

"The finest overview and user's guide to the wild and wonderful world of things people cheerfully put in their mouths in various places around the world."

— Anthony Bourdain



As featured on *Good Morning Australia*

Extreme Cuisine

The Weird & Wonderful Foods That People Eat

by **Jerry Hopkins**—#1 New York Times Bestselling Author of *No One Here Gets Out Alive* and *Elvis: A Biography*

foreword by **Anthony Bourdain**—author of *A Cook's Tour* and *Kitchen Confidential*

photographs by **Michael Freeman**

Portions of this book have appeared in magazine articles and a previous coffee table version entitled *Strange Foods*. Here is what the media had to say about it:

"...a visually stunning volume that is part history, part travelogue and part cookbook."
—*AsiaWeek*

"If you are sure you can partake of all the lurid, stomach-turning photographs, this is actually a fascinating detour into the wilder culinary regions."
—*The Sunday Times (Singapore)*

"It's delightfully disgusting."
—*Outside*

"Colorfully graphic photographs aside, he offers sound historical background and cultural insight into people's culinary habits."
—*San Francisco Examiner*

"Hopkins and Freeman won't leave you hungry. In addition to fine photos, the book provides a breezy yet detailed narration, plus recipes, historical notes, lots of cultural and anthropological background and explanations why some food may sound repulsive but be good for you—or at least good for whoever is willing to taste it."
—*zolatimes.com*

"As this is not a book for the squeamish, it should make a perfect gift for them."
—*The Nation (Bangkok)*

"Perhaps this is the best food book for your friend on a diet."
—*Honolulu magazine*

To my wife Lamyai

Extreme Cuisine

**The Weird & Wonderful
Foods That People Eat**

by Jerry Hopkins

foreword by Anthony Bourdain

photographs by Michael Freeman



PERIPLUS

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Cover: The agave "worm" at the end of a bottle of Mexican mezcal is in fact a moth pupa.

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I FIRST MET JERRY HOPKINS over a plate of crispy-fried frog skins in Bangkok. I was midway through another six week gastro-tour of Asia and I thought it was a good idea to meet the man whose book had for some time served as my virtual Fodors guide to the pleasures and terrors of extreme cuisine.

Before setting out on the road to film a television show of my adventures, I eagerly consulted his definitive collection of unusual eats, itemizing, country by country, what I absolutely had to try while in each place. Vietnam? Gotta have that *ho bit long* (half-term fetal duck egg). Singapore? Don't miss out on the scorpions! After a few years of this, when offered a spicy fry-up of crickets or worms, I'm likely to say, "Bugs? That is so last week!"

This book is the finest overview and users' guide to the wild and wonderful world of things people cheerfully put in their mouths in various places around the world. It's one thing to hear, third hand, that they drink snake wine in much of Asia—it's another to actually see the stuff—a nest of coiled serpents, a bird, still in plumage, trapped among them, in the bottom of a bottle. This book benefits from lush—even appetizing photography. It is quite another thing to actually try the stuff.

Which I actually recommend everyone do. The world is a big, scary, beautiful, dirty, multi-colored, multi-cultural, sometimes cruel, sometimes nauseating—but always marvelous place. People eat differently around the world. While a gourmet from Indiana might turn his nose up at bird's nest bat, many Southeast Asians would be truly horrified by a Kraft single. Which, truly, is more strange and terrible to the greater part of humanity—the simple charms of a worm taco, or the terrifying head we call a Grand Slam Breakfast?

Fortunately, Jerry Hopkins approaches his subject with a pure heart, free of prejudice—taking clear delight in his subject. If there is one sin in the world of gastronomy, it is lack of curiosity, and Jerry, in his book, and in person, makes readily apparent his interest and excitement in his subject.

I could not have written *A Cook's Tour* without this book. There is so much I would have missed. And experience has shown me that no matter how frightening a dish may look on the page, in front of you, on the table, with a proud host watching your first tasting—and the accompaniment of much local beverage, it's almost always worth the ride. For truly—how bad can it be? Compared to an olestra greased faux potato chip, Cheez Whiz or pineapple pizza, a lot of this stuff is pretty damn good. One of the surprises of my trips has been the sadness, even pity with which poor citizens of faraway places receive sketchy accounts of what Americans put regularly in their mouths. This from nations whose peoples are traditionally insectivores. And there's a lot to be said for their argument. People enjoy and even celebrate with a lot of what you see in this book. And I'd eat most of it with a smile compared to the standard fare at most midwestern malls. While a lot of this stuff skirts the fine Asian line between food and medicine (shark fin, bear bile, snake blood), some of it is quite tasty. My frog skins with Jerry were delicious.

So dig in. Enjoy. Eat without fear or prejudice, secure in the knowledge that millions of people have been enjoying this fare for centuries without ill effect. Get away from your hotel dining room—and the tourist terrordomes and range wild and free. Eat. Eat adventurously. Miss nothing. It's all here in these pages.

If nothing else, when the money runs out and you find yourself cadging free drinks at your local saloon, you can always re-tell the anecdote of the time you ate the poisonous blowfish liver. That's usually good for at least one drink.

