

strawberry-rhubarb pie with whipped cream
and a big batch of oatmeal-raisin cookies
or tollhouse chocolate chip ... and the
stomach does firm up, round and full and
content and securely protruding from
the family album.

-- Leo Mailman

Cape Elizabeth ME

PEPPERS:

ON A NEWSPAPER REVIEW OF A ROBERT ALTMAN FILM: "THREE WOMEN"
MORELIA MARKET, MEXICO

Peppers green, peppers red, peppers blue
peppers peppers peppers everywhere
hide me, I scream, I can't get away from peppers
jalapeno peppers, little deadly peppers, ground peppers
peppers black, peppers that make you sneeze
the pepper that ate Tokyo
peppers that make you swallow your teeth
peppers bell, superpepper, the pepper from outer space
peppers as harmless as mushrooms
behind every great man is a good pepper
peppers that will make your car battery sing with volts
peppers that will strip the chrome off your bumpers
peppers that will melt the fillings in your teeth
peppers in my chorizo, peppers in my eggs
cream and sugar in your coffee, señor, or peppers
chili peppers and doctor peppers
peppers in my curried chicken
peppers on peppers
the day of the peppers, pepper uppers, pepper trees
peppers eating out a whole new stomach
peppers between my teeth
a girl named Pepper
peppers that sank a thousand ships
I admit that the flies don't like them
and they keep the meat from rotting
and they don't stink like onions and garlic
but they are in the restaurants on the table, pickled and
smiling
like there is nothing to worry about
I order something safe
and some sadist in the back of the kitchen
is salting my waffles with peppers
they come floating with bananas in my cornflakes
they sit like gate-crashers on the edge of my plate

waiting for me to make a fool of myself
daring me to take them on just one more time
and like a fool, I do
and I run off to the north screaming
for raspberry frozen yogurt
and someone hands me some cold milk
with instant peppers mixed in it
or the ice cubes come with peppers frozen in them
peppers green and peppers red and peppers blue
fierce like all the women I ever loved
they fall in love that way, burning and full of gas
but beautiful as peppers on bright blue plastic
sorted out according to color
and stacked to please the eye
pointing south
or peppers on a Mexican newspaper review
of a Robert Altman film, "Three Women"
women indeed
never trust a woman that puts peppers on her ice cream
she will eat your liver with Taco Sauce
she will leave your heart pickled on a restaurant table
she will put peppers in your boots
to keep away the scorpions
and other women
and when the sun peels your skin
like paint off an old building
they say that peppers keep you cool
and one bite later I break out sweating and screaming
and cursing all the peppers that ever were
tears in my eyes, coals in my mouth
snorting flames and napalming taste buds
that flop over and die and they never come back
gone south for the winter
Oh yes, I can't taste anything anymore but peppers
I load a syringe with peppers and shoot it up my veins
save me, I yell, I am going to the pepper half-way house
I am a peepee when it comes to peppers
of any kind and all kinds of hot stuff
I scream for ice cream and they all laugh
at the big dumb gringo spitting out gobs of peppers
crying on his knees under the table of the local cantina
and somewhere in the back stalls of the market
I find the pepper pushers
and I see them there like pubescent girls in an Easter
parade
beautiful and innocent and dangerous as a moray eel
and, like a fool, I get sucked in again
a pretty face, a pretty green pepper
and there I am, straddle-leg over a bunch of pretty
peppers
and I take them the only way I can
on film.