

THE HUNTING OF THE MINCE

A Wild Chase With Ishi That Ended With the Taking of the Mysterious Thanksgiving Animal in His Lair



By Arthur L. Price

YOU all know that beef is the meat of the stalled ox and lamb the meat of the veteran ram, but who can tell of the animal whose meat is mince?

Aye, say I, I can, somewhat grandiloquently, to be sure, very vaingloriously. For there are few others who have seen the Mince in its native haunt, the agile, ferocious Mince, the raging beast of the jungles, with the eye of the basilisk and the fiery temper that survives even after it has been minced and baked in the penthouse of a pie. At the behest of the Smithsonian Institution and with Ishi as a companion, I spent months in the jungle in search of the Mince, and I found him at a rampaging moment, when he was devouring the last strawberry shortcake of the summer.

That was a symbolical act. The year is divided into two open seasons, as all men know—the season of the Strawberry Shortcake, which is carelessly confused by the weather bureau under the obsolete names of Spring and Summer, and the season of the Mince, which has erroneous notoriety as Autumn and Winter. The last Mince of winter, left raging alone, will eat the first Strawberry Shortcake as it comes in flakes of whipped cream, topped with a crimson berry, and the effect of the pastry will send the beast to his cave, weakened and disconsolate. There the weary creature will pass the spring and summer—the strawberry season—while all the world devours the three story confection with its crimson pinnacle.

But as the seasons change, as a touch of frost comes into the air, instead of the simulation of frost glistening on the shortcake—which is never short, but always round, and what is round can not be short or long—the Mince gathers strength. About Thanksgiving day the Mince, filled with terrible courage, bursts from its enervating bonds and rushes into the open. There the first sight that meets its gaze is its old enemy, the strawberry shortcake. There is a savage struggle over the bill of fare, and the Mince, with one cruel snap of its desperate jaws, crushes the shortcake into oblivion.

That is a fact of natural history that we all know. Again and again we have seen the result of the struggle tacitly narrated on the coffee stained card which the expectant waitress slips into our hand. In vain our eyes will glance over the list for the strawberry shortcake. We ask of the waitress where it might be.

"This ain't no murgue," responds the lady. "The mince pie has come and the strawberry shortcake has went. Sic transit gloria mundi," she adds.

Not having a transfer for glorious Monday, we take mince pie.

Mince pie is quite filling to the stomach, but it is tantalizing to the mind. We are told that it is made of mince-

meat. Yes, but what is mincemeat? Other meats bear ready analysis. Mincemeat does not. It is complex, intricate, a conspiracy against the palate. To taste the flesh of the Mince one can not tell whether it runs on four feet or flies on two, or creeps on '86. To fork a morsel, or knife a morsel, whichever implement comes most readily to hand, from the browned prison house of pastry and ingratiate it between your teeth is not to get an answer to the question—is it fish or fowl or dinosaur?

Perplexed by the mystery of the Mince, I decided to go in quest of the brute, to hunt it down in its native lair, to camp on its savory trail, to bring the savage brute to ground, to stab it to the death and bear its dripping carcass to the shade of my holly-hock tree.

For such an adventure I knew that I must have a companion, a true huntsman versed in the lore of the woods, but free from any prejudice or bias in favor of or against the Mince. He must not have become an enemy of the creature through the medium

of torturous midnight visions, nor a sympathizer by olfactory and alimentary gratifications. He must be, I knew, neither inimical nor sentimental toward the creature. So I chose Ishi for my companion in the hunt; Ishi, the aboriginal, who never saw a Mince in the refined captivity of a pie nor in the horrible apparition of a dim bedchamber.

Ishi, being a celebrity, was hard to sign up for the expedition. I had to put up a bond for his safe return, and that I did in jeopardy of bankruptcy, for how did I know but that the Mince might captivate him, might spirit him away, such as the Snark in the poem assimilated the Baker?