MY SECRET TRAINING began as a child, at an English boarding school. I realise that few readers will truly appreciate the significance of this, but survival depended heavily on being able to eat, for weeks at a time, a food regime that was modelled loosely on that of Victorian prisons. A cartoonist called Ronald Searle once produced a book about these very English institutions, and to my mind no one has bettered his description of school dinner as "the piece of cod which passeth all understanding." There can be no finer education of the palate to accept the impossible than the one I and my fellow inmates received, and for that I am, as was intoned before each meal, "truly grateful."

As a photographer, I put my catholic tastes to work and began, many years ago, shooting the weird culinary habits that I came across. Much of this was in Asia, not because the region became something of a speciality of mine, but because the southern Chinese and their neighbors, particularly in Thailand, Laos and Vietnam, have a greater fascination with unusual foods than any other culture I know. So where more appropriate should I meet Jerry for the first time than in Bangkok, where we found that we shared many of the same tastes.

With very few exceptions, I ate what you see photographed here. Keeping or consuming the property I should explain, is considered one of the perks of photography, and where a fashion photographer might get the clothes at the end of the shoot (or model if lucky), I would be left with the gooey parts. Yes, that includes the rats and the bats and the buffalo's penis—two-and-a-half feet, by the way, when flaccid. My only regret is that the publisher excised some of the best bits on the grounds of common decency. Surely you wouldn't have been offended by the breakfast of raw chopped dog, flavoured with its bile? On second thoughts, perhaps you would.

Michael Freeman

"He was a bold man who first swallowed an oyster"

—Jonathan Swift

ABOUT 150 YEARS AGO, an eccentric English gentleman named Francis Trevelyan Buckland invited a group of influential Earls and Viscounts and Marquis to dinner and in an attempt to expand their dietary horizons placed the freshly-killed haunch of an African beast on the table at London's famed Aldersgate Tavern. It was, he said, eland, a large antelope, and he thought they should be imported and bred on the green meadows of Great Britain, for the gustatory delight and nutritional benefit of all its citizens. The crusade that followed the dinner attracted considerable attention in the daily press, but no one seemed much interested in taking it any further, and the eland remained in Africa.

Buckland was not discouraged. He was raised by eccentric and imaginative parents and as a child he had eaten dog, crocodile, and garden snails, a habit he kept for life. To a fellow undergraduate at Oxford he confessed that earwigs were "horribly bitter," although the worst-tasting thing was the mole, until he ate a bluebottle fly. Later, guests at his London home were served panther, elephant trunk soup, and roast giraffe and it was reliably reported that whenever an animal died at the London Zoo, the curator called the Buckland home.

Buckland pressed on, forming, in 1860, the Acclimatisation Society of the United Kingdom followed by sister societies in Scotland, the Channel Islands, France, Russia, the United States, the Hawaiian Islands, Australia, and New Zealand. His goal was the same: to introduce new food sources worldwide. In the end, his efforts failed. The world's dinner table did not welcome Tibetan yak, Eurasian beaver, parrots and parakeets, the Japanese sea slug, steamed kangaroo, seaweed jelly, silkworms, birds' nest soup, or sinews of the Axis deer, and Buckland died in 1880 in relative obscurity, where he remains today.

Since Buckland's failed effort, there have been several campaigns, both public and private, underwritten by the United Nations and individual countries as well as by ranchers, academics, and businessmen, to introduce "exotic" foods to the closed diet of what generally is called the "west," but in fact is epitomized by the gastronomical habits of Europe and North America. (And hereafter will be called Euro-America.) Nearly all have been unsuccessful and many were opposed vehemently. Yet the debate continued.

"There are no more than one dozen species of domestic animals which are major food producers around the world," Russell Kyle argued logically in *A Feast in the Wild*, a book published in 1987. "If one adds the species with limited, local importance, such as the yak in the Himalayas, or the alpaca in the Andes, there are still fewer than twenty domestic species altogether with a major role as food producers. And yet the world as a whole contains over 200 species of herbivorous animals from the size of a hare upwards. Why have men apparently never considered making more deliberate use of so many wild animals for food production?"

Ten years later, in 1996, came "mad cow disease" and when British beef was banned by the European Union, the media published and broadcast stories about ostrich and kangaroo and other beef substitutes. As British Airways added ostrich medallions to its first class menu and other unusu-

protein sources appeared in European supermarkets, and more wild game became available in North America, a growing number started taking "strange foods" seriously. What was called "Extreme Cuisine" by the producers of a television series of that name for America's Food Channel suddenly became all the rage.

In Southeast Asia, Australia, and the United States, struggling alligator and crocodile farms found new markets, domestic and foreign. In Singapore, an established investment service began offering ostrich "futures": invest in a pair of breeders and reap the profits in the sale of their offspring, ranging from twenty to forty a year. From Sydney to Nairobi to Los Angeles, "jungle" restaurants, where gamagrass and other exotic dishes were served, became an overpriced trend. At the same time, a few naturalists made an interesting pitch to environmentalists, arguing that the way to save threatened species was to give them commercial value: guarantee their survival by eating them; once there was a market for these beasts as a food, they suggested, people would start breeding endangered species instead of killing them. A dubious argument, bearing in mind the value given to the tiger, the elephant, and many other threatened animals.

