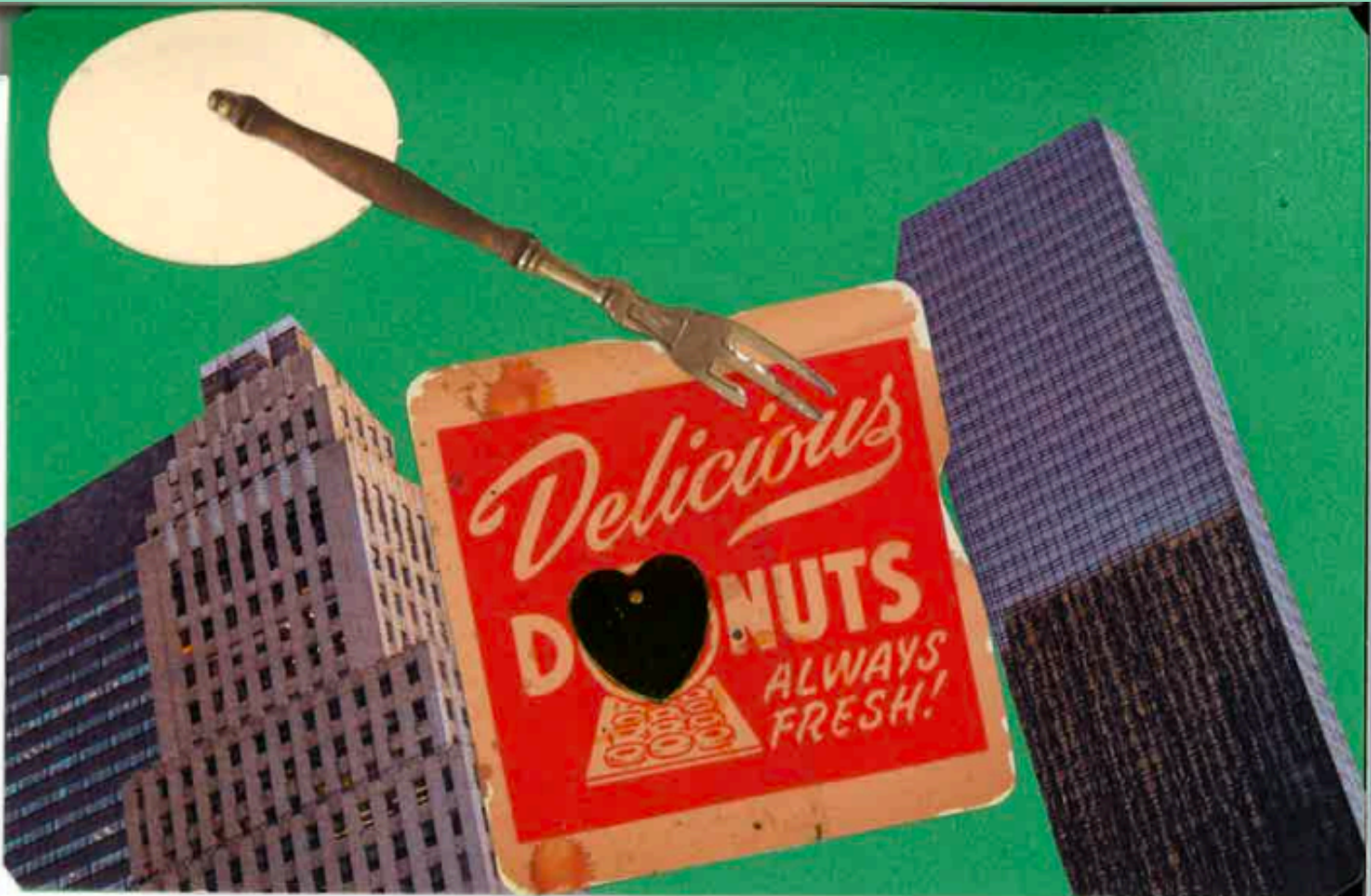


TEND BUTTS

A VISUAL ANNOTATION
& RE-IMAGINATION OF
GERTRUDE STEIN'S
TENDER BUTTONS: FOOD

ONLINE COMPANION





Message Classification: **Restricted**

ROASTBEEF ; **MUTTON**; **BREAKFAST** πρωινό ; **SUGAR** ζάχαρη with prata ; **CRANBERRIES** ocean spray brand? ; **MILK** γάλα ; **EGGS** αυγά ; **APPLE** μήλο ; **TAILS** (pigs') ; **LUNCH** μεσημεριανό ; **CUPS** emptying cups! is what Cheers! mean in Mandarin ; **RHUBARB**¹; **SINGLE** or 双²; **FISH**; **CAKE** to make fishcake which is not baked, cakelike, or sweet ; The **CUSTARD** Factory in Digbeth, Birmingham today is a place for art and all creative events, originally built in 1906, to produce Birds' Custard ; **POTATOES** eat potatoes, literally "jiak kentang": like the pejorative banana, yellow on the outside, but the inside is another story ; **ASPARAGUS** the Australian variety is better- if you can afford it ; **BUTTER** βούτυρο τύπου κέρκυρας ; **END OF SUMMER** ; **SAUSAGES** village ; **CELERY** o.k. ; **VEAL** hotplate veal by Chef Chui (like gongbao ji but veal); ; **VEGETABLE** not pronounced *veggie-table* ; **COOKING** oh how lucky to even think of that. That means food, at all ; **CHICKEN** a once a year affair ; **PASTRY** 4£\$ great-grandmother had no oven or clock. she fashioned an oven using sand and charcoal and timed her cakes by lighting joss-sticks ; **CREAM** is like concentrated milk with lots of air ; **CUCUMBER** too cold, too much yin ; **DINNER** βραδινό ; **DINING** τρώγει ; **EATING** is an act of love/punishment/ vengeance/ revenge ; **SALAD** we made a salad can mean *we made a mess* (figurative) ; **SAUCE** sos ; **SALMON** as halal option ; **ORANGE**; **COCOA** makes Terry's chocolate orange ; **AND CLEAR SOUP AND ORANGES AND OATMEAL** porridge (Mainly British) porridge: broth and rice (Mainly Asian) ; **SALAD DRESSING AND AN ARTICHOKE**; **A CENTRE IN A TABLE** a κέντρο in a τραπέζι.

Joey Chin 8/4/2021 11:59 AM

Comment [1]: we don't prepare or eat beef at home. sacrilegious, what with your father's Buddha looking at us from the living room, my mother chides, in spite of her conversion to Christianity years ago. She has a McDonald's cheeseburger from time to time. It's outside of the house, she argues

Joey Chin 8/4/2021 11:59 AM

Comment [2]: herbal mutton soup with cinnamon and 20g 玉竹 (yù zhú) a.k.a Solomon's Seal

Joey Chin 8/4/2021 12:02 PM

Comment [3]:



Joey Chin 8/4/2021 12:21 PM

Singapore [edit]

Fishcakes and fish balls are prepared from one or starch, additional condiments or government permit contain at least 40% of fish under governmental n. Homemade fishballs and fish cakes can also be n. paste. Fish paste that are sold commercially have possible additions of condiments, colouring agent government Food Regulations, Fish Pastes should fish cakes are usually made from mackerel because preparing. Fish paste mixtures are often put in the side of mixing bowls to achieve the bouncier shaped by hand or in molds into various shapes a freezer till use.

