headcheese. A portion also goes through a crystallizing process and is used in the manufacture of buttons." An online search for "blood buttons" leaves Google utterly perplexed, spitting out results for "I <3 Blood Donation" pins and burgundy-colored leather buttons from specialty Etsy sellers. When I inquired to Dominic A. Pacyga, the Chicago historian who originally piqued my interest in these grisley fasteners, he himself seemed entirely disinterested: "It seems odd to me that the offhand mention of these buttons has proven to be so interesting to people." A search of "hemacite" on eBay yields one result, a blood doorknob, dark chocolate brown with a sunburst design, listed for \$35 (although the seller gave me a private offer for \$20 when I placed it on my watch list, warning me in an email, "A few other interested buyers also received this offer—it won't last long. Hurry and take advantage right away!").

So besides this enthusiastic eBay seller, why have we lost interest in this bloody, cost saving product? Hemacite swiftly lost popularity with the advent of plastic, which was even cheaper to produce, as well as being more flexible and durable. The production of plastic completely replaced hemacite by the mid-

to late-1900s. But in an era when eco-consciousness could be considered a trend, why wouldn't people give up their plastic for a more earth-friendly option? If we are making fabric out of mushrooms, why wouldn't we make buttons out of the blood of animals already slaughtered for their meat?

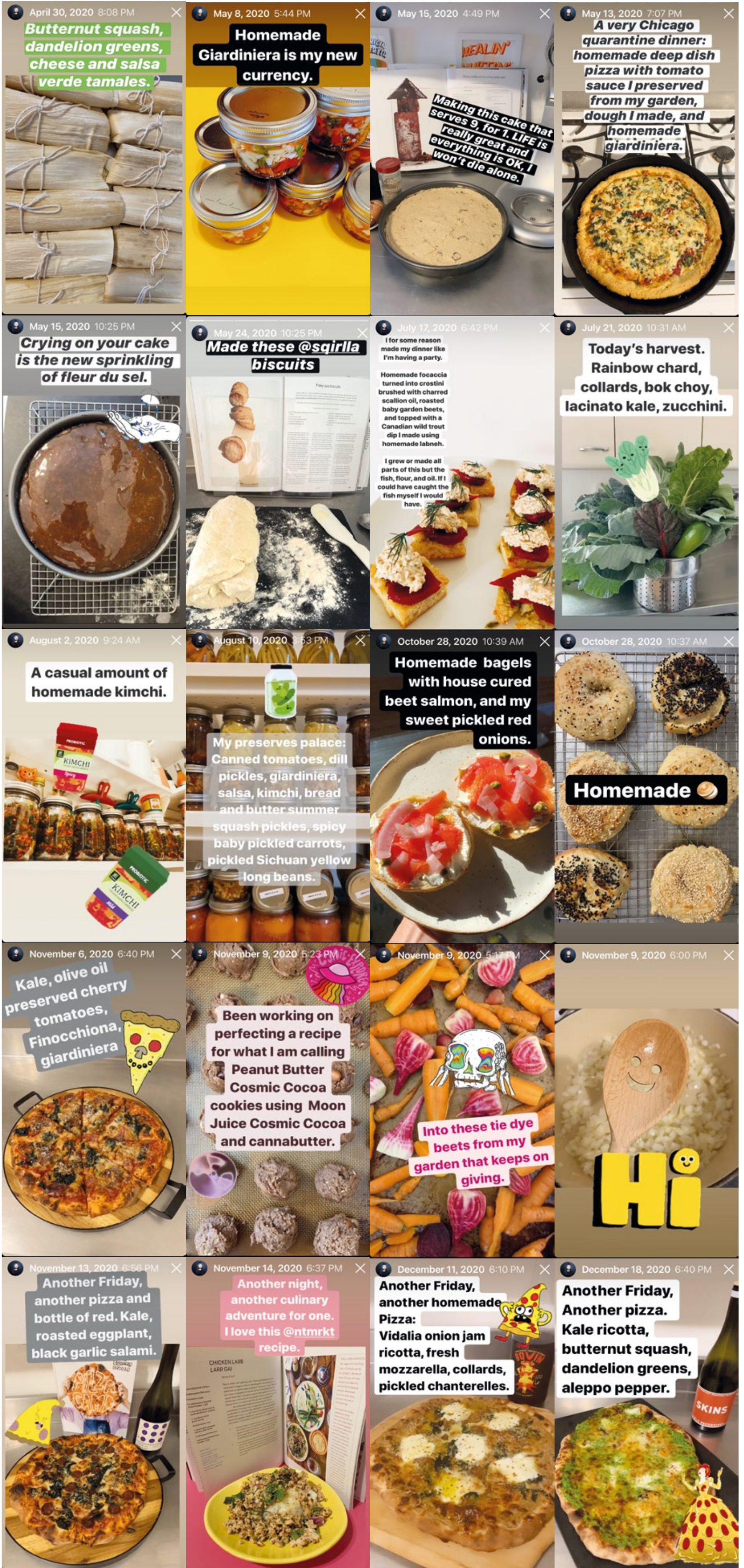
I would argue that blood is having a comeback, and blood buttons will be the next "vintage" fashion trend to see a revival. Social media has been a breeding ground for the popularity of blood-based products, particularly for its Instagram-worthy shock value. The internet has been privy to high-end vampire facials, a combo of microdermabrasion and a "rejuvenating" face mask of your own platelet-rich plasma, made popular by celebrities like Kim Kardashian. More recently, you can watch the mildly horrifying TikTok trend where teen girls spread menstrual blood on their faces for momentary internet fame and the alleged promise of breakout-free skin.

So it's not crazy to think that with the right marketing and influencer support, hemacite could find its way back into the homes of American consumers. I can imagine a world in which DIY blood button kits, complete with intricate silicone molds and individually packaged vials of blood and sawdust, make the rounds on Pinterest and Etsy, where YouTube film videos demoting their newfound craft with click-bait-y titles like "I TRIED A DIY BLOOD BUTTON KIT AND I REGRET EVERYTHING." Perhaps even a spread in *Vogue*, the bird-like shoulders of towering models draped in white dress shirts, red blood buttons popping against the crisp ivory. That's all to say, blood buttons may return as a "retro" trend, restoring a forgotten remnant of the Union Stockyards from a profit-centered past to a chic future.



The Preparation of Meals, the Passage of Time

By Jen Delos Reyes



Jen Delos Reyes is a creative laborer, educator, radical community arts organizer, and author of countless emails. Defiantly optimistic, friend to all birds, and proponent that our institutions can become tender and vulnerable. Delos Reyes currently lives and works in Chicago, IL where she is the Associate Director of the School of Art & Art History at the University of Illinois at Chicago.