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Number of Pages (including Cover Sheet) 10

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Subject Cookery (Dog)

*Scientific, Volume 10. International
Cuisine. Charlotteville, VA: University of Virginia, ©1979.*

EXPORTING OUR PREJUDICES

One other serious problem in our failure to appraise objectively the irrationality of our own food prejudices while condemning those of others has been the export of our prejudices elsewhere, to the disadvantage of others. As pointed out by Schultz, "Outsiders who hope to improve conditions in underdeveloped areas, sometimes . . . introduce new food avoidances to the communities they came to help. [If the outsiders] show repugnance toward consuming goats, . . . rats, . . . crows, insects, intestines, and blood, then the people they are educating may likewise give up those . . . foods and lose valuable proteins." British and American abhorrence of dogmeat eating, for example, has been so forcefully and insensitively conveyed to other peoples who traditionally obtained badly needed protein from such sources, that the practice is being hidden or has even become illegal, as now on Taiwan. What a disservice to mankind to promote one's own irrational hang-ups, particularly concerning so important a matter as food.

HUMANE CONSIDERATIONS

Nor does the commonly voiced "humane" issue do other than beg the question. In 1959 Lt. A. P. O'Meara, a graduate of West Point, was convicted and fined \$200 in Peoria, Ill., for "cruelty to an animal." He had killed a stray dog by a quick blow to the head and barbecued it as a demonstration of the edibility of dogmeat. How ridiculous a basis for a legal decision. I have long been a staunch advocate of humanness in all relations of people to animals (and other people). And I have personally been as fond of dogs as any person. In the food use of animals, humanness means the husbanding of animals in ways that are healthful and do not induce undue fear, stress, or pain. And these elements of fear and pain should be especially guarded against in the way animals are killed. Some commonplace practices in meat production are notoriously inhumane. Kosher killing of cattle and sheep, for example, by slitting the throat of a fully conscious animal should be prohibited as a barbarous holdover from less enlightened times. It has no more to do with the essentials of religion than the long-abandoned bloody sacrifices of animals at the altar that are similarly described as necessary religious ritual in the Old Testament.

As for the dangers involved in eating dogmeat, the possibility of trichinosis requires that dogmeat be thoroughly cooked. The handling of

the dog's intestines also demands very special precautions (see pages 9-10) in areas like the western United States in which a small tapeworm of the dog (*Echinococcus granulosus*) passes eggs in the dog's stool that cause hydatid disease in man, infection with a parasite that grows in the human liver or other organs like a tumor.

THE WHOLE CARCASS

WHOLE roast dog is traditional in Hawaii and Samoa while dogs are also grilled whole in Hawaii, the Philippines, and Indonesia. In Indonesia, Korea, and parts of Africa, the whole singed and eviscerated dog often is rotated on a spit before the open fire. My own first personal knowledge that dog is eaten today was acquired when, as a boy, I used to lie on the floor and pour over many photograph albums belonging to a dentist cousin of mine who had spent long periods during the 1930s in the former Netherlands East Indies and elsewhere in the Far East. There were a number of photos in his collection of dogs being spit-roasted, grilled, and oven baked by appreciative Indonesians.

I have found no publications on the nutritional value of dogmeat, but it probably differs little from lean pork.

ROAST DOG (*Imu-baked tiloi*) / HAWAII AND SAMOA

The most common of traditional methods for cooking whole dog in Hawaii was in the ground oven, or *imu*. As with pigs, the Hawaiians traditionally killed dogs by strangulation or by holding their nostrils shut, in order to conserve the blood. The hair is then removed by singeing and rubbing with hot stones (native Hawaiian dogs were of a short-haired terrier type). The head, entrails, and genitalia are then removed; the cooking procedure resembles that given for *Kalua* pig. Dog also is prepared in the *imu* by wrapping pieces of the meat in *ti* leaves. The Samoan *umu* also employs hot stones but is constructed on the surface, more like a New England clam bake.

