



*Meat Pie at the
Landmark Café*

Peter Rukavina

*To Olivier, for the idea,
Jennifer, for the bookbinding lessons,
and to Oliver, my partner in travel.*

I. Morning

Oliver got up, well before me, on Saturday morning and, uncharacteristically, got dressed by himself. He was downstairs on the couch with his laptop when I emerged about 8:30 a.m.: he was engrossed in a lengthy project to seemingly install every single Chrome browser extension.

Oliver doesn't like to leave things unfinished, and he gets stressed out by the transition from one activity to another, so shifting him into a mindset where he was ready to head to the farmers' market was stressful for both of us: there was some yelling and swearing (by him) and some subterfuge ("well, I can just go to the market by myself, I guess") by me. It was not the finest hour for either of us, but we came out the other end.

And so into the Jetta we piled, Ethan the service dog in the back, ready to start our day.

2. Farmers' Market

We've been going together to the Charlottetown Farmers' Market almost every Saturday of Oliver's 16 years; it's the reliable weekly thing that we do together.

While our routine has varied over the years, from week to week there's a structure that we hew to: we park the car on the far side of the market (a technical violation of the entry and exit direction rules), grab a shopping bag and Ethan, and head to the back entrance.

If the coffee line at Caledonia House isn't too long, we'll get in line for coffee. I leave my mug on top of the coffee machine from week to week; it took me about a decade to feel like I was enough of a market-goer to be allowed to do this. It's a battered old TechnoMedia mug that I picked up at a garage sale.

I didn't start drinking coffee until I was in my early 40s, so our market visits haven't

always included coffee, but, now that I'm a serious coffee drinker, it's an important part of the routine. When I first started drinking coffee it was "single cappuccino, one sugar," but that's since evolved to a double macchiato, which I like better both because *I like it better* and because there's something to be said for a little pretence in life.

Once I secure coffee, we go up the left hand side of the market to Ross Munro's smoked salmon bagel stand. We started eating smoked salmon at the market at the same time, many years ago; it was weird for both of us, I think: little kids aren't supposed to like smoked salmon, and I'd never had it before in my life. So it started off as a shared adventure, and we've never stopped. Kim Dormaar ran the smoked salmon bagel stand when we started, and Kim became a friend over the years, often slipping a little extra salmon in some waxed paper for Oliver to take home; it was stressful

when Kim sold the business and Ross took over, but he (and his wife, and his kids) have become friends now too, and so our smoked salmon bagel routine continues.

We get two bagels, both with no onions, one with no lemon (Oliver's).

Next stop is the smoothie booth run by Mathew Forrester, opposite the coffee stand; like bagels and coffee, a weekly smoothie is part of our routine.

This spring we've been working through the Strongest Families mental health program with Oliver, helping him conquer worries and anxiety, and helping him become more independent. One of the things we decided to work on last month was helping Oliver get to the point where he could order and pay for his smoothie on his own. We started out imagining how this would work, then role-played it repeatedly:

“Hello!”, Oliver would say.

“Oh hi, Oliver, what can I do for you?”,
would come the reply.

“I’d like a smoothie please,” Oliver would
say.

“What kind?”, the response.

“You choose!”, Oliver would reply, coming
up with a crafty way of working around the
fact that he has difficulty making choices.

We practiced this over and over, fine-
tuning as we went along to shave off anything
stressful about it.

Three weeks ago we were ready to try it out
live, but when we arrived at the market we
found Mathew out sick for the week; we used
the opportunity to role-play on the “live set,”
which turned out to be helpful.

The next week Mathew was there as
regular, and Oliver did very well (helped ably
by Mathew, who quickly picked up that
something was up and played his role
expertly).

This week there was another spanner in the works: when we arrived to order, Mathew was cleaning up a smoothie disaster in front of the booth, so we wandered off to pass the time until the all-clear.

We used this free time to chat with John MacFarlane, who sells books, buttons and curiosities from the opposite end of the hall. John was a grade 6 teacher at Prince Street Elementary School while Oliver was there, and we always make time to review the week with John while we're rounding the corner in front of his stand (while, at the same time, saying hello to friend Rajko Kujundzic across the way, selling his paintings).

After chatting with John, we looped around to visit Paul Offer and get some eggs and mushrooms. A pound of mushrooms was quickly produced, but there were, alas, no eggs: a combination of us being too late, and it being a slow week for the hens.

So, after a brief chat with Paul about LED lights and chickens, we popped outside and purchased a dozen eggs from our backup supplier off the parking lot.