When I had completed negotiations for Ishi's departure from the ethnological museum, where he and a mummy vie with one another for the honor of being the most prehistoric man, we set out.

I shall not dwell upon the equipment of our expedition. It is sufficient to say that we had a touring car which at will could be converted into a fortress, a hotel apartment, a motor boat, a kitchen or an aeroplane, as the whim or the need might be.

We left Market and Third streets at night, and proceeded due south for days; then suddenly turned to the left, taking the road that forks near the sycamore tree, four miles below the pink school upon a barefooted girl in a scarlet sunbonnet trimmed with green willow plumes sat reading Arnold Bennett's "How to Live on Twenty-Four Books a Year." You can't miss the turn, though it must be confused with the branch near the schoolhouse by the railroad crossing. The girl at that school had double willow plumes, however, so it would be inexcusable if a mistake were made. I give these details frankly, for I am willing that any one may find the haunt of the Mince. Most explorers are touchy about exposing their game preserves—no, I am as free as the air with them.

After we had turned to the left and continued along that road for 37 hours, including the time we paused at the cottage with a red cabbage in the middle of the day to get water to cool our engines, we saw the first tracks of the Mince. To be explicit we were nine zitzoras (by Ishi's computation) from the red cabbage. I want to help you all I can.

Ishi was at the wheel of the car, as I remember. A heavy dew had fallen the night before and we were navigating over the tree tops toward the lair of the Mince. We could plainly

see his six feet marks below us on the rough ground. Then, above the whirr of our Gnome engine, we heard a loud bellow that ended in a sizzle, as if a bull had balled over on the kitchen stove.

"That is he," said Ishi, punctiliously correct in his grammar.

"If it isn't it," I assented mildly, for I knew not the sex of the Mince monster with six legs which we were about to approach.

Traveling at the rate of 87 miles an hour we soon came within sight of the Mince, browsing two zitzoras before us in a juicy, crimson cranberry marsh, up to its knees in the rich pulp. I had never seen a cranberry marsh before, and the wide pond of crimson syrup, edged with the congealed cakes of the pulp, was a revelation to me. On the southeast corner of the pond was the pumping plant and the pipe line which conveyed the delicate liquid to the market.

I made a note at the time that I favored municipal ownership of cranberry marshes and would advise the construction of a dam and the storing of the sauce.

But I had little time for thoughts of anything but the Mince. There was the creature before me, the wonderful beast whose meat I had so often eaten. At the sound of our propellers the Mince started to flee from the marsh, but it was too late for it to escape entirely from us. Ishi took his kodak

and began snapping at it, as the illustrations will show.

I shall tell how the beast looked to us as we finally cornered it under a plum pudding tree with its tusks as deep in a belated strawberry shortcake.

The Mince has a general resemblance to an ox, though it wears its suet more conspicuously than cattle do, but its general frame is of the ox. That portion of its body from which the round steaks are cut is abnormally developed. Its forelegs and its hindlegs—that is, its main hindlegs, are circular in form, suggesting that round steaks could be cut off eternally before the supply would be exhausted. Its most peculiar feature, as we judged from its tracks, were its extra legs. They are not located along the side of the animal, as they are in an insect, which carries six legs very comfortably. The Mince's extra legs, its super legs, I might call them, grow from its shoulders, and do not resemble legs so much as they resemble the trunks of apple trees.

In my gastronomical analysis of mince meat I have always detected the taste of apple, and presume that the Mince mixed some sliced apple with the meat. In that I found I was wrong, for the apple is a concomitant part of the beast in its natural state.

The eyes of the brute were weird. The right eye resembled an orange and the left a lemon. I had detected a taste of orange and lemon peel in the mince meat of the table, and now I saw where it came from. The neck of the creature was a wonderful part of its anatomy. It was thin and tough, and on close inspection I found that it was like a tendril of a grapevine. The Mince was the flavor of vintage found in all well made mince pies came from. Later, when we had killed the Mince—Ishi did it with his bow and arrow—we found that its blood was four parts cider, three parts wine and three parts brandy. In some of the finer specimens, I have since been told, the proportion is seven parts brandy and the rest evenly divided between cider and wine. Mince that have been habituated to dry states, or local option towns, have blood that is either all sweet cider or largely sweet cider and part drug store whiskey.