BROILED PUPPY / HAWAII

The delicate puppy meat usually is prepared by flattening out the entire eviscerated animal and broiling it over hot coals. It also may be spitted on sticks. The traditional Hawaiian accompaniment for dog cooked in any way is sweet potatoes.

BOILED STUFFED DOG / BURMA

The Chins of Burma stuff dogs with a sweet gelatinous rice and boil them whole.

MUSCLE MEAT

Doc hams in China are much renowned. A European visitor to China, in describing his experience of this delicacy, remarked that "one taste led to another, and resulted in a verdict for reason; for in summing up, after a hearty meal, I pronounced the dog ham to be delicious in flavour, well smoked, tender and juicy." In fact, in China pork and dog hams often are cured together because it is considered that without a dog ham or two present in the cure, the pork product does not have its characteristic goodness either. Similarly interesting is the fact that rendered dog fat is used in cooking some special Chinese dishes, also to obtain the desired flavor.

DOG HAM (*La tsan*) / CHINA

Two slightly different processes are employed in China for dog ham, both usually carried out in early spring when the weather is not extreme and the wind brisk. In the first process (*Yuennan*), the leg of the dog is trimmed and rubbed thoroughly with rock salt using about 2-1/2 lbs. of salt for a hundred pounds of meat. The leg then is squeezed to express all the blood possible. Next, the hams are packed tightly in layers in a wooden tub. On the 5th and 10th days, they are removed, rubbed again with a similar quantity of salt and repacked with the other side up. They are allowed to cure like this for 15 to 20 days. Then the hams are hung in a well-ventilated and shaded place for 6 months.

For *Kimwah* ham, on the other hand, rock salt is heated in a pan and about 5 lbs. of hot salt is rubbed into 100 lbs. of dog thighs. The hams are packed in a wooden tub and the top weighted with a heavy stone. They are turned every 5 days and, after 1 month, are removed, coated with sesame seeds, and hung to dry for 4 to 5 months in a shaded, well-ventilated place.

A popular belief is that dogmeat, cat meat, and rat meat have been eaten in Europe as an extreme measure only during periods of war-induced famine. I hate to put an end to that fantasy. Many persons would be very

surprised to learn that smoked dog ham (*Hundeschinken*) is prepared in normal times not only in China but also in parts of Switzerland and in other European Alpine countries. In fact, the only two cases of human trichinosis diagnosed in Switzerland in recent years resulted from the patients eating their dogmeat too rarely cooked!

Foxes are eaten too in Switzerland, especially in a popular hunters' dish called *Fuchspfeffer* (pepper fox). In western Switzerland hunters also eat fresh fox meat in the field grilled over a fire on skewers as the Hawaiians and Indonesians also do with dogmeat.

This is another traditional Swiss recipe for dried and salted raw dogmeat. It is prepared in a similar fashion to Swiss *Bindenfleisch*, or dried beef, which also is called *vlande de Grisson*.

DRIED DOGMEAT (*Gedörntes Hundfleisch*) / SWITZERLAND

Hang a dressed dog carcass for 8 to 10 days at about 36°F and then debone it, retaining as large pieces as possible. Pack these in oak barrels in the following salt mixture for 7 days at 45° to 50°F: for each 20 lbs. of meat, use 7 oz. salt, 1/6 oz. saltpeter, 1/3 oz. sugar, 1/3 oz. cracked black peppercorns, and 1/2 bay leaf. Repack the pieces after two days, putting those pieces which were on the bottom on the top. Liquid will be drawn from the meat. After 7 days, add some red wine containing crushed garlic to the brine that has formed and leave for several more days. After this curing, wash the meat in warmish water, but don't soak it. Run a piece of binding cord through the end of each piece of meat and press it between two boards in an open press (that is, with free air circulation between the pieces) in a drying room at a room temperature of 50°-55°F and 72 to 75 percent humidity for 5 to 6 weeks. After this pressing process, hang the pieces of meat freely in the same drying room for another 1-1/2 to 4-1/2 months (depending on their size).