Through history and around the world, what is eaten has varied greatly from time to time and place to place, from one culture to another. Much of the dietary change has resulted from history's "natural" development—for example, the Portuguese introduced Brazilian chili peppers to Asian cuisine when they started trading there and Marco Polo packed spices and teas back to Europe following his first journeys to China. Similar change continues today as modern travelers return home with a newfound taste for foods experienced abroad, and as more migrants from one part of the world to another take their distinctive cuisines along with them; thus, most if not all Euro-American cities now have sushi bars and Thai restaurants (to name just two examples), unknown only a few years ago. Over the centuries, many other factors have influenced diet, from religious beliefs to hunger to flavor to status to medicinal (and, some insist, aphrodisiacal) properties and more.

What it all comes down to was stated simply and eloquently by M.F.K. Fisher, arguably the best writer about food in the 20th century, who wrote in a book aptly titled *How to Cook a Wolf* (published in 1942). "Why," she asked, "is it worse, in the end, to see an animal's head cooked and prepared for our pleasure than a thigh or a tail or a rib? If we are going to live on other inhabitants of this world we must not bind ourselves with illogical prejudices, but savor to the fullest the beasts we have killed.

"People who feel that a lamb's cheek is gross and vulgar when a chop is not are like the medieval philosophers who argued about such hair-splitting problems as how many angels could dance on the head of a pin. If you have these prejudices, ask yourself if they are not built on what you may have been taught when you were young and unthinking, and then if you can, teach yourself to enjoy some of the parts of an animal that are not commonly prepared."

Calf brains, sheep tongues, chicken feet, pig entrails, fish heads, the list goes on and on. Add "unusual" species such as ants and termites, beetles, bats, water buffalo, algae, cactus, rats and mice, flowers, elephants, whales, camel, bear, grubs, and earthworms, the start of another long list. And, yes, add all those protein sources that so many regard only as pets: cats and dogs, hamsters and gerbils, horses, exotic birds and fish. How many of us would push ourselves away from the table when such dishes were served, as the late Ms. Fisher said, because of what we learned when we were young?

All that said, much regional individuality remains in the world. In Taiwan, serpent blood is a tonic and many in the southwestern part of the United States swear by rattlesnake steak, just as kangaroo meat is a principal part of the diet for many Australian aborigines and appears on restaurant menus in dozens of Aussie restaurants. A small neighborhood in Hanoi and several in Seoul specialize in dog dishes (not to be confused with dishes from which dogs eat). Bulls' and sheep's testicles called Rock Mountain Oysters are accepted in the American west, while in China, pigs' ears, fish eyes, and roost

wattle are chop-sticked up with gusto. In Southeast Asia, fried locusts are regarded as tasty snacks just as monkey stew is a staple in parts of Africa and the Amazon, guinea pig is an essential protein source in Peru, ants and termites are cherished in Africa and South America, yak milk is made into butter in Tibet and then added to tea, and horsemeat has an avid, centuries-old following in France with another market expanding in Japan. These foods, accepted in one region, are rejected by diners elsewhere.

I've followed Ms. Fisher's lead and tried to make this book a guide to how the other half dines and why. I'm no Frank Buckland, but over a period of twenty-five years I've augmented my meat-and-potatoes upbringing in the United States to try a wide variety of regional specialties, from steamed water beetles, fried grasshoppers and ants, to sparrow, bison and crocodile, the latter three served as *casseroles*, grilled, and in a curry, respectively. I've eaten deep-fried bull's testicles in Mexico, live shrimp sushi in Hawaii, mice cooked over an open wood fire in Thailand, pig stomach soup in Singapore, minced water buffalo and yak butter tea in Nepal, stir-fried dog tongue and "five penny wine" in China, the boiled blood of a variety of animals in Vietnam, and pate made from my son's placenta when I lived (and he was born) in the UK. This list, too, goes on, and I share some of these experiences in the chapters following, along with many recipes. After all, no matter what humans eat by choice or circumstance, the one thing all the dishes have in common is that they must be prepared properly.

Of course, there are some people who oppose such exploration. Conservationists are concerned correctly, about the disappearance of endangered species. Others worry about animal rights, objecting to the manner in which even non-threatened species are penned or caged and slaughtered. A third group—called "bunny-huggers" in wildlife circles—cries out when people eat animals that they, the protestors, call pets, reminding me of Alice at the banquet in *Through the Looking Glass*, who turned away the mutton because it was impolite to eat food you'd been introduced to.

I will not engage animal rights people in debate. Their point of view is valid and, in fact, carries incalculable weight in a world where resources and environment are being threatened in a manner that is as alarming as it is unrelenting. Many argue that this alone will expand our gastronomical frontiers whether we like it or not. As Mr. Kyle wrote, cattle are notoriously unkind to the earth and in time there won't be enough pasture to accommodate the world demand, forcing us to dine on alternative protein sources. The one mentioned most often? Insects.