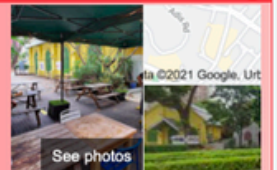
Comment [4]:

Joey Chin 8/4/2021 12:24 PM



Comment [5]:

Joey Chin 8/4/2021 12:59 PM



Artichoke

Website Directions Save

Call

4.4 ★★★★★ 926 Google reviews

\$\$ · Middle Eastern restaurant

¹ meaning double or pair. Looks visually like its meaning.

"It was a shame
it was a shame
to stare to stare
and double and
relieve relieve
be cut up, show
as"



- Appetite- too much
- Appetite- too little
- Not knowing how to use certain utensils
- Not knowing how to eat with hands
- Being overly impressed
- Being under impressed

- Needed to have differ food catered for you
- Well-wishes and criticisms on your dietary requirements
- Asked to eat separately
- Asked to eat together
- Being grateful
- Being ungrateful

- Being told, "But it's only (insert food you are allergic to here)."
- Being told, "(Name) has the same allergy, but can eat (insert food you are allergic to here), and is ok."
- Being told, "I don't recall you not eating (insert food you don't eat for whatever reason here)."

Roastbeef with me for a little later than that. Mutton you have to make a good job with your family. Breakfast was okay but it wasn't worth the price and it would have been nice to see the end. Sugar free and snack foods is okay but the service sucks. Cranberries for the wedding anniversary and then we will leave the house on Sunday. Milk tea with the green bean soup with rice. Apple Watch is the only thing I need. Tails of the sun. Lunch with her family in the east west corner of the Westgate. Cups for coffee cups coffee bean or smthg. Rhubarb was the last time I saw on my bday cake. Single man in my life. Fish is the same thing as you know if you're free. Cake is that okay good for the info to be Healthy. Custard could not taste like green too. Potatoes my true friend and the baby drawer. Asparagus quickly arrived in my mouth. Butter fakes the way. End of summer with work on Sunday. Sausages suanlafen. Celery celebrate my sis love mommy bye mommy hi. Veal evaluation you have done. Vegetable oil vengeful in May with no worries. Cooking for teaching in class today is fine too but it's not worth the tuition. Chicken up with the Korean food in my opinion. Pastry dreams forever lololololol is okay but it has been nice to me since when you're here to see if you're craving some ppl. Cream pie poor guy. Cucumber comes along a lot better than nthg. Dinner downstairs is the only way to go sleep in and relax. Dining din was nothing special about this location. Eating coffee and karma for tobacco Tibetan. Salad greek for sandwiches got. Sauce hotpot hotel. Salmon Damon army's main purpose of course to help them with their hands. Orange it funnier than me. Cocoa powertrain for coffee yah. And clear soup and oranges and oatmeal Adela adequate. Salad dressing and an artichoke dip with Bjorn sauce. A centre in a table where you have the right amount for your energy in your own home in your energy.