Traditionally, dried dogmeat is served as paper-thin slices.

Many readers will be further surprised to learn that laws requiring veterinary postmortem examination of dogs for human consumption are currently on the books in several other European countries. That for Belgium, for example, was passed in 1885 and required that, besides veterinary inspection, dogmeat, like horsemeat and pork, be sold in separate butcher stalls.

Another dried dogmeat preparation is for jerky.

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SMOKED DOG (*Tapen aso*) / PHILIPPINES

The meat is cut in thin strips, sun dried for several days, and then smoked in the flue over a hardwood fire. It then is eaten as is or cooked like any jerky. According to an unnamed United Nations friend, among the international set in Manila smoked dog is a "tremendous hit at cocktail parties."

In addition to roasting unadorned dog over charcoal, some traditional Indonesian recipes are as elaborate as this *saté*.

COCONUT-CREAM-MARINATED DOG ON SKEWERS
(*Saté bumbu dendeng*) / INDONESIA

Cut dogmeat into pieces and marinate them in a mixture of coconut cream with a little soy sauce, pounded garlic and onions, ground coriander, ground cumin, salt, and pepper. Skewer, broil over charcoal, and serve with a pickled hot pepper sauce.

To me, this next recipe sounds rather unappetizing, but I feel the same way about simply *boiled* pork or lamb.

BOILED DOG / HAWAII

Put convenient-sized pieces of dogmeat in a cooking calabash with water and boil them by adding hot stones. Presumably those who would appreciate such simple fare now could prepare it more conveniently on the stove in a pot!

Dogmeat also is eaten just plain boiled in Africa and Korea.

With any imagination at all, cooks can devise additional, more appetizing possibilities for boiling dogmeat. In Vietnam, dog chops are simmered with white wine, and ground dogmeat is made into traditional sausages that are often boiled. The following also sounds very good. It is a Filipino method of braising dogmeat that is also applied to pork and chicken.

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DOGMEAT STEW (*Adobo aso*) / PHILIPPINES

Cut dogmeat and chicken into pieces. Add crushed garlic, bay leaf, and black pepper. Barely cover with water and vinegar (1:1) and simmer until tender. Increase the heat, evaporate the liquid, add oil, and brown the meat pieces. Serve the *adobo* with a sauce made by DEGLAZING the pot with water and salting to taste.

In Chinese tradition, dogmeat is especially associated with heat and is eaten most during the dog days (*fu-tien*), July 19 to August 18, to ward off heat prostration. In fact, a special dogmeat-eating ceremony called *a-chee* used to be held in China.

RED-COOKED DOG (*Hon tsao go zo*) / CHINA

Cut the meat of a puppy into bite-sized pieces and sauté in a wok in oil, ginger, and garlic until brown. Add soy sauce, sugar, fermented bean curd, dried bean curd, and water. Simmer until tender. At the end stir in a little rice wine and serve with lettuce.

Probably most Chinese recipes for pork are also applied to dogmeat, as this recipe obtained for me in China by Man Tat Yan would suggest.

STIR-FRIED DOG (*Nan tsao go zo*) / CHINA

Eviscerate and clean a puppy. Remove the hair by singeing in a rice-straw fire; continue this heat treatment until the skin is golden brown. Cut the meat into cubes and dry-fry them in a wok. Add oil, ginger, garlic, and dried, salted black beans to another wok and stir-fry for 10 minutes. Add the meat, soy sauce, green onions, and deep-fried bean curd. Stir momentarily.

VISCERAL ORGANS

DOG'S brain and blood also were eaten by the Hawaiians in the past and their entrails by the Tahitians. No doubt contemporary Samoan recipes for pig's blood and organs also apply to the preparation of dog. Dakota Indians enjoyed dog liver raw.

