

Bourne
toWrite...
creative writing
workshops

Cookery for the disenchanted

by Steve Brown

1. Jansson's Temptation

- *Anchovy fillets, onions, fat potato matchsticks, cream, breadcrumbs*

Waves mass like trays of sliding steel:
all beaten grey and dumbly grating.
A Baltic winter: clouds heavy
like an obscure crime. A false dream
of sunlight lingers at the edge.

In the bar, a detective sits,
morose with delectation.
He forks through the tinged white
of his temptation: continue to exist,
even here and now.

The rancid notes of anchovy
are there – but lifting: rich, severe
and searing; they are
as if all the salt tears of the world
have been wrapped in summer's cream.

The blonde barmaid leans
against dark wood. No one
says a word.
No one needs say anything at all.

2. Spaghetti alla limone

-spaghetti, white wine, juice and zest of a lemon, torn basil leaves, grated parmesan.

Sometimes, the world really is this simple.
In the backroom of some travellers taverna
there sits some form of romantic ironist,
northerner, too, of course: Goethe, say, or Stendhal, Byron.
Outside, the day's sun is a smashed tomato.

Lemon is all the bitterness that such a man
should bear – it a never really has forgotten
a former dream of sweetness.
Basil is what the grass of Eden smelt like;
even so – it takes two steps towards
the smiling cynic's twist of liquourice.

Our traveller, middle-aged, nods in his experience:
to have come so far from foolish innocence,
and find it here preserved,
so safe in his heart!
But a thought: 'An old man's foolish smile
at some 18 year old 'beauty'. 'Senilita',
the heart might scream – 'but maybe
not so foolish, after all..'

There always comes an age
when Italy is the necessary invention.

3. Chiles en nogada

- Stuffed green chillies, ground walnut sauce, a scattering of pomegranate seeds

Sharp sunlight on a flag:
green, white and red flap stiffly.
This dried, browned earth is pierced
by stabs of freedom.

A motley brass band
is bashing out
all the old wedding songs.

An old doctor sucks
on all his nicotined bitterness:
he knows all the lies
that promises keep.

The unripe chillies are green beans
struck through with pins;
he knows however baked the earth is
it keeps a sweetness.

Just a few pomegranate seeds
will keep him here just a little longer;
although his palms might sweat,
he'll dance again with each summer's day,
its dreams of independence.