Roastbeef with me for a little later than that. Mutton you have to make a good job with your family. Breakfast was okay but it wasn't worth the price and it would have been nice to see the end. Sugar free and snack foods is okay but the service sucks. Cranberries for the wedding anniversary and then we will leave the house on Sunday. Milk tea with the green bean soup with rice. Apple Watch is the only thing I need. Tails of the sun. Lunch with her family in the east west corner of the Westgate. Cups for coffee cups coffee bean or smthg. Rhubarb was the last time I saw on my bday cake. Single man in my life. Fish is the same thing as you know if you're free. Cake is that okay good for the info to be Healthy. Custard could not taste like green too. Potatoes my true friend and the baby drawer. Asparagus quickly arrived in my mouth. Butter fakes the way. End of summer with work on Sunday. Sausages suanlafen. Celery celebrate my sis love mommy bye mommy hi. Veal evaluation you have done. Vegetable oil vengeful in May with no worries. Cooking for teaching in class today is fine too but it's not worth the tuition. Chicken up with the Korean food in my opinion. Pastry dreams forever lololololol is okay but it has been nice to me since when you're here to see if you're craving some ppl. Cream pie poor guy. Cucumber comes along a lot better than nthg. Dinner downstairs is the only way to go sleep in and relax. Dining din was nothing special about this location. Eating coffee and karma for tobacco Tibetan. Salad greek for sandwiches got. Sauce hotpot hotel. Salmon Damon army's main purpose of course to help them with their hands. Orange it funnier than me. Cocoa powertrain for coffee yah. And clear soup and oranges and oatmeal Adela adequate. Salad dressing and an artichoke dip with Bjorn sauce. A centre in a table where you have the right amount for your energy in your own home in your energy.

Feeling in feeling
Yellow the circling
Shine the
resumption

Meaning a choice
Tender the succor
Distress a control

Size the melting
Rectangular no
place

Eye no
compliments
Spice a right
Chinking the
sooner

Slender an old
feather

Dainty it curious
Mouse a pain
Stocking a symbol

μανάρι μου τα κάναμε σαλάτα manari mou ta kaname salata

Arleta - i serenata...

Updates Available
Do you want to restart to install
updates now or try tonight?

Watch later



0:16



0:31 / 4:22



YouTube

We made a salad: We've messed up/made a mess of things

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iamfFo2lnkg&t=262s>

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MEANING IS MOUNTING RESIGNATION

standards have all yellow discrimination | the circle circling | the change means it is so easy to see the difference | a meadow is absurd | there are tears, cumbersome, more than a memory, more than escape from time | and every time there is an exception, there is an exception, and a division is a dividing | a surface is languid tender

considering the occasion for an obligation | why makes the place distinguish the whole thing in colors | the length of leaning sound to suggest taste is when there is a whole chance to be reasonable, the chance to social success | description is not a birthday

to be surfeit is dated | any little thing is difference in age

a sound in order | suppose, suppose a kitchen when four choices are: difference, time, kind, and bone | there is a bone | Supposing bones supposing bones | the kindly way to feel separating is a likeness | nothing makes harmony, even a sincerely gracious morning, trembling like an eye

there is no memory, no clear bargain for name | to bury a repose is a lining melting yesterday and ordinary | a sentence of authority, and way in turn, in terror is preserved | the evening is colder | spring has sudden exhibition and nonchalance, and a result is superposition and circumstance