An earlier version of this book was published in 1999 as *Strange Foods: Bush Meat, Bats, and Butterflies*. That material has been updated and expanded and nineteen new chapters have been added along with a preface by noted chef Anthony Bourdain and an afterword that considers such recent food-related threats as SARS.

I don't insist that you add ostrich or dog or grasshopper to your menu, although I do suggest that you consider expanding your diet to include something outside the ordinary. However, as a frequent traveler, I do urge anyone who shares my passion for new places and peoples to heed that old but good advice about "when in Rome, do as the Romans do." Try some of the local food; I believe that it's the path to understanding the culture better than any other besides learning the language, marrying a native, or converting to the local religion.

Of course, species on the endangered list are not recommended, except under special circumstances. (There are chapters on elephants and whales.) There is no need. There are too many other tasty choices.

There also is the matter of curiosity and the pleasant surprise that frequently follows it. "I have always believed, perhaps too optimistically," Ms. Fisher wrote in a book called *An Alphabet for*

Gourmets (1949), "that I would like to taste everything once, never from such hunger as made friends of mine in France in 1942 eat guinea-pig ragout, but from pure gourmandism."

Remember the person who first tasted the oyster. It's not just dinner, it's an adventure.



CHAPTER ONE

mammals

NO ONE IS SURE what the first humans ate, but surely other mammals were soon included in the diet if they weren't there from the beginning. In Neanderthal times, for example, the mammoth played a large role—courageously brought down with spears, then feeding, say, a dozen or more caves full of people for maybe a week or more. Many drawings found in such caves in Europe, North America and elsewhere show men hunting great, hairy beasts and archeological digs have uncovered the well-chewed bones of dozens of animals to show that meat-eating has a long history.

Since then, of course, the number of mammals added to the diet multiplied as quickly as the number of species, while, in time, hunting, transport, and marketing advances were made enabling all types of meat to reach a larger audience, in smaller, more manageable portions. In other words, it is not necessary nowadays to deal with a dead mammoth outside the cave when there are steaks in the freezer and quarter-pounders at the corner fast food outlet.

That said, despite the advances and a current trendiness in the consumption of some exotic foods—mostly game meat—it can be argued that the number of protein sources for a growing number of people is shrinking rather than expanding, at least proportionately. Through history, humans have eaten virtually everything that walked, including each other. However, if it is true that in recent times the number and variety of mammals consumed in many parts of the world have increased, the consumption of the four herbivorous mammals that provide eighty per cent of the world's protein—cattle, pigs, sheep, and goats—has become more prevalent. Thus, as the number of species being added to the menu goes up, the proportions, worldwide, are running the other way.

That many mammals have disappeared from the menu can be explained in part by the unfortunate number of species added to the endangered lists, and their removal from the approved diet may be applauded. At the same time, the Gang of Four—beef, pork, lamb, and goat—has gained ground because of fashion and the outside influence that accompanies the press of history. In Japan, for example, meat was virtually untouched before the country opened up to the West in the mid-19th century, and in China, where bean curd was first produced some 2,000 years ago and meat-free diets were commonplace, McDonald's outlets now outnumber vegetarian restaurants in Beijing.

Notions of class and caste exerted other forces. Some animal foods, such as possum in the United States, became associated with the poor, the "lower class," and thus were not accepted at "better tables, just as what is called "bush meat" in Africa and "bush tucker" in Australia traditionally was consumed by ethnic minorities, thus was shunned by those who fancied themselves fancier. At the same time, a number of specific mammal parts—blood, brains, certain innards, and sexual organs, for example—were disdained because they were not considered a "proper" food for the proper lady and gentleman.

Certain religions also played and continue to play a role. Hindus do not eat beef, Muslims and

Orthodox Jews do not eat pork, and not so long ago many Catholics ate only fish on Fridays. Some of these guidelines and taboos have their origins in practicality. Pork has been banned for thousands of years in the Middle East and remains on the taboo list for many hundreds of millions today because it spoils quickly; modern refrigeration has eliminated most of the threat, but the belief remains in force. It may also be argued that beef in modern India is an inefficient food source because grazing cattle would take away land required by more productive crops such as rice and vegetables; before 800 B.C. however, when India was lightly populated, beef was welcome at mealtimes.

In the chapters that follow, I talk about mammals ranging in size from the mouse and the bat to the elephant and the whale, including animals both domesticated and wild. I've also selected foods from all corners of the earth, from horse tartar in France to monkey stew in West Africa to dog soup in Korea to yak butter tea in Tibet to grilled lamb's testicles in the United States.

Some of the chapters may offend Euro-Americans because the animals are regarded by many as pets or partners. Perhaps with no other food is the gastronomical gap made clearer than when what is called "man's best friend," the dog, finds a welcome place on a plate in Asia and only on a lap in Europe and America. Second to the dog is the horse as man's closest companion and helper through history. Yet they are regarded highly at mealtime in many countries, as are cats, hamsters, gerbils, and guinea pigs.

