

Menupoems: the idea

by Esther Cohen

If you could were able had occasion
with the right word
albacore, amphibian, even elevator
to write on a menu
replacing unappetizing
too many eee's entrée no adjectives not even
fantastic dessert, what would your words be?
Today, anyway, I want ecstasy.

by Renee Armand

I'm sitting alone, a fork
in my hand; men stare at women,
rare cuts of lamb in delectable
clothes, truffled hair (a strand
in the salad, one on the chair).
A bite, then back to the book or
the pen, things of necessity, unlike
diets or men. No need to ensnare;
I'm just eating, amazing, with
this honey mouth, this caviar air.

Eating Out Without

by Michele Battiste

the baby, without the body listing
and pitching off my lap; without quick
fingers that dart into sauces, squeeze
the butter, chuck the bread. Restaurant
dining without mashed biscuit smashed into
cleavage, without Pelligrino toppled
and soaking the puff-pastry shell. Without
the babe, I order the snails. Indulgent —
but not for the butter, the garlic,
the price — solely to feed only myself
with the exquisite, silver, child-sized
fork.

Ordering Dinner in Jiuhuashan

by Nancy Vienneau

The woman handed us each a small card
And disappeared behind a ripple of fabric tacked over a doorway
Leaving us to decipher.
No pictures, no clues,
Impenetrable as the Great Wall.
We left our table and drew back the curtain: a kitchen's
Modest wood counter lined with
Baskets of bok choy and spring onions
Garlic scapes and blue-brown eggs.
We pointed to our wants, the peppers and greens, the steamed rice on the stove
And pressing luck, tucked our hands into armpits,
Flapped and strutted a giddy chicken dance for
Dinner.

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Night Shift

by Amanda Reynolds

There is always someone waiting
for a napkin, a salad, a tray full of grease.

Crimson and clover, over and over
from some anonymous speaker hidden

in a dank corner that no server
has ever dared clamber up a stool to clean.

Three-top in section eight,
one coffee, two creamers,

six screaming kids.

"Waitress! There's a hair in my chicken."

"I get two sides? How about left and right?"
"You want a tip? Third horse, second race."

The biggest insult is always the pennies left,
cold soup, a tipped and flying glass of milk.

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Unnerving

by Caryl Avery

Whenever you reach for hors d'oeuvres
The waiter sadistically swoeuvres
And then they are out of resoeuvres
Which is why they serve drinks — for your noeuvres.

If You Believe That, I'll Tell You Another One

by Caryl Avery

They tell you we're free roaming,
But I tell you we are not.
If we could really roam free,
Would we wind up in a pot?

Would we choose a life in aspic,
Give our gizzards to the cause?
Become Kentucky Fried Chick
Served with corn bread, fries and slaws?

Would we fall upon a skewer,
Dress in bread crumbs from Milan?
No, if we could really roam free
We'd be chicken parmi-gone.

◆*◆*◆*◆*◆*◆*

The Ghostly Bread

by Janice Krasselt Tatter

One night a new loaf of bread disappeared,
its polka-dotted wrapper intact, empty.
Like a hunter, my grandmother searched
for signs of mice, holes in the wrapper.
I was old enough to know that vanishing bread
was as illogical as prayers to the dead
so afterwards I slept with one eye open.

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Potatoes

by Katharyn Howd Machan

for Eric

It's the way he slices clean potatoes, boiled just soft enough
to fry in oil with salt and onions: she's known a dozen men
who can't compare. They might add pepper, garlic, even splashes
of paprika red as midnight lace; but none have had his fine
musician's hands, the flick of wrist that works the spatula
in perfect time, preventing burn. He knows the kitchen
of her dreams, all right, and fills it up with simple spices
he's aware will flower in her mouth. When he carries her
the polished platter, heaped with feast for eye and tongue,
how she sings in praise of fragrant food as good
as winter sleep, his love waiting at the table
for her to raise her fork and eat.

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by Annie Lanzillotto

My heart is crushed tomatoes
I drink Chianti and sit in the heat
Staring at the aged tree arm of Grandma Rose's peach tree,
A rare glimpse at the good life.
My heart is crushed tomatoes
When my American name comes out of her mouth
When her voice says something so sweetly.
My heart is crushed tomatoes
Squeezed through Grandma's hand.
Squeezed into the aluminum pot.
My heart is crushed tomatoes
When she tells me to be quiet.

A Drinker's Love Poem

by Carly Sachs

I could drink the glass of you down, the vodka of you —
how you can lose yourself in anything,
the woo-woo of you, the kamikaze of you, the fuzzy navel of you.
The rocks of you melt into another round, the Maker's Mark of you,
the martini, dirty of you, the extra olives of you, the Sapphire eyes of you,
the Effen body of you,
the make it a double of you until we order tequila shots past the midnight
of you, no salt, no limes,
the pure scotch of you, the peaty sex of you, the my father of you,
the Freud of you, the Oedipus of you. Mornings of bloody mary sting of you,
Afternoons of the perfect manhattan of you, the sleepless city of you.
I want the distillation of you, the fermentation of you, the rim of my finger
on the glass of you.



Tête à Tête

by Meredith Escudier

We order different things, or try to,
a glass of wine, a bottle for two.
When our plates come, he lifts his fork
and dips into mine, disturbing the display
of a well-ordered entrée.
My women friends go berserk
at the perceived intrusion.
How possessive, presumptuous
ill-considered, they find.
But who cares? I don't mind, plus
we've been married all this time...

◆*◆*◆*◆*◆*◆*

Treat

by Eleanor Gaffney

It was always
Welch's grape jelly bleeding
into soft white bread
and milk for dunking Oreos.

She'd pull out the speckled tray
of the white enamel stove
and I'd climb up
the step stool.

Perched beside her
as she washed dishes,
neither of us knew
a whit of what was to come

or how simple ritual
would sustain.

My Last Day, and Then, My First, Or Café Loup

by Esther Cohen

APPETIZER

Years and years and then again, years,
I've been working one of those
long hours Advil in my bag sometimes
wonderful work never enough money, help,
support from outside jobs.
At last I left.

ENTRÉE

To celebrate, we go to Café Loup.
Perfect black and white room,

Prix fixe \$28 including peach tart
with abundantly real whipped cream.
Magic owner Ardes gives us French Fries
for our table. We devour them.

DESSERT

The evening becomes one of those
light pink restaurant nights. Food
was what we wanted. Even strangers
from the next table joined us.

AFTER DINNER DRINK

Good sign, or good meal?

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What To Do When Your Meal Is Over:
send us *your* menupoems.
menupoems@alimentumjournal.com

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