The horns of the Mince were a dull green, not a fashionable shade, and on examination we found that they were half citrons, or some similar substance; its hoofs were of caked brown sugar, apparently, and its hide was mottled with raisins and currants.

Ishi killed him, as I said.

When the creature first sighted us in our aeroplane, it made a mad rush for the seclusion of a poplar forest. But we were too quick. Cleverly handling the aeroplane, Ishi headed off the beast and from his perch in the aeroplane shot him in a vital part, one of his apple tree legs. A mince without an apple tree leg is no mince at all. With a somewhat perturbed expression the fine creature fell, and when we had made our landing and reached the side of the beast there was little before us but mince.

We didn't expect much else.

In years gone by nearly every well ordered family would have its Mince and make its own mince meat. But that was before our generation. Now all the Mince are in the control of the beef trust and we seldom see the meat until it comes to us in jars and pots or in the restaurant pie.

But I have seen the Mince in its native habitat, I have hunted the Mince, dared its basilisk eye, which, after all, at close range looks away, and I am on my feet; I have faced its horns, which, on inspection, resemble citron rind.

The Mince is a most interesting creature, but not so dangerous when faced as it is when it is in the narrow confines of one's bedchamber, that it is villainously ferocious. Then it does not look like itself. It is different then to distinguish it from a nightmare.



Do We Eat to Live, or Do We Live to Eat?

Behold, his breakfasts shine with reputation. His dinners are the wonder of the nation. With these he treats both consumers and quality who praise, wherever they go, his hospitality.

By Sarah Williamson

"GASTERIA" wrote Brillat-Savarin, author of the "Physiologie du Gout," and most famous of chefs, ancient or modern, "is the tenth and fairest of the muses. She presides over the enjoyments of taste." Other writers have chimed in with the opinion of the celebrated Parisian who deserted the law that he might have more time to wrestle with the more interesting problem of gastronomy. "One of the most important of our temporal concerns," wrote Thomas Walker, apropos the art of cookery, and De la Rochefoucauld tells us that "good thoughts proceed from the stomach." The pleasures of the table have absorbed men of note from the period before Christ to this very moment, and will continue to prove absorbing so long as men of taste live. It was a learned philosopher who told us not to look too far backward or forward, since life is so brief, in order to be happy. Let us therefore study, was his advice, how to fix our happiness in our glass and on our plate.

Do we eat to live or live to eat? The French say we only eat to live when we do not comprehend how to live to eat. But then the French are always epigrammatic. After talking with one of the gastronomic authorities in San Francisco one understands how very ignorant is everybody outside of Paris of the real meaning of artistic cooking. The French chef takes cooking seriously, as did the ancients who cared for the

delights of the cuisine. He studies cooking just as any student studies anything when it is to be his career's keynote. You or I or the other one may have fancied he or she was a rather clever cook, but just go and have a half hour chat with the Pacific Union or Bohemian club chef, or one of the chefs at the big hotels, or with Raphael Weill and your knowledge of cookery shrinks to not even the mastery of the alphabet. A good cook is really an artist, but there are not many epicures outside of Europe probably who can thoroughly appreciate the creation of a Savarin or his successful imitators. Men of all ages have loved to eat, but not all have had the wit to perceive when the dish they were consuming was the creation of an artist. The French chef has an utter contempt for the man who says, "Now, that is a mighty fine little dish, and I've no doubt there are those who like that sort of thing, but for me, give me a wholesome meat at my own table, a nice juicy steak and fried onions." For such a barbarian the chef feels a pity he is incapable of expressing. Esau sold his birthright for a mess of red potato of lentils. Perhaps Esau was the first epicure. Lucullus, the Monte Cristo of Naples, according to Juvenal, devoured at one meal a whole estate. He thought nothing of spending \$20,000 on one banquet and nearly every day he spread one of these feasts. The Emperor Domitian called a cabinet to decide whether a fish should be minced or cooked in a special dish. When the cabinet had settled the question, Domitian did not even ask them to partake of the fish, but dismissed them. One of the famed chefs of the ancients was Archestratus, the Syracusan rival of Cicero, who wrote a poem on "Gastronomy." Berochous also wrote a poem on this theme 200 centuries later. No San Francisco bard has yet arisen to sing properly the praises of eating.

