

Hemispheres

FEBRUARY 2016

UNCOVERING THE PAST

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“Highway 1 bends beside an ocean
of brilliant blue, passing lovely
little towns along the way.”

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UNITED 

A STAR ALLIANCE MEMBER 

Quick
Lit

"I gather words that seem obscure (*sciagura, spigliatezza*: disaster, casualness) and ones I can easily understand but would like to know better (*inviperito, stralunato*: incensed, out of one's wits). I gather beautiful words that have no exact equivalents in English (*formicolare, chiarore*: to move in a confused fashion, like ants, and also to have pins and needles; shaft of light). ... I gather countless nouns and adverbs that I will never use."

—From Jhumpa Lahiri's memoir, *In Other Words*, in which the Pulitzer Prize-winning author writes (in Italian) about her efforts to master the Italian language (FEB. 9).



This Porridge Is Too Hot

China's comforting breakfast gruel goes glam

CULINARY ARTS

Like ramen before it, China's humble rice porridge, congee, is beginning to attract notice in the U.S., as it offers an immensely customizable Asian take on comfort food.

Chef Tory Miller (pictured) of Sujeo, in Madison, Wisconsin, first encountered an MSG-filled version of the dish as a teenager in Chicago's Chinatown and found it gamey and salty. His challenge? Update congee without sacrificing its simplicity. "My first inspiration was risotto and the way cheese rinds incorporate a rich umami flavor," he says. His East-meets-Midwest version bolsters Korean Rhee Chun rice with local Sarvecchio parmesan cheese in place of the MSG, plus steamed chicken, ginger, fish sauce-soaked Thai chili, and lime.

At San Francisco's SPQR, Matthew Accarrino interprets congee with American ingredients

through an Italian lens, cracking golden rice from South Carolina's Anson Mills and cooking it into a creamy risottolike porridge with veal sweetbreads, turnips, and yuzu mostarda. **Chef Bryant Ng of Santa Monica's Cassia describes congee as "Asia's chicken soup"** and tops his with a salad of smoked shredded chicken, minced ginger, sweet onion, white pepper, and herbs.

In Chicago, congee gets a sweet twist as the dessert course at 42 Grams. Chef Jake Bickelhaupt ferments bamboo rice, chosen for its vibrant green color and floral flavor, then folds in chewy dehydrated Chinese ya pear and crunchy puffed rice. Miso caramel and a scoop of butterscotchy dulce seaweed gelato top it off.

"The congee is naturally sweet from the fermentation process," Bickelhaupt explains. "It's my interpretation of salted caramel, with Asian ingredients."

—AMBER GIBSON



Making Scents

Sniffing out the science of smell in Paris

CHEMISTRY

Paris' Packaging of Perfume Cosmetics & Design Congress touts itself as the world's leading expo for fine-mist spray bulbs and bottle-stop daubers. One expert who will probably not be at this year's event (Feb. 3-4) is Nicolas Cloutier, whose Paris perfumery, Nose, is based around the idea that scents should be chosen according to science, not pretty bottles or fancy names. Customers undergo a 30-minute "diagnosis," which uses "perfume recommendation technology" and "a very robust statistical algorithm" to create "olfactive portraits."

On a recent afternoon, a consultant named Lin extolled Nose's virtues: "We match scents to individuals by breaking down olfactory elements. Smells reveal a big part of our personality."

Just then, two women bustled in, past sniffing stations and swiping screens, and headed for a vial with a shimmery label. "Oh, that is just beautiful!" exclaimed one of the arrivals. "Get that one!" —BOYD FARROW