

FOOD & DRINK

BOOK EXCERPT

Second of three parts



RETRODISK

It varies according to geography, income, education — but all white guys are variations on the same theme: They love to eat meat, says Stephen Hunt.

TAKE A CHANCE ON MEAT

In the second of three excerpts from the new book *The White Guy: A Field Guide*, we learn about this odd specimen's diet.

BY STEPHEN HUNT

People on the Indian sub-continent favour curried vegetables and lentils. Asia is dominated by rice, the dietary staple of half the world's population. Whole swathes of Africa feature cuisine based around the joys of the sweet potato. White guys like them all — and meat. Lots and lots and lots of meat. Sure, it clogs your heart. Yes, all of those grazing, farting cows warm an already unseasonably hot planet. No one likes to think about those melancholy, soon-to-be-beheaded chickens living cheek by jowl (fowl?) in some industrial park in the American Midwest, awaiting their afterlife as chicken nuggets shaped like characters from *Toy Story*.

There are different degrees of this rule — it varies according to geography, income, education and whether or not you are the type of white guy who likes to train for triathlons or kayak across the Georgia Strait in windstorms — but all white guys are variations on the same theme: We love to eat meat! Even Vegetarian

White Guy likes meat — he just thinks not eating what he likes makes him morally superior to the rest of us. (It might.)

THE JOY OF BURGERS

Unlike with television (invented by a white guy) or the personal computer (again), no one is quite sure who invented the hamburger, although the consensus is that it was an American white guy. Texans claim that a Texan named Fletcher Davis invented the burger in the 1880s, serving them to great acclaim to all those Texas Rangers who would eventually be played on television miniseries by the likes of Robert Duvall and Tommy Lee Jones. In 1904, Davis made the trek to the World's Fair in St. Louis, set up a burger stand, and was immediately joined by another guy selling French fried potatoes. Instant chemistry.

But Connecticut Yankees have a counter-claim. They say Louis Lassen of New Haven served the first burgers in 1900, as a kind of new-millennium treat for all of those Yale white

guy freshmen just arrived in town, oblivious that the 20th century was theirs to ruin.

Lassen served burgers — on toast, with cheese, tomatoes and onions — at Louis Lunch, and unbelievably, Louis Lunch is still there, still serving burgers to Yale freshmen wondering if they're going to grow up to be president, or just Stephen Colbert.

Eating a good burger is a sensual experience, right up there with watching Angelina Jolie address the UN. It's erotic-gastronomic. If it's medium rare, with some Dijon mustard, ketchup, onions, tomato, lettuce, pepper, salt a dab of mayo all ladled onto a lightly toasted sesame bun, it can't get much better than that.

Almost every place you go in North America, you will find a memorable burger. They are one of the few great things that are still accessible to almost anyone. Most of us will never know the pleasures of Kobe beef, or drink wine older than the fruit in the back of the fridge. We can only dream of winning the lottery so we can afford tickets to the Super Bowl or World Series. We saw Paris, before the Euro went nuts; now we recall it, in a kind of fond haze, like a beautiful ex-girlfriend who

only wanted to be friends.

But if you have 20 bucks, you can still sample a fine burger, often at some modest, no-nonsense diner. In New York, the Corner Bistro in the West Village serves mugs of draft beer, has the ambiance of a student pub and serves sublime cheeseburgers. In California, In-N-Out Burger makes the most legendary burgers of any fast food franchise, which is only fitting, because what is California's contribution to the culture, if not the drive-through, fast food, cholesterol orgy that is the burger, fries and shake?

THE RISE AND FALL OF BEEF

In recent decades, beef has suffered tremendously in the meat PR department, reversing a decades-long trend where beef reigned supreme on the white guy menu. Beef was the New York Yankees, the Montreal Canadiens and the All Blacks rolled into one. Gangsters, politicians, movie stars and athletes all worshipped at the altar of the steakhouse. Humphrey Bogart may have said it best: "Nothing beats roast beef at the Ritz."

I loved Humphrey Bogart. He was like a hard-boiled,

cigarette-smoking Clooney.

Somehow, though, around 1980, chicken and fish got the upper hand, mainly because some chicken publicist got their hands on some statistics linking heart disease to beef consumption or some other nutritional insight like that. I'm not going to engage in a debate about the healthfulness of various types of meat. I mean, I'm like everybody — opting for the chicken or fish, unless I start loathing my reflexive goody two-shoes behaviour, at which point I select the beef. I also have a lifetime love affair going with bacon. Bacon ranks right up there with day games at Yankee Stadium as a personal pleasure for me, and I don't care if the National Institutes of Health publishes a Russian novel about how eating bacon contributes to the rise of terrorism the world. I'm still eating it.

From the book *The White Guy: A Field Guide* © 2008, by Stephen Hunt. Reprinted with permission of the publisher, Douglas & McIntyre. Tomorrow, what does the White Guy wear? And why is it so ugly? *White Guy* author Stephen Hunt will be at the downtown library in Calgary tomorrow at 7:30 p.m. and in Winnipeg on May 22, at McNally Robinson Booksellers, at 8 p.m.