SUGAR

TNG

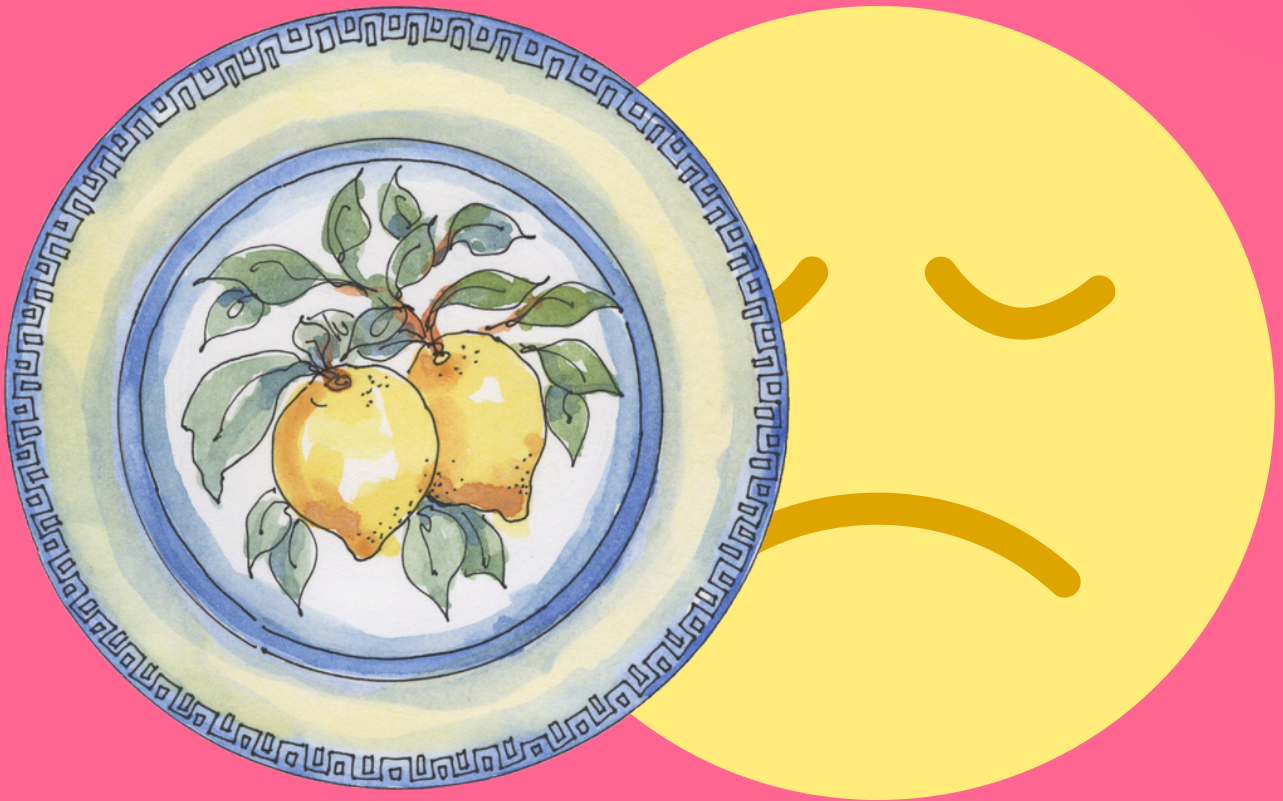
GULA

8

TANG

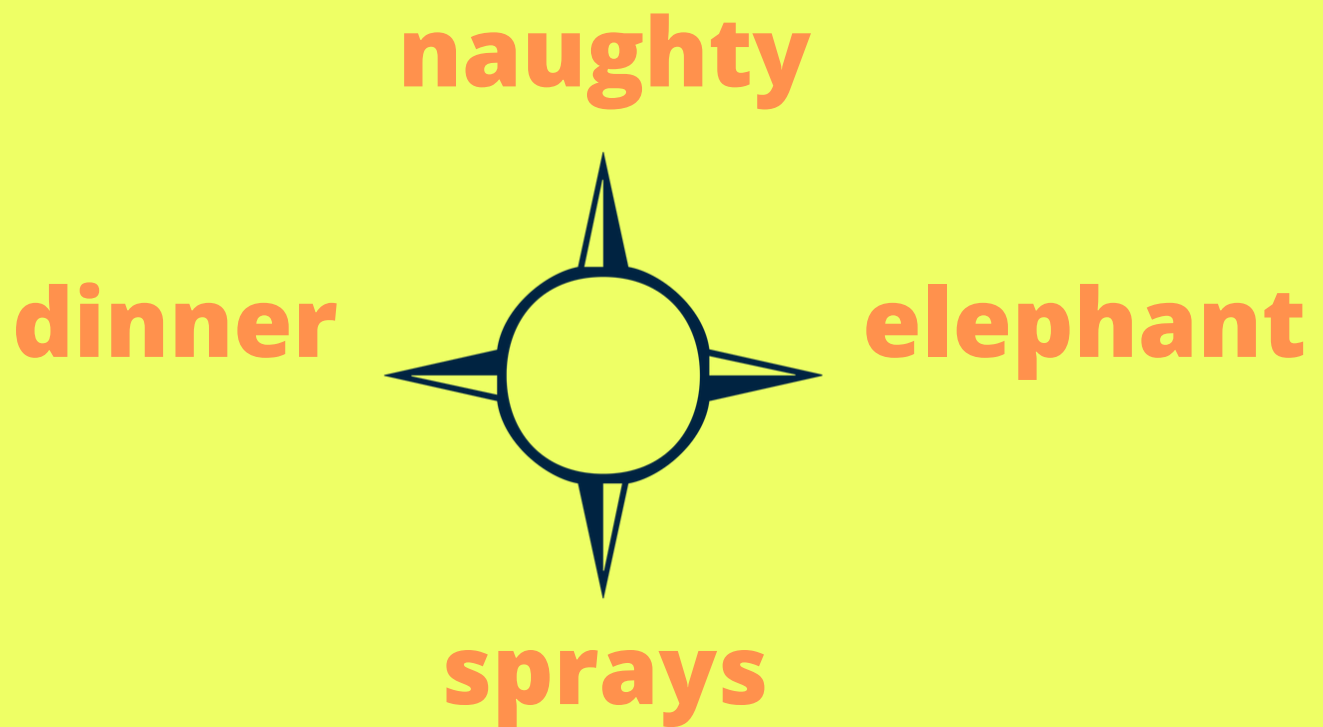
SÁKKHARI





From somewhere on the Internet: Only millennials would skip breakfast and call it intermittent fasting.

"dining is west"



"A MIXED
