

FERN's Friday Feed: The political restaurant



Welcome to FERN's Friday Feed (#FFF), where we share the stories from this week that made us stop and think.

Talking food politics with the Sioux Chef FERN and *Switchyard*

“Owamni is a political restaurant, one that allows its patrons to believe they are confirmed anti-racist allies. To eat here is to get to be a good person, at least for a time, because what Sean Sherman is doing is a good thing,” writes Theodore Ross. “This kind of politics is not exclusive to Owamni, nor is it the only reason one might eat there—reviewers have nearly universally praised the food, after all—nor is it necessarily fair to Sherman to view his project in this way. Le Bernardin in New York is a Michelin three-star French restaurant, with a French chef, serving French food, and France, as a nation, is eager to spread its culture, language, and politics around the globe, but particularly in places that were once its colonial possession, if they will allow them. But you would be hard pressed to find anyone trying to understand Eric Ripert’s food primarily as political, although it is every bit as much as Sherman’s.”

How shooters lured historic wolves to their deaths in Wyoming *WyoFile*

“An electronic call drew the canine in. The recorded sounds of a pronghorn in distress blared from a point some 600 yards north of the Colorado-Wyoming state line. It was a Saturday in May 2019, and the hunters at first thought they were looking at a coyote,” writes Mike Koshmrl. “Then the animal emerged further from the brush. They saw it had a ‘swooped down tail’ and an ‘oversized head.’ The men playing the distress call knew what this was. Wolf. When the gray lobo came within 243 yards, a rifle erupted. The shot from the 7 mm Shooting Times Westerner killed the lone male, a member of the first wolf pack documented in the state of Colorado since the 1940s. ‘It was no mistaken shooting,’ the shooter told *WyoFile*. “We knew what it was. And when we saw it, we wanted it.”

How seafood caught with Chinese forced labor ends up in U.S. school lunches

Politico* and *The Outlaw Ocean Project

“We documented the use of Uyghur and North Korean labor to process seafood coming from Chinese ships tied to human trafficking and illegal fishing,” writes Ian Urbina. “Then we used bills of lading and other customs information, product packaging and company press releases and annual reports to track the seafood to grocery stores, restaurants and food service companies in Europe and the United States, and federal contracts databases to tie imported seafood — everything from pollock to salmon to haddock — to American and European government purchasing.”

The fantastical feasts of England's first celebrity chef *Atlas Obscura*

“People who love extreme dining praise it as gritty and high-octane, a way to push back against older dining traditions imagined as stuffy and overly refined. But dining in the past was more dazzling, and more dangerous, than we could ever imagine,” writes Amanda Herbert. “Robert May (c. 1588–1664), a celebrity chef in Elizabethan and Jacobean England, made his name by staging elaborate feasts full of atmospheric effects, sensory experiences, and dramatic, even downright risky, stunts. At May’s banquets, clouds of gunpowder smoke choked the air. Animals hopped along the table. And diners were never really sure if the food on their plate was dead or alive.”

A brief history of onions in America

Literary Hub

“Onions remained predominantly a wild plant in the Americas much longer than in Europe and Asia,” writes Mark Kurlansky. “The French explorer Jacques Marquette, traveling the shore of what is now Lake Michigan in 1674, relied for nourishment on an onion that the Indigenous locals called cigaga-wunj, which means ‘onion place’ and is the origin of the name Chicago. In more recent times it has come to be known as the Canada onion, *Allium canadense*, and it grows wild in much of North America from New Brunswick to Florida and west to the Rocky Mountains. It is fairly easy to spot because it has a very strong onion scent and it flowers spectacularly in great globes of little pink or white blossoms. Today it is favored as an ornamental plant.”

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