

EDIBLE BOOKS

BY LISA JONES

EAT THIS BOOK

—A plate of puff pastry scrolls, each of which does not contain a sausage: *The Day No Pigs (In Blankets) Would Die*.

—A bottle of double chocolate stout in flight over a nest of Cadbury Creme Eggs: *One Brew over the Cocoa's Nest*.

—A blender full of a mint beverage, and a single glass: *The Last of the Mojitos*.

Combining food and great works of literature with a shocking lack of shame, the Fifth Annual Edible Book Festival was sponsored by students of the University of Texas School of Information and the Kilgarlin Center for Preservation of the Cultural Record. Held as part of an international festival inaugurated in 2000 by book artists Judith A. Hoffberg and Béatrice Colon, it pays homage to the April 1st birthday of French gastronome and culinary wit Jean-Anthelme Brillat-Savarin.

The festival's Web site calls itself, rather Britishly, "a celebration of the ingestion of culture and a way to concretely share a book. It is also a deeper reflexion on our attachment to food and our cultural differences."

And the festival pays homage to puns—gleefully horrible puns. At the Kilgarlin event, *Fight Club* duked it out in the sandwich

division with *The Joy Luck Club*, which sported a traditional "stab" binding constructed with curly-topped toothpicks. *The Book of Reuben* handsomely displayed the best features of both form and content, but couldn't resist a side of *Goodbye Mr. Chips*. A stack of ice sheets embedded with gummi letters and threaded on red licorice strings slowly melted from *Where Are the Snows of Yesteryear?* to *Drink This Book: A Toast to A. Hoffman*.

Worst (or best) of all was the entry voted Best in Show by festival attendees: *A Havarti-Breaking Work of Saga and Other Cheeses*, a spectacular vaudeville finale razzing not just Dave Eggers, but most of Western literature—from *Yeast of Edam* to *Two Gruyères Before the Mostaccioli* to *Don Brie-xote de la Manchego*—before bowing out with *Harry Potter and the Cheddar of Secrets*.

At the end of the day, participants were forced to eat their words. The most tasteful entry, *The Francis Bakin' Cake*, was beautifully illuminated with his quote, "some books are to be tasted, others to be swallowed, and some few to be chewed and digested." To which he might have added, "Reading maketh a full man."

Photos of the 2007 Edible Book Festival are posted at <http://picasaweb.google.com/edible.book.festival/EdibleBookFestival2007>.

"Edible Books" will be a regular feature discussing books by local authors on food, culture and literature. See edibleaustin.com for more about joining the Edible Austin Book Club, an online forum moderated by the authors. Our first selection will be *"Culinary Biographies,"* edited by the late Alice Arndt.



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