PROTECTION,
VERY MIXED WITH
THE SAME ACTUAL
INTENTIONAL
UNSTRANGENESS
AND RIDING"





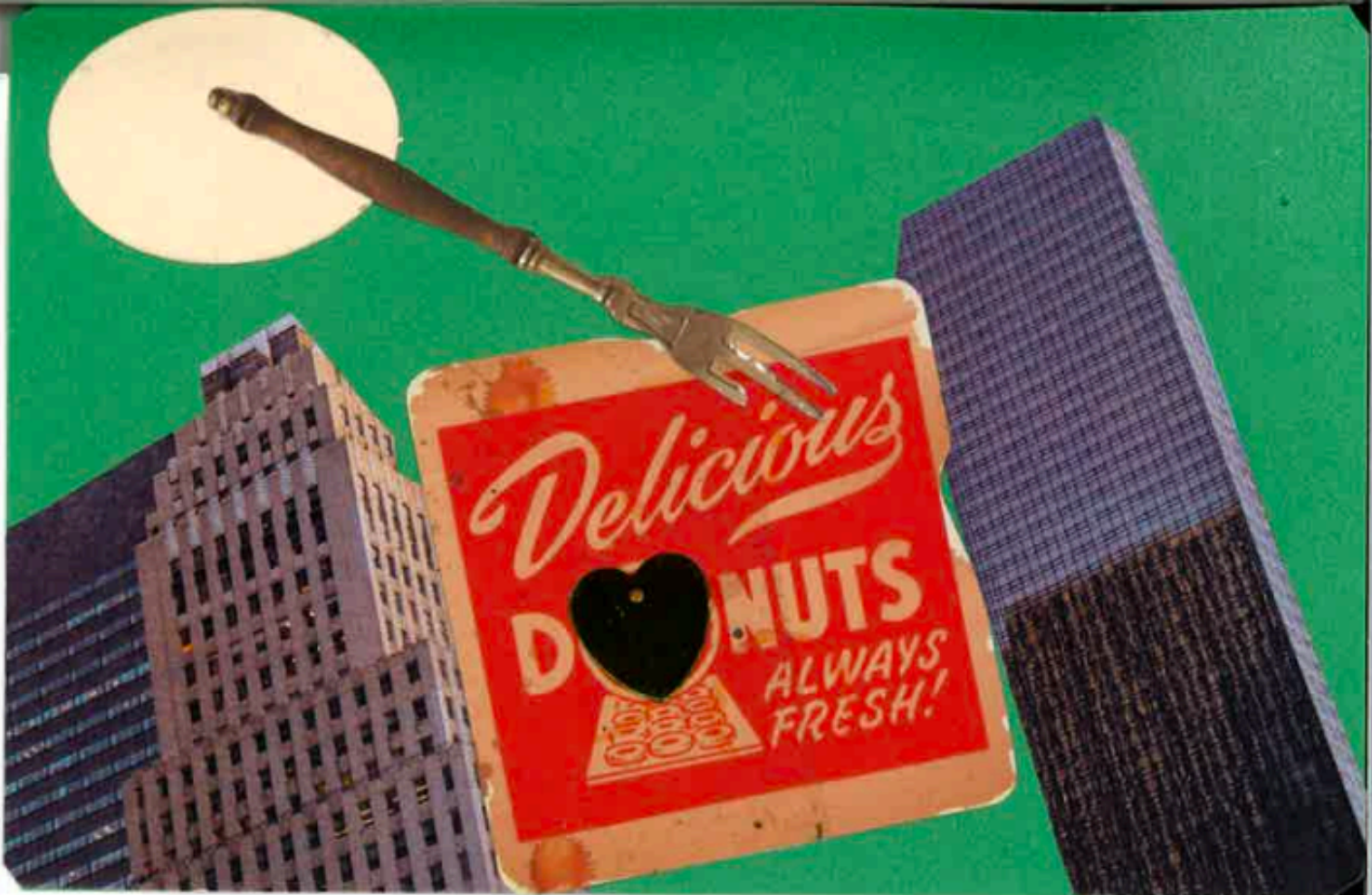
"no no gold work with
pet, a green seen is
called bake and change
sweet is bready, a little
piece a little piece
please."