Here is a tip to George Sterling. It is when you read about such people as those cultured in eating and drinking, as well as in what we call

Some of San Francisco's Amateur Chefs, While Professing That Eating Is Simply a Necessity, Contrive, Still, to Make It a Joy

"The arts" today, that one becomes humble in his own estimation when he approaches a cookbook with the idea of evolving a menu therefrom. In "The Marriage of Caranus," Athenaeus depicted the ideal cook:

"Know on thyself thy genius must depend. All books of cookery, all helps of art, all critic learning, all commentary notes are vain, if void of genius thou wouldst cook."

This is what every chef the writer has interviewed in this city has assented to. "The touch of genius," they say, is necessary. Without it no cook can do anything worthy the attention of an epicure. "Cooking," wrote Yuan Mei, the Chinese Savarin, who lived in the eighteenth century, "is like matrimony; two things served together should match. Clear served go with clear, hard with hard, and soft with soft. Into no department of life should indifference be permitted to creep—into none less than into the domain of cookery." To cook is an art of arts, without, however, the reach of any who will take the trouble to master its alphabet and graduate into its higher branches. That one may become an artist by this study is not promised. Artists are the born, not made product. But a knowledge of cookery in the finer branches will be an aid to culture just as a knowledge of the languages helps to the comprehension of literature, and a knowledge of music to the comprehension of music. Whether men or women are the better cooks will always be a moot question. The various historians of gastronomy rather sneer at feminine

knowledge of cookery in its finer aspect. They give all the credit for gastronomical genius to the men. But men usually do well whatever they attempt, probably because they never attempt anything they know is beyond their accomplishment. Given a cookbook, a modicum of common sense and a deft hand there is no reason why any man or woman should not become at least a fair cook.

Dumas the elder was the greatest of accomplished boys vivants. To him is due the saying, "To eat understandingly and to drink understandingly are two arts that may not be learned from the day to the morrow." Dumas was a famous cook. Some of his friends who doubted his culinary ability and hinted that he employed chefs to evolve certain dishes he served at his feasts, just as he employed secretaries to write chapters of his novels, were non-plussed when the creator of "The Three Guardsmen" invited them to a dinner in which he prepared every dish and cooked it before their eyes. It was Dumas who evolved the famous recipe of Porthos for serving a sheep whole. You recall the scene where Porthos dines with Louis XIV? If not, read it again. It is worth while. Most of the Louis' of France, by the way, possessed culinary ability. Louis XIII frequently prepared his game for the table. Some said that he did this because he nourished the constant fear that he might be poisoned by an enemy. Louis XIII was the creator of the method of preparing outlets or chops broiled not only on the grill, but between two other outlets, in order to preserve the juices. Louis XVI was

the patron of Ude, a noted chef and author, who made the statement that "Every man is born with qualifications necessary to constitute a good cook." Note he says "man," not "woman."

Louis VI created a cold pate of larks which is said to have been delicious. The composer Rossini could cook cleverly, and his most celebrated dish was a preparation of macaroni. It was a contemporary of Rossini who said, "An overturned salt cellar is only to be feared when overturned in a good dish," which is a good thing for the superstitious to remember.