I also include chapters about animals on the world's endangered lists. I am not irresponsible. First, all have a long history as food that continues to the present time, so they cannot be denied from any survey that has any pretensions to historical comprehension. More important, they give me a chance to argue that some of these animals are not always threatened, depending on location and circumstance.

I have not deliberately tried to offend. Southeast Asians adore grilled field mouse and rat, the Chinese put a lot of faith in beverages and soups made from animal penises, a recent Indian prime minister began each day with a glass of his own urine, and on a program produced by the BBC in London in 1997, human placenta was blended into a delicious pate. (As did I twenty-five years earlier.) What is strange in one place, in another is merely lunch.

Where's the beef?

The figures speak for themselves, says World Bank economist Nicholas Stern, who has been crunching numbers to determine how much the developed world pours down the toilet in farm subsidies.

The average cow in Europe, he concluded, was subsidized to the tune of US\$2.50 a day, while the figure for Japan's prized herds was \$7 per animal.

While the world's rain forests are denuded to create pasture or produce grain for the same quarter of a pounders.

In time, he thinks, the protein choices must change.

Dogs & Cats

In most Euro-American countries (except in some immigrant communities), dog is man's best friend or so they say. Which explains why so many westerners get so upset when this animal is eaten so matter-of-factly in many Asian and Latin American countries, and why a one time movie sex goddess in France, Brigitte Bardot and so many animals rights groups campaign so vigorously to get the eating of Fido banned.

Ms. Bardot gained prominence in her crusade when the animal rights foundation bearing her name urged soccer fans not to attend the soccer World Cup in Seoul if eating dogs was not outlawed and all the restaurants in the city offering dog on the menu weren't closed. While hers was a valid point of view shared by many in the so-called West, in other parts of the world, especially in numerous Asian countries, it was regarded as incomprehensible. Not only in Korea, but in most of southern China (including Hong Kong) and much of Southeast Asia, as well as in parts of Latin America, dog was just an available and affordable protein source.

There were precedents for Ms. Bardot's proposed ban, however. In 1988, the South Korean government ruled that restaurants serving dog soup, or *poshintang* (literally, "body-preservation stew"), closed to present a better image for foreigners attending the Olympic Games. Ten years later in 1998, Philippine President Fidel Ramos signed into law a statute banning the killing of dogs for food, although its extreme popularity in the north made success of enforcement questionable.

Similar action has been taken elsewhere. In 1989, two Cambodian refugees living in southern California were charged with animal cruelty for eating a German Shepherd puppy. The charges eventually were dropped when a judge ruled that the dog was killed by the acceptable practices of slaughtering agricultural livestock. That did not satisfy animal activists who later the same year convinced the California legislature into passing a law making it a misdemeanor to eat a dog or a cat punishable by up to six months in jail and a fine of US\$1,000. Later still, the law was amended to include any animal traditionally kept as a pet or companion. Presumably, those charged with enforcing this law were expected to look the other way when 4-H Club members led their prize cattle and pigs to slaughter, animals they had raised from birth and for whom they frequently developed great affection. Furthermore, rabbits could still be killed and eaten and so could tropical fish, because they were legally categorized as livestock and fish, not pets.

There is no mystery why so many Euro-Americans oppose the eating of dog. There have been too many dog heroes in literature, TV and film—in stories by Jack London and dozens more, in movies like *Rin Tin Tin*, *Lassie*, *Benji* and Disney's enduring *101 Dalmatians*, in virtually everything well large in popular culture, from the heroic K-9 Corps in the US military to the St. Bernard who carries a flask of life-saving grog to humans lost in the Alps. In addition, the dog—believed to be the domestication of a Neolithic Asiatic wolf—through the years has proven his usefulness to man because of its speed, hearing, sense of smell, hunting instinct, and herding abilities.

All that said, dog has been a welcome dish across much of the world's history and geography. The earliest recorded eating of dog goes back to Confucius's time in China, circa 500 B.C., when the *Li Ji*, a handbook of ancient ritual translated in 1885, offered recipes for delicacies prepared on ceremonial occasions. One of the dishes was canine, fried rice with crispy chunks cut from a wolf's breast, served with dog liver basted in its own fat, roasted and seared over charcoal. During the same period, a

emperor who wanted more warriors, encouraged childbirth by awarding what was described in the literature of the time as a succulent puppy to any woman bearing a boy.

The Chinese (and other Asians) regarded dog meat as more than a culinary treat. It was considered to be very good for the yang, the male, hot, extroverted part of human nature, as opposed to the female, cool, introverted yin. It was believed to "warm" the blood and thus was consumed in greater frequency during the winter months. As early as the 4th century B.C., a Chinese philosopher named Mencius praised dog meat for its pharmaceutical properties, recommending it for liver ailments, malaria and jaundice. Along with many other foods, it also was believed to enhance virility. The Chinese also served a sort of dog wine, believed to be a remedy for weariness.