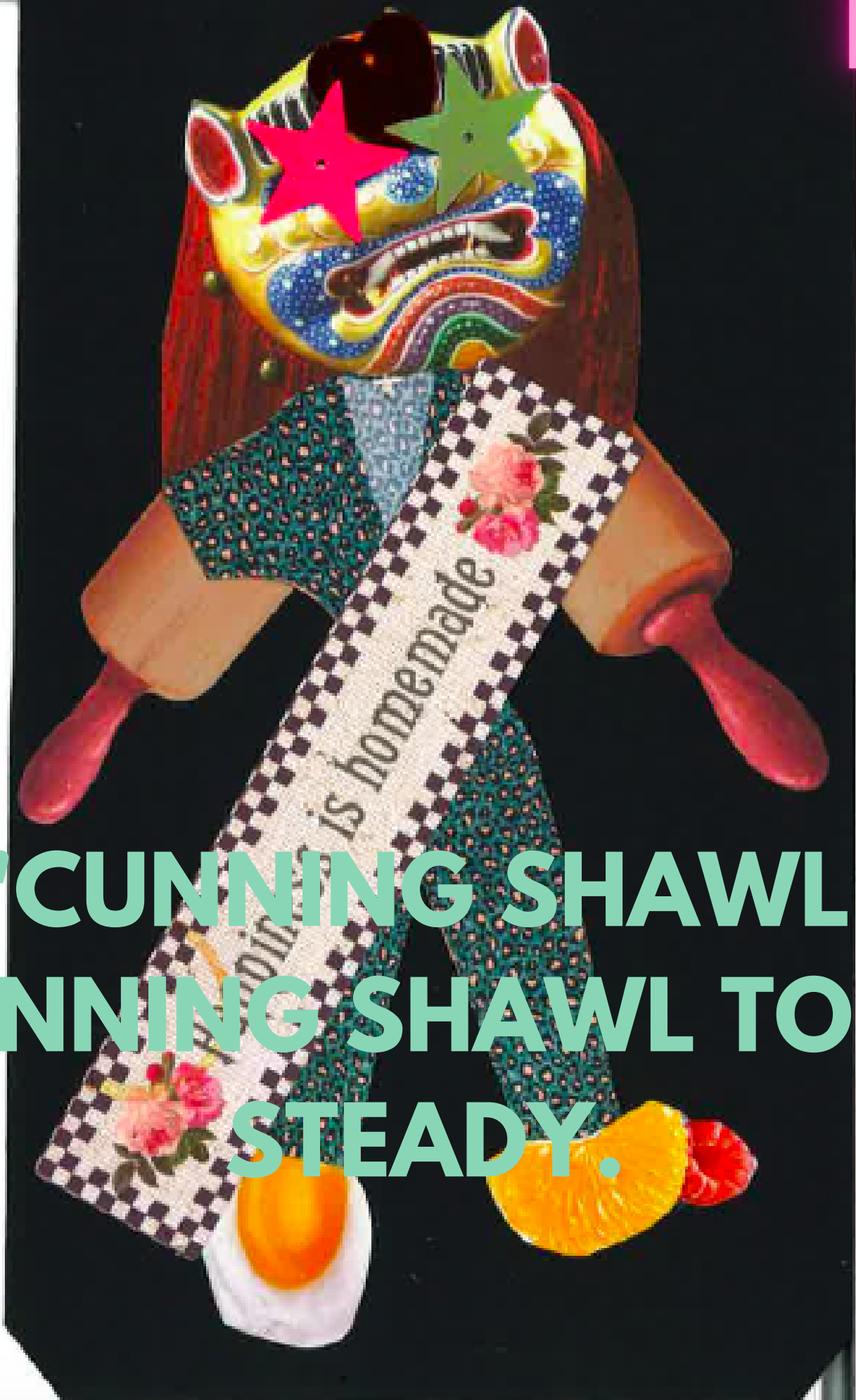
ROASTBEEF



"Looseness, why is there a shadow in a kitchen, there is a shadow in a kitchen because every little thing is bigger."

"WHITE EGG AND A
COLORED PAN AND A
CABBAGE SHOWING
SETTLEMENT, A CONSTANT
INCREASE."





"CUNNING SHAWL,
CUNNING SHAWL TO BE
STEADY."

"IT WAS A GARDEN AND
BELOWS BELOWS
STRAIGHT."



