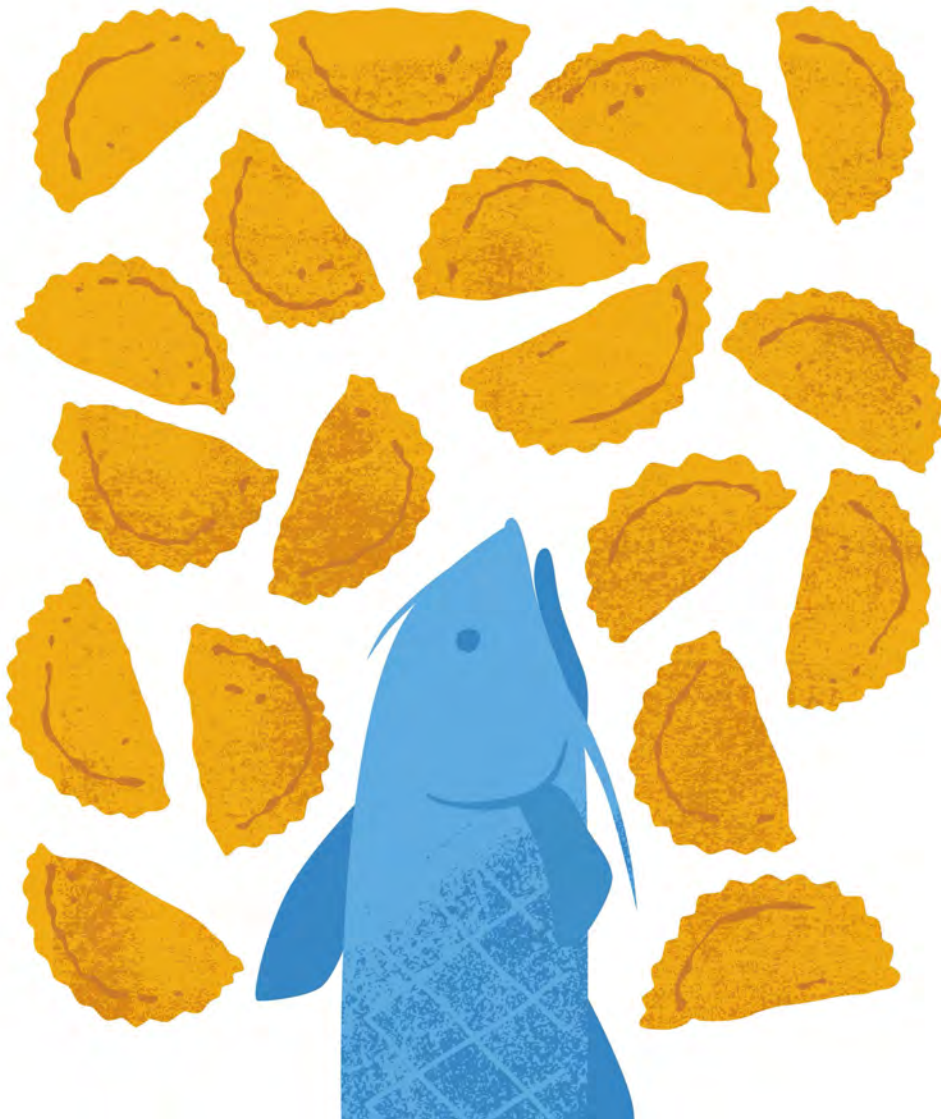


# ACCOUNTING FOR TASTE

## LET ME HAVE MY CATFISH

by Steve Yarbrough



POSTPRANDIAL EPIPHANY: Though my lovely wife is in most ways my better, there is one realm in which I believe I am more tolerant. To wit: When she returns to Poland, she wants to eat pierogi. She loves them all. Ruski pierogi, pierogi stuffed with meat, but especially the ones stuffed with mushrooms. She will order them three times out of four. I understand. First of all, she likes the taste. But more importantly, they remind her of childhood, when the world seemed huge and small pleasures counted for so much. Her grandmother's back from the internment camp where she got sent for being a capitalist. Most of the unexploded shells have been removed from the rubble where she plays. Things are looking up. So I never say, "Oh, but wouldn't you like to try the stuffed duck? Or the Lithuanian-style pork chops?"

Now, when I return to the South, there are only two things I care to eat: fried catfish and barbecue. And both choices trouble her, due to the girth of my waist and her desire that I last a good bit longer. I love the way they taste. But beyond that, when I contemplate fried catfish, I see my grandfather coming up the bank of the Sunflower River, over close to where Mr. Weber's place was, just off 49 North, with a string of catfish. I see a young boy who's never been north of Memphis, east of Tupelo, south of Jackson, or west of Lake Village, and he's licking his lips. It's the early '60s and nothing that's happening around him bothers him much, though when he grows up and recalls it, it will bother him every day. His idea of a big time is to buy a Dr. Pepper at Mr. Tyner's store in Moorhead. His idea of a really big time is to go into Indianola on Saturday night and look at all the toys he can't have at Morgan and Lindsey's. He won't hear of Proust for another fifteen years or read him for twenty. He's never heard of Poland and doesn't know there's a magical little girl over there eating her pierogi.

So I say, "Let me have my catfish, my pulled pork, and hushpuppies, and you eat all the pierogi you want. You can even have those horrid ones stuffed with blueberries. Because while you can take a girl away from Ostroda, and a boy away from Indianola, you can't take either of those places out of either one of them, and why would you want to? Bring your life to your lips and savor it. It could never taste the same to anyone else." 🍷

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*Steve Yarbrough, a native of Indianola, Mississippi, teaches creative writing at Emerson College in Boston and is the author, most recently, of The Realm of Last Chances.*