

SITTING DOWN TO WRITE a letter as the new editor of *Gastronomica* is a thrilling, and perhaps somewhat terrifying, experience. Darra Goldstein, the founding editor, has left large shoes to fill. As a reader, I have long regarded *Gastronomica* as one of the most important spaces for food writing. As incoming editor, I aspire to bring you a journal that continues to feature the most innovative scholarship and writing in the field. I envision *Gastronomica* as a “kitchen table,” a space where writers and scholars come together to engage with critical, necessary, and sometimes even uncomfortable debates about the political, social, and moral dimensions of food and eating, not just in our own homes and backyards but throughout the world. My goal is that this forum, in turn, provokes debates among readers. I have always felt that because food is a mediator between the personal and the public, it offers a unique vantage point from which to investigate fundamental questions about the human condition, whether that is by thinking about the place of technology and science in our daily lives, by considering the many different ways people throughout the world balance pleasure and responsibility, or by contemplating how food is always and in every possible way thoroughly infused not just with nutrients but with moral values. In other words, I want us to peek into other people’s pantries, see their dirty dishes, and sit with them at their tables to discuss and understand their worlds and experiences from their perspectives. This is not merely culinary voyeurism but rather a collaborative project of commensality where we all learn from one another and where “good food” is really about finding “good” company.

I was trained as a social anthropologist and have long been fascinated by the political dimensions of food consumption. My work as a scholar is focused on the Soviet Union and post-Soviet Europe, but my interests as an editor and reader extend far beyond this subject. At the University of California, Santa Cruz, where I teach in the anthropology department, I am surrounded by a community of scholars known for producing provocative, multidisciplinary work on food and agriculture. I am proud to be part of a scholarly community that has, for six decades, shaped food studies research and set the gold standard for social and environmental justice. UC Santa Cruz has generously supported my efforts to assume this editorial position, and I am pleased to be working with an editorial team of graduate students.

As the incoming editor of *Gastronomica*, I feel incredibly privileged to follow in the footsteps of Darra Goldstein, who has been both an inspiration and a mentor to me, just as she has for many of you. As a graduate student, I became fascinated by Russian food culture, and not surprisingly, my studies led me to Darra’s path-breaking work in Russian literature and on food.

Beyond her work as a scholar, Darra has defined the field of food studies as the editor of *Gastronomica* and as series editor of the California Studies in Food and Culture series. For more than a decade, Darra has cultivated a community of authors dedicated to probing all dimensions of food, cooking, and eating. *Gastronomica* transformed how we think about food and food practices, teaching us to see

food practices as complex cultural phenomena. I am thrilled to carry the journal forward.

It pleases me that our first issue is coming out at the beginning of summer, a season filled with community celebrations, vacations spent with family and friends, and the gradual transition to autumn. There is something palpably different about summer, a time when daily routines slow down to accommodate trips to the lake or beach, relaxing picnics, and enjoyable meals of fresh produce *al fresco*. It is also a time often associated with new, if not fleeting, love affairs.

This issue nicely captures the simple pleasures of summer, as the essays, poems, and articles collectively narrate a summertime romance with food. India Mandelkern's essay, "Does the Foodie Have a Soul?" begins with a look at the deep historical roots of our love affair with food—and how we love talking about food. Erica Cavanagh's essay, "Come and Eat," poignantly expresses the joy of company that is encapsulated in a simple invitation to a meal, while the essays by Jean Ende, Lawrence-Minh Bui Davis, and Juliet Wilson provocatively show that food can just as easily be an impediment to intimacy. Expressions of familial love and the power of food traditions to keep families together are featured in the pieces by Greg Patent, Leigh Donaldson, Mary Lyn Koval, and Gina Ulysse. Helen Labun Jordan, Jared Demick, Sharon Hunt, Jake Young, and Courtney Balestier take us further afield by revisiting places that hold special places in their hearts. Nicole McFadden, Hillary Fogerty, Emily Bright, Barbara Crooker, and Kate Lebo offer declarations of love and appreciation for the beauties of food, even as Michael Lawrence provides a cautionary tale about the consequences of unreciprocated declarations. The two feature articles build on these themes of pleasure and intimacy. Judith Fan offers a fascinating account of the "gastronomical revolution" that has emerged in Peru as part of a larger project of social change to cultivate a new form of national solidarity. Love of nation and cultural patrimony come through clearly in her article. Kimberly Voss and Lance Speere examine the formation of the Association of Food Journalists by women food editors in an effort to codify and legitimize the ethics of their profession at a time when women's food writing was largely disparaged and women were excluded from professional organizations for journalists. As Voss and Speere show, an abiding commitment to their professional craft motivated these women to pursue food writing, a love and passion that we can all, perhaps, appreciate.

I hope you enjoy this issue, and I hope the various pieces remind you of your own summertime loves, perhaps inspiring new romantic thoughts and longings that will become treasured memories. Of course, summertime and summer loves are fleeting—and autumn and the next issue of *Gastronomica* are around the corner. Until then, may you eat and drink well, and enjoy the many pleasures of good company.

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