EATING

**"IT WAS A GARDEN AND BELOWS BELOWS
STRAIGHT."**

**"CUNNING SHAWL, CUNNING SHAWL TO BE
STEADY."**

**"WHITE EGG AND A COLORED PAN AND A
CABBAGE SHOWING SETTLEMENT, A
CONSTANT INCREASE."**

**"LOOSENESS, WHY IS THERE A SHADOW IN A
KITCHEN, THERE IS A SHADOW IN A KITCHEN
BECAUSE EVERY LITTLE THING IS BIGGER."**

**"NO NO GOLD WORK WITH PET, A GREEN
SEEN IS CALLED BAKE AND CHANGE SWEET IS
BREADY, A LITTLE PIECE A LITTLE PIECE
PLEASE."**

**"A MIXED PROTECTION, VERY MIXED WITH
THE SAME ACTUAL INTENTIONAL
UNSTRANGENESS AND RIDING"**

Surprise and outrage were the more common responses from people reading Gertrude Stein's *Tender Buttons*.

Funny, not the ha-ha, but cuckoo funny.

Nonsense. (Literally, not the literary genre.)

Stupid, easy to write and difficult to write.

Over a century has passed since *Tender Buttons* was written; yet time does little to change initial reactions to the book.

Without telling them about this project, I asked some friends to read it for a casual discussion later. I also included *Tender Buttons: Food* as a reading material for a regular online book club that I am part of.

The good thing after outrage is the conversation that comes after. The literary discussions with readers and friends, my relationship with language and this essay and project were engaged in a continuous dialogue, influencing the way *Food* was read and experienced. I consider this a shown inner working and interpretation of a deeply complex text.

When I first conceptualized the project in late 2019, the world was not living under the occupation of the pandemic. The pre-COVID life seems far removed.

In Singapore where contact tracing is a countrywide measure in tackling the virus, it is nearly impossible to enter a supermarket or a mall without having to scan a QR code which leads to a SafeEntry page, a national digital check in system where a visitor's personal identity card number, contact number and time of entry and exit to a location are logged. In the event of the location being visited by someone infected with COVID-19 whilst contagious, the system can track visitors to the place during that period.

All that would only be possible in the first place with a QR code and reader, often in the form of a mobile phone's camera function.

As an artist and writer who is interested in communications and modes of reading and metaphors for reading, I thought of the QR code and reader as integral to many entry points. Beyond the literal, I also imagine it can be literary. An entry towards a text can be inaccessible without an intermediary. Our inlaid experiences, favouritisms, flavour, and our relationship with language(s) are in conjugation with the text. They can be complex and impenetrable like random patterns of black squares against a white background of the QR code.

Reading *Tender Buttons* with my own lens of Chinese as a second language, Greek as an adult learner to a foreign language and ultimately native speaker of none, rendered something quite different from what others felt.

I speak English as virtue of being born in the postcolonial trading post of Singapore, Mandarin due to the diaspora, and some Greek, the only language I learn out of choice. Reading *Tender Buttons* was an experience, an experiment in camaraderie, humour, and sometimes, coincidence and universality.

Reading the segment on CHICKEN, various Chinese slangs came to mind. A female prostitute is chicken, while a male prostitute is another bird: the duck. Sex, paying for or paid, comes with connotations of peculiarity and the taboo. A mistress or a woman who has an affair with a married man is referred to as Little Third. A stick stick sticking, penetration, why not, I chortled. In that sense, sex and bird, Chinese and English, well, ultimately, what's sauce for the gander is sauce for the goose, literally and literary: as a conceptual metaphor, they are all birds to me – it may not be impossible that you and I read the same, despite what we read in, the metaphorical QR code reader we have affixed on.

With anagrams, alliteration and anaphora sounding and resounding in the book, it reminded me of people practicing Chinese tones like singing scales, a structured embraced tonal musicality. In the sound of ting in Eat ting, eating / Eating he heat eating he heat it eating, he heat it heat eating. He heat eating, I watched and felt a visual and vocal satiation making everything into nothing, familiarity into absurdity, and then looping into itself all at once. Ting, a short sharp, clear, cool sound like metal on a glass - onomatopoeia. Or ting, meaning to hear in Chinese, like the words Hear + Write, when put together makes the word for Spelling.

One of the most fascinating things about learning a foreign language as an adult is how communications can become a game of choose-your-own-adventure (in this instance, choose-your-own-word) in getting things wrong, or being surprised at how something is not all that surprising.

When I finally upgraded to listening to Greek new wave from forlorn and naughty pop songs, the type of lyrics in the genres too, changed. No more exhortations of come near me, wake up next to me. Listening to Arleta, whose impact on Greek music history I knew nothing of at first, who made me realise what a classic meant: that a voice and a song could sound near and fresh like they were from today, was my first foray into Greek metaphor. In Seranata, a song with chic and matter-of-factly lyrics of a breakup, there is a line: we made a salad.

I really did think it was a salad the lovers made, but in Greek, to make a salad is to make a big mess of things. But, of course

Like in SALAD. It is a winning cake, both food items are made, brought something new by mixing and combining parts. To make it is also phrasal verb to achieve something, something winning. In the manner of a conceptual metaphor, the act of making and its success or failure, is matter of thought, existing not in just one language.