Later, the Manchu Dynasty that ruled China from the 17th century banned dog meat, declaring its consumption barbarian. However, southern Chinese continued to eat it and Sun Yat-sen's oppositionist Kuomintang followers began their meetings by cooking dog, believing the act symbolized their anti-Manchu revolution. The code name was "Three-Six Meat," a play on the Chinese word for the number nine, which rhymed with the word for dog. Even today in Hong Kong, where since 1950 it has been illegal to catch or kill dogs or to possess their meat, butchers and customers use the expression "Three-Six Meat" when selling and buying it. Because Hong Kong Chinese are from southern China where dog is still regarded as a staple, enforcement of the law has been negligible, punishment (up to six months in prison and a fine of US\$125) has been lax, and the law is widely ignored, especially during the winter months when demand is greatest.

It is well known that the American Indian originated in what is now Mongolia, and it's believed that they brought the dog with them when they crossed the Bering Sea and eventually settled the wilderness that became North America. When European explorers and settlers arrived in the New World, they counted seventeen dog varieties, many of them raised specifically as food, although it was noted that not all tribes indulged. Those that did included the Iroquois and several Algonquian tribes of the central and eastern woodlands and the Utes of Utah, who cooked and ate dog meat before performing sacred ceremonial dances. While the very name of the Arapahoe means "dog-eater." David Comfort writes in *The First Pet History of the World* that puppies were generally preferred because of their tenderness: "They were fattened with a special mixture of pemmican and dried fruit. After harvest with a tomahawk, the puppy was suspended upside down from a lodge pole, and the carcass hand-marinated with buffalo fat. Then it was skewered."

Many of the early European arrivals contentedly, or at least circumstantially, joined in. Cabeza de Vaca, the Spanish explorer, was shipwrecked in the Gulf of Mexico and wandered for eight years on foot throughout the American Southwest, eating canine regularly. In Christopher Columbus's time Mexico's only domesticated livestock were the turkey and the dog and according to a history written in the 16th century, the two meats were served in a single dish. Meriwether Lewis, leader of the Lewis and Clark Expedition that opened the American Northwest, wrote in his journal in 1804, "Having been so long accustomed to live on the flesh of dogs, the greater part of us have acquired a fondness for it and our original aversion for it overcome by reflecting that while we subsisted on that food we were fatter, stronger, and in general enjoyed better health than at any period since leaving buffalo country." As recently as 1928, the Norwegian explorer Roald Amundsen ate his sled dogs in the Arctic in his attempt to reach the North Pole, although that was, admittedly, for reasons of survival and not by choice.

Nor was canine cuisine limited to Asia and North America. For at least a thousand years Polynesians cherished the *poi* dog, so called because the animal's diet was vegetarian, consisting largely of *poi*, or cooked taro root. This was one of the food animals taken to what is now Hawaii on primitive sailing ships from Tahiti and the Marquesas (along with the pig). At large feasts in Hawaii

in the early 1800s, hosted by local royalty and attended by sailors from England and the United States as many as 200-400 dogs were served at a single sitting.

In 1870, a cookbook was published in France with recipes for dozens of dishes based on the meat of dogs. Across the English Channel, however, the British typically rejected anything enjoyed by the French and in the 1890s *Punch*, the humor magazine, published several cartoons demonstrating the disapproval. The same magazine also satirically described an anonymous Englishman's encounter with a canine meal:

*...he brightened up
And thought himself in luck
When close before him what he saw
Looked something like a duck!*

*Still cautious grown, but, to be sure,
His brain he set to rack;
At length he turned to one behind,
And, pointing, cried, "Quack, quack?"*

*The Chinese gravely shook his head,
Next made a reverend bow;
And then expressed what dish it was,
By uttering, "Bow-wow-wow!"*

Today, dog remains popular in southern China, Hong Kong, parts of Japan, Korea, much of Southeast Asia, and to a lesser degree in Mexico, Central and South America, but not without controversy. For years, organizers of the world's most famous dog show, in England, welcomed sponsorship from the Korean electronics giant Samsung, until the International Fund for Animal Welfare protested in 1995, claiming that up to two million dogs were processed for the Korean food industry annually.

Men in the dog business must be selective. If the dogs haven't eaten well, the meat may be stringy and possibly unhealthy. In some Asian countries today the movement is not only to regulate the slaughter and promote cleanliness, but also to identify establishments where dog meat is served because sometimes it is substituted for something else. For example, I was served "wild boar" in Saigon that I'm sure wasn't boar—this, the day after seeing a flat-bed truck loaded with caged dogs on the highway leading into the city. A coincidence? Perhaps.

I have also eaten dog in China and Vietnam. As a photographer friend took pictures of a skinned dog just delivered to a restaurant in China's Yunnan province, a woman beckoned to us to come in. Close to the stove, she had some bite-sized, stir-fried haunch in a wok, left over from lunch, with a taste like cooked beef, slightly greasy, as dog, I've learned, often is. Two weeks later, in the mountainous region of northwestern Vietnam, near the China border, I was served thin slices of dog tongue stir-fried with garlic and vegetables and while visiting a weekend marketplace in the same province I saw more than a dozen well-fed dogs of various breeds for sale (for about US\$10 apiece), and later I observed members of the hilltribe prominent in that area leading dinner home on a leash. The same year, 199

the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development said there were at least fourteen million dogs in Vietnam, their numbers swelling as more and more farmers turned to raising dogs instead of pigs.