National Post

The Appetizer



A sampling of our food & drink blog

SEASONAL SOURCES OF SUCCULENCE

Chef Andrew Milne-Allan's eyes fire up and he brushes a hand quickly through his startling mass of hair. He's excited about the long-awaited spring produce finally appearing in local markets, his source of inspiration for new regional Italian items for his Zucca Trattoria in Toronto: "The most important thing is that these things are available now. It's a seasonal menu — they'll be gone three weeks from now. Asparagus and artichokes, we're excited when these new products come in, and they're just starting in the local markets."

He's promising a warm salad of roasted rabbit loin, artichokes and fresh fava beans with pine nuts and pecorino Monforte for patrons to sample during Toronto's first Italian Seasons Spring-Primavera Festival. From May 16 to 31, many of the city's fine Italian eateries will showcase dishes created to celebrate spring — a challenge, Milne-Allan says, since spring in Italy was several months ago and spring in Toronto hasn't fully arrived.

"I wanted to take it to heart and do something very seasonal, because it represents what I do here at Zucca." Born and raised in New Zealand, Milne-Allan says he's almost part-Italian after spending 20 years' experience deepening his knowledge of the regional cuisines — and marrying into an Italian family. "I change the menu four or five times a year, according to the produce that comes in, so I follow that very closely, the local farmers' markets in summer and spring, which leads to the menu. White asparagus won't be here until next week; I mean, it's flown in from Peru or wherever, but I like to use the local produce. So the asparagus won't be on the menu until next week. The morels are from B.C.; they will be here next week, we're hoping. The wild leeks just started, but I'm expecting to get some for Friday.

"We don't have tomatoes in the winter. We use the heirloom tomatoes from the end of August into October and then they're gone. So, we do seasonal food. That's what we're all about."

Zucca is located in an old Edwardian building at 2150 Yonge St., just south of Yonge and Eglinton in Toronto, 416-488-5774.

Karen Hawthorne, National Post

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Vegans: More than just tofu squares!

Marvelous & mouth watering meat-free meals



AMY ROSEN
Dish

Most of my friends are vegetarians. Not sure how this happened exactly, as they have little else in common, save for their deep ad-

miration for me. And cats.

So I thought of my friends as I sat down to a vegan dinner at the Chelsea House in Ottawa, a monthly event staged by an Ottawa catering crew called Zen Kitchen, which is enthusiastically helmed by Chef Caroline Ischii.

I was in town visiting my brother, David, at the time, and I insisted he join me. Said David: "I feel like I've lost the lottery."

The next evening, seated at one of the communal tables with a fun group of non-vegan foodies, we sipped organic and vegan wines (including Niagara Frog Pond Farm Merlot and California Bonterra Chardonnay), and perused the Moroccan-themed menu (the theme changes each month,

though most are Asian-inspired). There was a silky Great Northern bean and garlic soup, then a flavour-packed Middle Eastern salad, a root vegetable tagine and a vegan chocolate pecan pie capper ('nuff said). "It's actually a gourmet meal that just happens to be vegan," said one of the regulars at my table.

David, however, remained noncommittal.

ZEN KITCHEN CHEF CAROLINE ISCHII'S JEWELLED SALAD

(Serves 4-6)

For Salad

- 2-3 Cara Cara oranges or other oranges, peeled and sectioned
- 4 medjool or other dates, pitted, and cut into 6-8 slivers each

- 6 cups mixed bitter salad greens, such as arugula, radicchio, watercress, baby mustard, lovage, dandelion or mizuna, washed and dried
- Spiced nuts to garnish (recipe follows)

For Vinaigrette

- 1 tbsp (15 mL) Dijon mustard
- ¼ cup (60 mL) apple cider vinegar
- 2 tbsp (30 mL) maple syrup
- ¼ cup (60 mL) walnut oil
- ¼ cup (60 mL) extra virgin olive oil
- sea salt and freshly milled black pepper, to taste
- 1 tsp (5 mL) orange zest

For Spiced Nuts

- 1 cup (250 mL) slivered almonds
- ½ tsp (7 mL) ground coriander

- ½ tsp (7 mL) chili flakes (more or less, depending on desired level of heat)
- ½ tsp (7 mL) ground cumin
- ½ tsp (7 mL) fennel seeds
- ½ cup (75 mL) maple syrup
- ½ cup (75 mL) olive oil
- ½ tsp (7 mL) sea salt

1. To make dressing, combine mustard, apple cider vinegar, maple syrup, walnut oil, olive oil and orange zest (optional) in a blender and blend thoroughly. Add salt and pepper to taste. Adjust seasonings to taste.

2. For spiced nuts, toast spices in a skillet until aromatic. When cooled, grind spices in a coffee/spice grinder. Whisk together maple syrup, olive oil and salt. Combine spices and liquids in a bowl. Toss nuts in the liquid and bake on a baking sheet lined with parchment paper at 350F (180C) for 10 to 20 minutes until lightly

browned. The nuts will burn very easily so watch them carefully.

3. Toss the greens in the vinaigrette just before serving. Place greens on the plate and then add the dates and orange slices. Sprinkle the spiced nuts on the salad.

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ILLUSTRATION BY AMY ROSEN