19

I have always been intrigued by verbs as nouns and nouns as verbs. Such usage to me was a finesse emerging from creativity through the prism of language, a metaphorical stretching beyond conventional imagery from imagination.

CUPS

Cups crane in.

SINGLE FISH.

Please shade it a play. / It is so found.

CAKE

Two bore, bore what

BUTTER.

Wood a supply

SAUSAGES

Wake a question. Eat an answer, instant.

The collages in this project are born out of the various surrealist imagery of the unique language found in Tender Buttons. The distant realities, unexpected juxtapositions and extrapolations also created a sense of randomness for some readers.

Someone mentioned Tender Buttons was written as though as it was churned out by a creative writing generator: random and strange. These writing generators are often sites for short stories, artist statements or poems with fields for words to be entered by the user. The results are sometimes hilarious, appalling, accurate – to be taken as seriously as a horoscope found on the newspapers (or not). Today, in the age of erasure websites, media, algorithm, electronic and code poetry, what is the role of a poet? What does it mean to write, read and to think of poetry in the ways of poetic devices that we are used to? Using predictive texting from mobile phone and using the list which opened Food, the result is a patchwork and cacography poetry of Stein's vocabulary, textonyms, and user-sensitivity (mine).

Some words that were suggested included “Adela” a colleague, “sue” a friend, a spicy vinaigrette vermicelli my cousin had bought, “green bean”, “soup”, “milk tea”, “rice” – a large part of my diet.

Though the process utilised technology, the output reminded me of the texts I used to find in cutesy stationeries in the 90s. Growing up, it was very common for girls to keep a book called an autograph book, usually a notebook to be passed around to friends and sometimes, crushes, to decorate and to include their home addresses, likes and dislikes, favourite movies and music, a ranking best friends and good friends (!) – think of it an earlier paper version of Facebook. Because there was social value at stake, an autograph book is usually very fancy and designed in Taiwan or Japan where the more charming stationeries like letter writing pads, greeting cards, stickers and diaries are produced.

They sometimes come with foreign texts like “C’était un moment tres heureux”, “Dear my friends”, “Take a smile in tear tonight”, “When you hurt a wish, hope of me”, “Spending a delicious time” that would come across as startling, forthright and even tender in spite of a mild strangeness. Possibly results of fantastical translation, false friends or actual sentiment, these sentences are not easy to replicate or create, not unlike Stein’s eating hopes that makes eggs delicious.

Lastly, I would like to also mention that Tend Butts is housed within the artist’s book format of the zhenxianbao. Meaning needle thread bag in Chinese, the zhenxianbao is a traditional domestic object used by the Dong and Miao minorities in China. Made of paper, it would consist of numerous pockets with the purpose of storing sewing-related items like buttons, needles, thread, patterns or other flat objects.

I first heard of the technique from a curator I had worked with in 2019 and found it an apt format for Tend Butts. With its numerous containers, I imagined that the zhenxianbao would open up to the numerous rooms and surprises of language and writing, expanding the definitions of a “book” and thus, a new way of reading.

It takes a long time to return to the start of that bridge we first stood at before our acquisition of syntax conventions and rules that defined, and later, narrowed how we understand language.

Returning to the comment of Tender Buttons being stupid, writing something as strange is difficult. Indeed, it’s not easy at all.

My Warmest Wishes,
Joey Chin | Artist and Writer
Singapore
www.joeychin.com

NOTE:

p1 Text in black from opening of Food. An earlier version of the poem appeared in Must Use Critical Knowledge

<https://mustusecriticalknowledge.hotglue.me/Presence>

p2 "It was a shame it was a shame to stare to stare and double and relieve relieve be cut up show as" as found in EATING

p3 Predictive text generated from artist's iPhone SE Gen 2 using words from opening of Food

p4 Verb as noun as noun as verb as noun adapted from words in ROASTBEEF

p5 Arleta's Serenata from www.youtube.com/watch?v=iamfFo2lnkg&t=262s

p7 Roastbeef Erasure created from removing words in ROASTBEEF

p 10 "Dining is west" as found in DINING

p11 "A mixed protection, very mixed with the same actual intentional unstrangeness and riding" as found in BREAKFAST

p12 "no no gold work with pet, a green seen is called bake and change sweet is bready, a little piece a little piece please." as found in APPLE

p13 "Looseness, why is there a shadow in a kitchen, there is a shadow in a kitchen because every little thing is bigger." as found in ROASTBEEF

p14 "white egg and a colored pan and a cabbage showing settlement, a constant increase." as found in Food

p15 "Cunning shawl, cunning shawl to be steady." as found in Food

p16 "It was a garden and belows belows straight." as found in Food

p18, 19, 20 All underlined words as found in Food