In Thailand, I found dog in the open markets as well, butchered and ready to go, but also cooked into a rich stew that sold for about eighty US cents a portion, and deep-fried into a sort of jerky. This was in Sakon Nakhon, a province in Thailand's northeast, where on the average day, I was told, approximately a thousand dogs were killed for markets in the region. This area was known for a kind of Oriental dog tartar, where raw dog meat was chopped almost to a mince, mixed with a few spices and finely chopped vegetables and served with the dog's blood and bile. Unlike Vietnam, where most of the dogs that are cooked are tender puppies, the adults wind up on the plate in Thailand, so tough that minced is the easiest to chew and most digestible.

In Korea in 2003, an estimated 4,000-6,000 restaurants served rich soups (costing about US\$10 for a medium-sized bowl), casseroles (US\$16 per serving), and steamed meat served with rice (US\$25). It was, as in other places, technically illegal to sell cooked dog meat, and restaurateurs did so under threat of having their licenses revoked. However, an appeals court in Seoul in 1997 acquitted a dog meat wholesaler, ruling that dogs were socially accepted as food.

So, too, in Hanoi, where the Nhat Tan neighborhood by the Red River on the capital's northern outskirts is made up almost entirely of dog restaurants, while the village of Cao Ha, forty kilometers to the south, makes a living keeping them in meat. Here, at least ten or a dozen dishes will be on the menu, including steamed dog, minced and seasoned dog wrapped in leaves, fried intestines, spare ribs and fried thighs. A kind of sour dog curry is also made with fermented wine and served with noodles. The most expensive dish on offer is a bamboo shoot dog soup. This normally is only eaten in the second half of the lunar month when it is regarded as auspicious. It is believed to help general health and fitness as well as male virility and wipe away bad luck.

As a protein source for human consumption, cats have a briefer history. At least, there are fewer historical references and while felines continue to find their way to the supper table, from South America to Asia, consumption level is comparatively quite low. This may be explained by the fact that through the ages, human regard for the cat has swung so widely—from worship to blasphemy and back—and at neither extreme did the small creature with the heart-warming purr and sharp claws ever seem as right for a stew or grill as their larger relatives, the cougar, the panther, the leopard, the lion, and the tiger.

There are, of course, numerous cases of the small, domestic cat being eaten for survival, just as Mr. Amundsen ate his sled dogs in the last century. In 1975, for example, the British correspondent Jon Swain was held captive in the French embassy in Phnom Penh following the invasion of the Cambodian capital by the Khmer Rouge. "With no end to our internment in sight, the shortage of food was becoming serious," he wrote in *River of Time* (1996). "Reluctantly, Jean Menta, a Corsican adventurer, and Borella, the mercenary who had been keeping a low profile in case he was recognized, strangled and skinned the embassy cat. The poor creature put up a spirited fight and both men were badly scratched. A few of us ate it, curried. The meat was tender like chicken."

So, too, in 1996, cats were skinned and grilled in Argentina under the media's harsh glare, causing an uproar in homes throughout the country and in the legislature. The press and politicians asked, were people so poor they had to eat pets? The answer, of course, was yes.

The same year, in Australia, Richard Evans, a member of Parliament, recommended the country do everything possible to eradicate the country's eighteen million feral and domestic cats by 2020 to prevent them killing an estimated three million birds and animals every year. John Wamsley, the managing director of Earth Sanctuaries, went a step further, urging people to catch and eat feral cats.

recommending what he called "pussy-tail stew." Another uproar shook the media.

It isn't always need that puts the cat in the pot. At Guang's Dog and Cat restaurant in Jiangmen, city in southern China, the owner, Wu Lianguang, told reporters in 1996, "Business couldn't be better. The wealthier the Chinese become, the more concerned they are about their health and there's nothing better for you than cat meat."

In northern Vietnam in the 1990s, cat joined its canine cousin on many restaurant menus in the belief that asthma could be cured by eating cat meat and that a man's sexual prowess could be aroused or enhanced with the help of four raw cat galls pickled in rice wine. As a food, it was enjoyed raw, marinated, grilled over charcoal, or cut into bite-sized chunks and dunked into a Mongolian hotpot with vegetables. According to a report from Agence France Presse, a dozen restaurants specializing in cat meat opened in just one district of Hanoi and about 1,800 cats were butchered every year in each of them, with the cost to the consumer rising from US\$3.50 to US\$11 in just two years.

Cat meat—generally not so greasy as dog—was a favorite of Hanoi gourmets until 1997, when the government forbade all further slaughter. Why? Official figures showed that as the country's cat population dropped, the number of rats multiplied at an alarming rate, ravaging up to thirty per cent of the grain produced in some districts around the capital city. The restaurants were held to blame.

The same year on the other side of the world, in Lima, Peru, a last-minute appeal from Peruvian animal-lovers persuaded authorities to halt a festival of cat cookery intended to celebrate a local saint's day. Organizers of the event announced with regret that the annual festival honoring San Efigenica, scheduled in the southern coastal town of Canete, had been cancelled at the insistence of animal rights activists. However, cat continues to be considered a delicacy and it remains on local restaurant menus, without any public display.