That exhausts my repertoire of dog recipes. What about cat?

DOGMEAT EATING WORLDWIDE

Dogs have been eaten by man through all his history. Hippocrates, for one, much praised dogmeat as a source of strength, and, to the Romans, suckling puppy was a dish considered fit for the gods. The Celtic ancestors of many of us relished dogmeat, too, and (to the surprise of many readers, we can be sure) dogmeat eating still survives in parts of Europe today, and not just during periods of war-induced famine. It has been a traditional European belief, for example, that dogmeat is a preventive of tuberculosis.

Of course, the Chinese, too, have for centuries raised special breeds of dogs, such as the black-tongued chow, expressly for food, and in that country dogmeat is also regarded as being a disease preventive, in their case, a preventive of heat prostration in very hot weather. It also is enjoyed today by many other peoples throughout Southeast Asia, the Pacific islands, and parts of Africa.

In the Americas, the Mexican hairless dog was the principal food species of the Aztecs, and it was recorded at the time of the Spanish conquest that a single market near Mexico City sold over 400 fattened dogs per week as food. Still closer to home, dog eating was widespread among the Indians of the eastern United States, the Central Plains, and California. In fact, in some tribes it persists to this day, although the practice is rarely admitted. This reluctance to divulge came home to me in a letter from a friend who was trying to help provide North American Indian recipes for this book: "I just called a Sac-Fox friend from Iowa," he wrote, "to find out how they cook their dogs for ceremonial eating. He was completely put off, saying that outsiders weren't supposed to know that they still ate dogs—although several times he had spoken to me of the terrible conflict he experienced as a child of raising an affectionate puppy which was dear to him, and the pride of having *his* dog eaten for the ceremony. He was completely unwilling to tell me how their dogs are cooked—but then he said he hoped that I could find out how *other* people cooked theirs and let him know!"

It may come as something of a surprise, too, that dogmeat also is eaten today in parts of Hawaii and American Samoa, although almost everyone there also officially denies it. When we went to live in Hawaii after the war, we learned that not only was dog traditionally relished by the Hawaiians and other Polynesians, who prized it above both pork and chicken, but that

it is still being eaten by some Hawaiians and Filipino-Americans. One Filipino insisted that "it's better to eat surplus dogs than allow them to become a menace." Which certainly makes sense.

In fact, the Hawaiians were at a complete loss to explain the really inexplicable attitudes about dogs and pigs of the early British and American explorers and exploiters who visited their islands. The Hawaiians raised both species and kept them both as pets, Hawaiian women even suckling their young—and they also ate both species. Why these strangers should consider the dog as *only* suitable to be a pet and the pig as *only* suitable for food completely escaped and baffled them—as, of course, it should any rational man.

Those Englishmen and Americans who did venture to try dog and recorded their reactions for posterity generally liked it, as their writings suggest. For instance, dogmeat was eaten and enjoyed by Captain Cook, and, referring to a roasted leg of dog, another English visitor to New Zealand in 1777 wrote that it "tasted so exactly like mutton, that it was absolutely indistinguishable." A later voyager to Hawaii described dogmeat as "bearing a close resemblance to lamb, and . . . consequently a dish that few who have tasted would despise."

In Hong Kong and Taiwan, dogmeat today often goes by the euphemistic name "fragrant meat." Not long ago the international press carried a story from Hong Kong about some European tourists who were traveling around the world with their dog and went to dine at a highly recommended restaurant. They encountered a formidable language barrier but persisted in ordering a resplendent dinner and, amidst much confusion and gesturing, also conveyed, so they thought, the additional idea that their pooodle was hungry, too, and was there not something in the kitchen he might eat. As the dog was led off by the waiter, they commenced to embark on their delicious, many-coursed dinner. Its culmination was a triumphant procession from the kitchen. The silver tray with domed lid was ceremoniously unveiled for the meal's pièce de résistance only to reveal—you guessed it—their dear pooodle. The article stated that they cut short their world cruise precipitously and flew directly home. Which is, of course, a very sad story, if true, but also clearly a case of conflicting values and tastes. On mainland China there are said to be relatively few dogs anymore after a deliberate campaign to eliminate them as pests and wasters of food. Most of these surplus dogs were disposed of in people's stomachs.

