

Death by Pad Thai: And Other Unforgettable Meals

From the Introduction:

When these twenty bountifully gifted writers were asked to search their gustatory pasts for a meal they'd never forgotten and would surely not forget, I explained that I wasn't necessarily interested. In the most magnificently prepared, heavenly tasting food they'd ever eaten. I was looking instead for meals made unforgettable by their *occasion*. Occasions that extended the culinary circumference beyond how things tasted to include the more complex palates of love and loss, of welcome and return, of comedy and error, and on and on.

...

I'm delighted but not surprised to report that I got deliciously more than I asked for. Dipping into the contents at random, there's the story of a woman's lifelong desire, from grade school to the very recent present, for the food in someone else's lunch box, on the plate across the table. And one of a young man's Freudian (the writer's word, not mine) aversion to vegetables, and the beautifully simple ritualistic meal it made him miss, due to paternal expectations that he would take over the family wholesale produce company. There's the account of a couple, struggling on the husband's lowly assistant professor's salary, heading to Manhattan to celebrate the acceptance of his first novel and learning that a day of fancy New York dining can leave a person nearly broke and utterly famished. As well, there's the hilarious story of one woman's life with lasagna . . . And there's a blow-by-blow chronicling of the day-long merry massacre to which the anthology's title refers of four-pound lobsters in order to achieve pad thai transcendence. There are these and there are fifteen more, each and every one of them delectable.