A Swiss chef who worked in a five-star hotel in Asia smiled when I mentioned cat cuisine. He said he ate cat in northern Italy and enjoyed it, and if anyone wanted to do the same and lacked a recipe, they could substitute squirrel or rabbit, all they had to do was find a recipe for one of those animals and substitute.

How Much Is That Doggie in the Paddy?

"The Lao [residents of Laos and northeastern Thailand] say eel is the best water meat and that dog is the best land meat," Chavalit Phorak, a man in the dog slaughtering business in Thailand told *The Nation*, a Bangkok newspaper, in 1997. "It's much tastier than beef and not as tough. In the past, families used to kill a dog to eat each week. People liked the meat, but they had to be careful not to exhaust their supply. After all, there's not much meat on a big dog, let alone a pup, and a dog takes a long time to grow, so farming them is still impractical."

In most countries where dog is eaten, farming is not necessary, as strays and other unwanted canine are plentiful. For this reason, there are men like Mr. Chavalit, who travels the back roads and barter for village dogs, then sells the meat, entrails, and skins. "My truck has a loud speaker," he said. "Everywhere I go I tell people that I will give them pails for their naughty or lazy dogs."

A healthy dog, in 1997, was worth two buckets. It took Mr. Chavalit three or four days to collect 100 dogs, the number at which he broke even and possibly earned a small profit, as each trip cost as much as US\$400 for petrol and pails. He then returned to the slaughterhouse, where butchers were paid twelve cents for every dog they kill, with a blow to the head with a hammer so as not to damage the meat.

the skin.

Another twelve cents was paid for skinning the dogs, plus sixteen cents for butchering the meat. The meat was then sold for up to US\$2 a kilo, with each dog contributing about three kilos, and the skins were sold for between US\$1 and US\$2 to factories in Thailand, Taiwan, and Japan, where they were turned into golfing gloves. (Think about that next time you step up to the tee.) The genitals were also sold, for about forty cents, and used in soup and wine, mainly in China, Korea, Vietnam, and Japan.

Stir-Fried Dog with Coconut Milk

1 lb dog haunch, cut into bite-sized pieces	2 tablespoons soy sauce
1 medium onion, thinly sliced	2 tablespoons fresh ginger, chopped
2 small green chilies, seeded and sliced	1 teaspoon ground cumin seed
4-6 mushrooms, sliced	1 teaspoon cornflour (mixed with water to form paste)
1 cup coconut milk	Salt and pepper to taste
5 tablespoons peanut oil	Fresh mint leaves

Heat oil in wok or frying pan, then add meat, stir-frying until lightly browned. Add coconut milk and soy sauce and stir for 1-2 minutes. Add onion, chilies, mushrooms, and seasoning and continue to stir. When the mixture begins to bubble, stir in cornflour paste. Garnish with mint leaves and serve with rice.

Sweet & Sour Dog

1 lb dog, cut into thin 2-inch strips	2 teaspoons vinegar
1 yellow or red pepper, seeded and chopped into pieces	3 tablespoons red wine
1/2 onion, chopped into pieces	1 tablespoon cornflour
1 tablespoon catsup	3 tablespoons vegetable oil
4 tablespoons sugar	Salt and pepper
1 tablespoon soy sauce	1/2 cup water
	Oil for deep-frying

Batter:

2 egg yolks, beaten
2 tablespoons flour
2 tablespoons water

Sprinkle meat with half of the red wine and a pinch of salt and pepper. Add catsup, sugar, soy sauce, vinegar, remaining red wine, cornflour, and 1 teaspoon salt. Set whatever is left aside for later use.

Make a batter from the eggs, flour and water. Heat cooking oil in wok or frying pan to 350°F and dip meat into batter, then fry until crisp. Keep warm on the side.

Clean wok or pan and heat vegetable oil, adding pepper and onion and stir-fry for 1-2 minutes, then add soy sauce/sugar/catsup blend and stir until it thickens, then mix in meat, serving hot, with rice.

—Based on interviews with Chinese cooks
Bangkok and Guangzhou, 1990s

Cat Ragout

2 lbs cat meat, sliced on bias	1 1/2 cups red wine
1 1/2 lbs potatoes, boiled and cubed	Flour
2 large onions, sliced	Butter
2 large carrots, cut into 1/2-inch slices	Pinch each rosemary, oregano and paprika
2 leeks, sliced	Salt and pepper to taste
2 stalks celery, sliced	Parsley or coriander, chopped finely
2 cloves garlic, chopped finely	

Skin cat, remove ribs, using only the trunk, cutting away the fat from the fillets, then slice into thin pieces. Dip into flour and cook in a pan until lightly browned. Boil potatoes. Cook other vegetables in butter, removing while still firm.

Put cat in casserole pot and add wine, cooking for 1 hour, until brown gravy forms. Add vegetables for final 8-10 minutes. Serve with polenta. (This is the traditional corn porridge of northern Italy; may substitute creamed corn.)

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