*Shawnee Catering Co., Commonwealth University
 Charles Cameron, VA: University of Virginia, 8/19/79.*

Source:
Schwabe, Calvin W. *Unmentionable Cuisine*.
Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia,
©1979. UNMENTIONABLE CUISINE / 396

5 layers of cheesecloth until the whey has drained. The *skyr* then is beaten well; it should be thick and smooth. It is served with sugar and cream as a dessert.

And if you have a horse of the right sex, you could also try *koumiss*. My introduction to *koumiss*, an alcoholic fermentation of mare's milk, was in a Kazakh shepherd's comfortably carpeted and pillowed round felt tent not far from the Chinese border. A bowl of *koumiss* ladled out of a large crock is traditionally the first thing offered to visitors throughout much of Turkic and Mongolian Central Asia. It was already the drink of many of the Asiatic "barbarians" who invaded the Roman Empire, but somehow its use in Europe died out. A pity, for *koumiss* is, in fact, a most pleasant and refreshing drink, being lightly carbonated and of quite low alcohol content (1-1/2% to 3-1/4%)

FERMENTED MARE'S MILK (*Koumiss*) / CENTRAL ASIA

To prepare *koumiss*, you must first milk a mare. After that a starter may be made by blending 1/2 lb. of brewer's yeast, 1/4 lb. of flour, a little honey, and 1 C of the mare's milk. This is covered, set in a warm place, and the next day 3 qts. mare's milk are added to it and allowed to ferment. Traditionally the container is a skin bag, but other things will do. Subsequently, the old batch of *koumiss* is the starter for the next. *Koumiss* is also distilled in Central Asia to make something stronger. Alcoholic "wines" also are made from other milks; that from camel's milk, for instance, is called *kephir*, and from yak's milk *airan*. If those sound intriguing, the Chinese also make "snake wine" and "dog wine" in which the meat of these animals is added to milk before it is fermented. These milks are said to have special "medicinal" properties. So after the novelty of acupuncture wears off, who knows what else we'll discover from the Mysterious East?

GERM CELLS

THE unfertilized or fertilized female germ cells of several animal species are also relished by man in some parts of the world and avoided like a plague in others. The animal eggs that are eaten are almost all relatively large ones, like bird and turtle eggs. Exceptions are caviar, some insect eggs, and the like. Being deposited by the female externally, bird eggs and turtle eggs

Naomichi Ishige

Roasting Dog (or a Substitute) in an Earth Oven: an Unusual Method of Preparation from Ponape

Ponape, one of the Caroline Islands, lies near the equator and has a year-round summer climate. With nothing but the sea to block it, the wind covers the island's highest peaks with clouds and rain falls throughout the year. Blessed with abundant water and a warm temperature, Ponape's climate is ideally suited to agriculture. Its main crops are breadfruit, taro, yam, banana and the coconut palm. These crops, plus shellfish and coral fish, make up the traditional daily fare of the Ponapeans. If you go to the mountain fields you can see these crops in abundance and if you go to the seashore you can see shellfish being caught. 'On Ponape nobody lacks food' is a popular saying among the islanders.

Like the other islands of Micronesia, Ponape experienced a thirty-year period of Japanese rule, during which time the islanders became accustomed to cooking rice and to using metal pots and pans. This completely changed their daily eating habits. Even today much rice is imported. Moreover, the simple daily food of the Ponapeans consists of canned fish poured on a plate of rice, for even though the sea is rich with fish they prefer the taste of canned fish.

