

Write Your Life

A micro memoir writing project

A lesson in pleasure

Tastings

“You didn’t eat the crust,” Tizi says.

I tell her I never eat the crust.

We’re having a piece of blueberry pie from Nino Salvaggio, a nearby market. Their blueberry pie, for her, is the off-season gold standard. It’s an anytime-of-year pie, which is a strike against it. Normal off-season mass-produced pies are loaded with industrial blueberries, which only approximate the flavor, texture, and goodness of the real thing. Nino, I don’t know how, has worked magic.

“You do eat the crust,” she says. “You like that slimy part the filling lies on.”

“It’s not slimy.”

But she’s right.

She’s blueberry. I’m pumpkin. I wait every year for Costco pumpkin pie, which it could be argued is the apotheosis of industrial pie, loaded with an aromatic pumpkin-ish filling, tens of thousands of them boxed on shelves across the country, and I don’t care. Let the pie come to me. On fine autumn days, when you park in the Costco lot, the intoxicating fragrance of pumpkin pie hangs in the air. At the end of lunch or dinner, Tizi will join me. She never eats the sodden softened flavorful part underlying the fruit (if you can call it that). But to see her eat a slice of blueberry pie is to witness moments of high pleasure.

Reminding me of the first time I met her cousin Pucci and his wife Sabina.

We joined them on an Adriatic beach in Rimini in the summer of 1979. Shortly after introductions, when the watermelon vendor passed, they stopped him.

“Anguria,” Pucci said. “É ora.” *Watermelon. It’s time.*

He and Sabina arranged themselves on the edge of a lounge chair and began to eat. The juice trickled from the corners of their mouths, down their arms, dripping from their chins onto their chests. They were undeterred, unembarrassed.

“Che buono,” Sabina said with a wet smile.

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“On-GOO-ree-uh,” Pucci said, smiling at me, a look of ecstasy on his face. With every bite the goo got longer. “On-GOOOO-ree-uh.” He was speaking to the gods. “On-GOOOOOO-ree-uh.”

“It’s not slimy,” I say to Tizi now. “It’s the bottom of the pie.”

This one’s finished. We’ve had the two last pieces warmed, with vanilla ice cream melting over it.

“This crust I don’t eat,” I say, pointing. “At the top of the piece.”

“It can be good.” She licks her fork. “If it’s made with lard.” She reminds me of pies she has loved, any pie at Christopher’s up in Indian River, with perfect lardful crusts.

Some days I surprise her with pie. You can buy half a pie at Nino’s, half a blueberry pie! It’s her forbidden fruit. It makes a spectator of me.