

MEMORABLE MEALS MAY OPEN WHOLE NEW PLEASURE VISTAS

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Do you know anyone who doesn't like to eat? It has suddenly dawned on me after 76 years that eating is without question the greatest pleasure we humans and the other animals enjoy. It's at the top of the list.

Others have known this for years and have built whole industries on the fact. We all necessarily have to eat to survive, but we also go to great lengths to satisfy our gastronomic cravings.

We do not all have the same tastes and our personal choices vary a great deal. I suspect some of this is inherent in each of us and we do not start out preferring the same food items as adolescents after we reach maturity. Witness the food items your children and grandchildren eat or refuse to eat and compare them to your own tastes.

Some items we acquired a taste for out of necessity, which I am sure originally was the case for many of the things we eat today. Rumor has it the French found that frog legs were delicious while facing starvation just prior to the famous revolution.

This brings up another interesting point. How would frog legs taste if they were not prepared in the traditional way of deep-frying? I do not think I would care for them boiled, baked or stewed. (I can hear many saying you would not eat them under any circumstances.)

I remember spotting a cow pasture with a liberal sprinkling of common mushrooms and stopping to ask the farmer if I could pick some. The answer to my query, "Do you eat mushrooms?" Was an emphatic, "Hell, no!" He not only gave me permission to pick them, but also supplied me with a cardboard box to carry them home in.

Volumes have been written about food preparation, presentation, storage and nutritional value. Who has not referred to or relied on the information they impart at one time or another?

Food preparation and the gurus who are recognized experts in that field have created a niche for themselves in prime time television. They provide entertainment, as well as useful information to would be cooks and those whose only interest is in eating. I fall into both categories and I am a devoted follower, but I most admit I am highly skeptical of some of what they dispense.

For one thing, I have had some disastrous results from some of my attempts to duplicate their gastronomic delights. They fell far short of what my expectations led me to believe they would be. Many I leave untried. Common sense tells me I am being treated to a bunch of hype and the results are foretold. Others have had a happy ending. Some are precluded by the vast number and opulence of the ingredients required to duplicate them. I readily confess to never having heard of them, being able to afford them, or know where to find them. Others have led to a real revelation and promise continued pleasurable experiences.

There are many foods I confess that do not cross my palate pleasingly. I have learned to eat some foods in decidedly measured amounts strictly because I know they are good for my constitution and a few to be polite. Some I abhor and will never under any circumstances eat. I suspect most of you feel the same.

Many of my most memorable meals were not outstanding so much in themselves as under the conditions under which partook of them. Two were at the end of arduous physical tasks, which involved miles of walking much of it on snowshoes on deep snow.

The first one was at the end of a full day's walking down the Oswegatchie River across Dead Creek Flow of Cranberry Lake prospecting for beaver trapping possibilities. My only sustenance since breakfast had been a can of sardines and an O Henry candy bar. When I reached the Blue Bird Diner in Star Lake my hunger was sated after a glass of Port and a half raw Porterhouse steak. It was placed on the grill frozen and I told the chef it was ready only after being seared on both sides. It was a drastic change in taste for one used to his steak being cooked until you could tap your shoes with it! It was a pleasant revelation and opened a whole new vista to me that I continue to enjoy.

The other meal followed a hike out of the Moose River Plains to the gate at Limekiln Lake with a pack of dried furs. While I waited at John's the old retired lumberjack from West Virginia, for my wife to pick me up, he invited me to have lunch with him. It was a simple dish of stewed northern beans and fatback pork, which I have never been able to duplicate.

At my age I doubt I will ever be able to duplicate either meal again, but I will keep trying.

What's your story?