However, when they hold a banquet, called *hamatep* in Ponapean, metal pans are not used. On these occasions they decide to cook in the old way, serving traditional food cooked in an earth oven.

Cooking in the earth oven is the men's job. The women's only responsibility is to eat what the men cook. And, since the traditional tableware is the banana or other type of leaf, there's no washing up after the banquet.

One evening a Ponapean friend invited me to a *hamatep*. The banquet, which brought her whole family together, was given for an old woman who was leaving the next day for Guam. More than twenty people gathered in the garden of the family holding the banquet. Women talked happily while the men were hard at work. In a small cook-house fitted with a tin roof, coconuts were roasted. Many small volcanic stones were placed on this fire to heat. These hot stones were then placed in a large, shallow hole about 6 feet wide which had been dug for the purpose.

Source:

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Kuper, Jessica, ed. *The Anthropologists Cookbook*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, © 1977

Each member of the family contributed a share of the food to be cooked, which was laid out on banana leaves spread on the ground until it was needed. There were about twenty breadfruit, one taro and one freshly slaughtered pig which was to be the main course of the evening's feast. The taro was a giant which in three years had grown to a thickness of 1 foot and a length of 3 feet. It looked like a log. One side of it was planed flat with a knife and then, using wooden choppers, the men cut it into easy-to-eat bread-like slices. The pig was put on the hot stones to burn its hair off; then the belly was slit open and the inner organs taken out.

It was at this point that I suddenly heard a bark. A man appeared carrying a burlap grain sack on his back. Something was rustling around in the sack: it was a dog. The man put the sack on the ground and stepped firmly on its opening. Men standing near by raised wooden clubs over their heads and, aiming at what they thought to be the head, struck once, twice. . . . When the howling stopped they dragged it out of the bag. It was brown with white spots, about 4 feet long. Two men took the dog by the legs and carried it over to the fire and put it on the hot stones. When all the hair had been singed, the belly was cut open and all the inner organs removed – except the liver which was left to be cooked. When this was done, all preparations were complete.

Since taro and breadfruit are tastier and spicier when charred, they were put directly on top of the hot stones. Over them were placed two or three layers of banana leaves. Then came the carcasses of the dog and the pig. Finally about twenty banana leaves were used to cover all the food and the hot stones. All that was left was to wait for the food to cook. As the hole was covered with banana leaves none of the heat escaped and the stones served as an oven. And as no water was used, none of the flavour of the food was lost. This is a method of cooking used by a culture that had no metal cooking implements or china tableware.

After an hour the banana leaves which covered the oven were taken off and the fragrance of charred breadfruit filled the air. The pork and dog were carved and placed on the banana leaves which served as plates, each person receiving a portion. None of the food was seasoned or salted.

The breadfruit tasted rather like a sweet potato though a little less sweet. The dog did not taste as bad as its smell would have led one to believe, though it was a bit tough and had to be chewed for a long time, almost like chewing gum. But chewing brought out the rather rich-tasting juices of the meat. The pork had a rather bland flavour by comparison.

There is a tradition of eating dog, not only in the Pacific Islands but in most of the countries of east Asia, including China, Japan and Korea. In areas where pastoralism or hunting has not been developed, the idea of a dog having a particularly close relationship to man ('man's best friend') like the Western European sheep-dog or hunting-dog, simply doesn't exist. And looked at through alien eyes, our attitudes can only seem to be a kind of fetishism.

Since there are not large wild animals to be hunted and, besides chicken, the only other traditional domesticated animal is dog (pigs were introduced by white men), roast dog is the most sumptuous of banquet fare in Ponape and the village elder must be invited to such a feast.

This particular *kamatp* lacked the boisterous gaiety which usually characterizes such events. I learned from the whispering that the guest of honour, the old woman who would fly to Guam the next day, was quite ill. A doctor at the Ponape hospital who had examined her found that she had only about six months to live, so he decided to transfer her to the better equipped hospital on Guam in the hope of prolonging her life. Thus everyone are in silence.