Napoleon boasted of his cooking talent, but when asked to make an omelette, he awkwardly flipped it on the floor. Conde also proclaimed his ability as a cook, but overturned his omelette into the fire. Prince de Talleyrand did not boast, but really knew how to cook.

If you wish to learn something about the history of gastronomy ask Mr. Raphael Weill to talk a little bit on one of his favorite subjects. He, probably more than any other man in this city, possesses a complete knowledge of the gastronomic art. He will explain to you the difference between what is a epicure and a gourmet, tell you what an epicure is, and wherein a chef differs from other cooks. He will tell you about the two famed Roberts, about Savarin and about Grimod de la Reuniers, who presided over the famous dinner of the Bohemian club. Regniere was the wonderful Parisian noble who distinguished himself in various professions and turned to cooking when an actress on whom he had lavished his fortune and affection turned him down. In gastronomy

he found solace for his heart wound. He particularly enjoyed the use of garlic. "Everyone knows its odor save he who has eaten it and who wonders why everyone files at his approach," Savarin borrowed many ideas from his predecessor but failed to give him any credit.

Mr. Weill, by the way, is not only an authority on gastronomy, but is somewhat of a chef himself, though he modestly disclaims that title. But his friends who have been invited to his meal "created" by their host unite in extolling the menu and the genius presiding. Mr. Weill prefers to place the credit of these feasts on his chef, George Tessier, who practiced his art at Marchand's before he became identified with the epicurean desires of the Bohemian club. Some of the recipes that have become noted at the Sunday Breakfast club meetings, and which have hitherto been retained for the delectation of the gourmet, are given later in this article. It is at the Bohemian and the Pacific Union club that one finds the members of the millionaires' club know what they desire in matters affecting the palate.

Frederic Delaire, known simply by his worshippers as Monsieur Frederic, died recently in Paris. He was the most famous and perhaps the last of the great caterers who illumined the nineteenth century. The Tour d'Argent regained, during his management, its prestige, which had its eclipse during quite a period. The Tour d'Argent is a celebrated hostelry and restaurant, which dates back to the twelfth century. It is situated in the old city, forming the island of St. Louis in the Seine. Frederic's great achievement was the carving and preparing of his famous caneton de Rouen (duck). Many San Franciscans visiting Paris remember him, and will learn of his death with great sorrow. Raphael Weill was a great patron of his, and a sincere

friendship existed between them. One of Delaire's first California admirers was the late Eugene S. Dewey, so beloved and so well known as San Francisco's greatest bon vivant.

As many of the millionaires know how to cook themselves, they are extremely particular as to the seasoning and preparation of their pet dishes. Onion soup is the most widely celebrated of the Bohemian club's dishes. Its praise have been extended over seas. They have a dish of tripe also that is famous. "Tripe a la Redding," it is called. Some of the local amateur chefs prefer the Italian method of cooking with oil. It was the ancient Romans, by the way, who first employed oil in their cookery. The Medics brought this influence into France, but it was the French who were always the most successful cooks. The French discovered the method of dressing meats in their own gravy. The Danes and the Germans always let their appetites run rather to the liquid part of the meal, the wines and malt liquors than to the food. Germans of our day excel in pastry cooking. In the possession of one club chef is an ancient menu, in which the dishes are referred to in amusing language. Fancy eating "the love affairs of soured beef fried" and "a virgin rooster in half mourning" (un cocq vierge en petit deuil). Cooks of historic memoirs were notoriously jealous and prone to asperse rivals, but one finds nothing of this in a local clubdom. Every one is anxious to praise his fellow and to spread the tidings of his accomplishment. The first cookbook known was published in 1390. "The Forme of Curry" by Pegge. The "Widow's Treasure" came out in 1625. Filippini, Parola, Dreves, Du Salls and Colombe all published cookbooks that have had a vogue more or less pronounced. None of our San Francisco chefs owns a cookbook which he pronounces infallible. "You must modify, to suit your taste and that of your guests," said Mr. Weill's chef.