Intercontinental Breakfast

by Corry Cropper (Associate Dean, College of Humanities)

ACROSS
1. Sunblock rating
2. It’s smaller than a T?
3. Enamel expert (abbr.)
4. Weep uncontrollably
5. Sports org. of the Undertaker and the Rock
6. Wordsworth poem, “We ___ Seven”
7. ___ soda
8. Abbr. on an envelope
10. ___ toast
11. ___ butter cookies
12. Genesis through ___ soda
13. ___ salt
14. Choose
15. Och’s partner
16. “Young ___ Brown” (Hawthorne story)
17. ___ meatballs
18. Ott-injured knee ligament
19. ___ yoghurt
20. ___ stuck frying pan
21. Two ___ meatballs
22. ___ sour cream
23. ___ toast
24. ___ meatballs
25. The ___ Man and the ___ (Hemingway)
26. ___ In the Rocks
27. ___ Colossus
28. ___ Insta-grass
29. “___ Sick” (for a very long time)
30. ___ soda
31. Ballpark fare
32. Ooh’s partner
33. ___ Yogurt
34. ___ Yogurt
35. Grilled cheese sandwich (1)
36. ___ butter cookies
37. ___ meatballs
38. ___ toast
39. ___ soda
40. ___ yoghurt
41. ___ sour cream
42. ___ toast
43. ___ meatballs
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100. ___ meatballs

DOWN
1. “___ Utah” (license plate slogan)
2. Card game with a bell
3. Rx approver
4. ___ stick frying pan
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Check your answers on page 14

VOX HUMANA ENDNOTES
Food as Commentary

Food as Commentary

A discussion with Marlene Esplin (Contemporary US and Latin American Literature) on a bizarre yet resonant bite which drives home social commentary from The Hour of the Star by Clarice Lispector.

Pleasant and familiar foods are often featured in stories we love. However, from time to time the food that characters eat—or imagine eating—diverts from the norm, leaving an unprecedented impact on us. Associate Professor Marlene Esplin explains that The Hour of the Star by Clarice Lispector features one such use of food. The book tells the story of Macabéa, “an endearing and hapless protagonist who is so poor that she eats hot dogs every day,” Dr. Esplin says. Poor, unhealthy, and deemed unattractive, Macabéa is nevertheless an obsessive consumer who dreams of stardom and wealth. She defines herself by her drink of choice, Coca-Cola, which she associates with glamour and luxury.

Neither hot dogs nor Coca-Cola are particularly strange—the odd fare comes when something in a magazine catches her eye. “At one point, Macabéa sees an ad for a lotion or face cream, and she imagines that if she had the money to buy the cream, she’d eat heaping spoonfuls of it,” Dr. Esplin says. Macabéa imagines that the expensive lotion, which wealthy people have easy access to, might revitalize her undernourished body.

This bizarre notion catches us off guard. Consider this: what would it be like to eat a spoonful of nighttime face cream? As we picture the sensation, we find ourselves better able to understand how unfamiliar Macabéa is with the comforts we enjoy. To her, our most mundane possessions are mysterious, miraculous luxuries which she would not know how to use if she had them. “The food and consumerist references in the novel seem to point to the unattainability of a certain lifestyle or mode of consumption for someone like Macabéa,” Dr. Esplin says. “Coca-Cola, hot dogs, and lotion all bear a little bit of Macabéa for me.”

Conclusion

Hunger quelled with a Big Mac stolen in a late-night robbery. An imagined bite of a spoonful of face cream. A Dutch oven full of biscuits browning as the sun is rising. A luxurious French meal miraculously conjured in a rustic Norwegian setting. The images and sensations in these excerpts transcend mere sensory experience; they evoke profound authorial intentions and literary purposes. Maya Angelou once described literature as “life-giving”—perhaps literature’s power to give us life, to sustain us and feed us, is never so distinct as when it draws on the power of food.

Your Food in Literature Stories

This brief article cannot pretend to catalogue the many ways authors use food in their writing. Food in literature is endlessly diverse and varied, especially when readers offer their own interpretation.

We would love to hear about your experiences with food in literature: What examples in your own reading enticed you? Did a certain food make you want to travel to a country or region? Did it pull you into the story, as it did Scott Hatch? Did the description of a unique food leave you scratching your head, as it did Dr. Esplin? Did the first taste of a food meet your expectations, or did it leave you wanting something different? Send us your story in 50–200 words to humanitiespr@byu.edu, and we will consider it for publication in the coming issue of the magazine.