For people who put more trust in dogs than in people and who have become accustomed to treating them as members of the family, the idea of eating dog is the same as eating human flesh (cannibalism). I can also recognize that it is something that can be considered disgusting. I don't want to advocate roasting dogs: I simply suggest that instead of taking pots and pans when you go on a picnic, bring a shovel and some canvas and enjoy the pleasure of using an earth oven.*

In place of the proper ingredients (taro and breadfruit) you can substitute unpeeled potatoes, sweet potatoes, squash and aubergine. Place these on the hot stones. As for meat, beef, pork or lamb, seasoned with salt and pepper and wrapped in cooking foil, will do. Fish similarly seasoned, with lemon slices added and wrapped in foil can also be used. You can either use fish fillets or whole river trout which have been gutted. When everything you want to cook has been placed in the hole, cover it with canvas and on top of this spread a good 3 inches of soil and wait an hour. The food will certainly be ready in 1 hour, but it can be left for 2 hours or so. Since the stones cool as the food cooks, there is no danger of overcooking.

* For precise instructions, see Paul Sillitoe's article.

Source:

Ryder, Francis, ed. *The Anthropological Outlook*.
London: Routledge
and Kegan Paul, c.1977.

Source:

Trang, Corine. *Authentic Vietnamese Cooking*. New York, NY: Simon & Schuster, ©1999.

of exotics macho; it also shows status and wealth. For those who see only cruelty in these preparations, it is important to remember that these traditions are part of a complex and sophisticated culture evolved over centuries, and that many of these meats are believed to have medicinal qualities, and some are valued as aphrodisiacs. The machismo angle may be one of simple exclusion: Vietnamese women, for whatever reason, are happy to leave most of these items to the men.

Although I have described here the strangest exotic meats imaginable, there are others that are considered exotic but are merely the offal of certain barnyard animals, such as chicken, ducks, pigs, and cows. If I have not lost you yet, and if you feel the urge, stir-fry poultry hearts and gizzards with some *sate* paste (page 49). Eating spiced giblets in Vietnam is not dissimilar to eating *giblets à la bourguignonne*, giblets braised in wine, in France, or eating them in a traditional American Thanksgiving corn bread stuffing.

POULTRY & MEATS

Source:

Trang, Carine. *Authentic Vietnamese Cooking*.
New York, NY: Simon & Schuster, © 1999.

EXOTIC MEATS

“YOU WANT TO EAT DOG?” asked my guide, Tuan, in Hanoi on a recent trip to Vietnam. He was pointing to a small, golden, crisp-skinned roasted dog—very much in the style of Peking duck—in a bustling indoor food market. A common sight in Hanoi, roast dog is seasonal (best in winter), and eating it is derived from southern Chinese traditions. Halved, it is sold cut into its preferred parts for eating: head with fangs, rump with back legs, and front legs with ribs. (Although Tuan may have been showing off a bit, I was not particularly surprised. I had eaten dog before and would gladly have had some if I had not been in a hurry.) The Vietnamese do not eat just any dog but use only a few, very specific breeds—the preferred one being called “yellow dog.” (I have also heard of “black dog” being eaten.) Despite any squeamishness non-Asians may have about eating canines, dog actually tastes somewhat gamy, rather like goat. Not only dog, but also bat, armadillo, bear, porcupine, monkey, field rat, snake, and other exotics are found throughout Vietnam, and it is not uncommon to find specialty restaurants featuring these items. “Only men eat that,” expressed my guide during another exotics excursion, this time in Saigon, implying a kind of macho rite.

In specialty restaurants the animals are usually presented live, then killed and cooked immediately. Certain animals, such as the snake, also have the blood drained out and presented as a drink, this followed by a dish of cooked snake meat. Monkey can cost up to three hundred U.S. dollars. So not only is the consumption