Enough time had passed by this time to return for a smoothie, and once again, with Mathew's help, Oliver secured what he needed on his own; the only glitch was that he'd forgotten his wallet, and so the payment had to come out of *my* pocket. *Next week!*

On the way out to the car we purchased some intriguing-looking Chilean potatoes and a dozen pirogies.

And just before leaving we stopped for the final part of our weekly routine: an iced tea from Lady Baker's Tea Trolley.

An hour after arriving, our routine complete, we headed out to the car and off to our next stop.

3. Jennifer Brown

Earlier in the week I'd taken a bookbinding workshop with Jennifer Brown from Crapaud, and when we were chatting afterwards I learned that she had a collection of metal type in her barn that she was willing to part with. Thinking that a trip out to the country might be nice, I'd emailed Jennifer earlier in the day proposing a visit, and she quickly invited us out, with the only proviso being that we arrive in advance of her 1:00 p.m. art classes.

So we headed to Crapaud, through the traffic chaos in North River, resulting from roundabout construction, through Cornwall, the Bonshaw hills, Hampton and onto the Old Post Road, where Jennifer had guided us to find her house.

We arrived at Jennifer's side door well in advance of the deadline, just after 10:30 a.m. and she invited us to join her in the sunny

room that she uses as her studio and classroom.

Jennifer's a talented educator, and a fount of knowledge about all things creative, so we had a lot to chat about before heading to the barn: how to draw faces, letterpress printing, art education philosophies, Peter Bevan-Baker.

As noon approached, Jennifer suggested we head outside, and there, squirrelled amidst a rag tag collection of ephemera, was a pile of ice cube trays filled with several fonts of type in remarkably good condition. We packed them up in a cardboard box, stuffed some stuffing between the trays to avoid a type-spilling disaster, and, after a brief delay to show Jennifer a sketchbook I'd been working on, we thanked her for her generosity and headed to Victoria for lunch.

4. The Landmark Café

For some years—I can't recall how many—Oliver and I start spring off with lunch at the Landmark Café in the heart of Victoria. I've been going to the Landmark since we arrived on the Island in 1993, and over the years we've gotten to know Eugene Sauvé and his family, and we enjoy hearing their tales of winter travel on this annual spring visit.

It was their second day open of the season; as usual, we were ushered to the big round table at the front, which affords a view of the entire restaurant, and an easy way to chat to Eugene as he's cooking.

Doug, our friendly (and exceptionally tall) server, who we apprenticed last summer to good end, brought us menus, and, again saving Oliver the punishment of choice, I ordered the quiche for him. And after verifying that the meat pie in the oven would

be ready shortly, I ordered a slice of that for myself.

I am, for most intents and purposes, a vegetarian; months can go by between me eating meat in any form. And yet my reliable go-to meal at the Landmark is Eugene's meat pie: it's simply delicious, and he uses local beef, and magical spices. And so I take a day off, and indulge.

This meat pie happened to be the first one out of the oven this season, and I was awarded pride of the first slice. It was as good as it's ever been. I suspect it won't be my last slice of the season.

We were in no hurry once our meals were done, so I ordered a coffee for myself, and a banana split for Oliver. The banana split is a new dessert on the Landmark menu, and Oliver inhaled it; I suspect it won't be his last one of the season.

Between courses I had a chat with Eugene's son Olivier (who everyone else knows as Oliver; I insist on the extra "i" because it is his name after all, and because I already have my own Oliver). I told Olivier about how my friend Bryson had written a book about the Camino Francés, which is a trail Olivier knows well, having walked sections every one of the recent winters. I told him how impressed I was that Bryson had decided to produce a book about his walk, despite having no experience making books and so, in the grander scheme of things, no business making books at all.

We agreed that this was a good thing, and that more people should make more books about their experiences more often. "Like you could make a book about this lunch." joked Olivier. So, *this*.

A leisurely two hours after arriving for lunch, we settled up with Doug, said goodbye

to Eugene and Karen and Olivier and Rachel,
and headed out.

5. Michael Stanley

Michael Stanley moved his pottery shop to Victoria last year, after stints in the heart of Charlottetown and in rural Breadalbane, and we try to stop in for a chat every time we're in the village.

I knew Michael's parents before I knew Michael: his father Malcolm is a potter and his mother Christine is a weaver, and when I worked at the PEI Crafts Council in the early 1990s, my job was to help find sources of craft supplies for producers like them.

Michael's first season in Victoria exceeded his expectations: by the end of the tourists, his shelves were bare. But over the winter he's been hard at work, and so we thought we'd get a chance to see what he'd been up to.

But we ended up chatting with Michael instead, not venturing more than a few feet in the door. We talked about Jennifer Brown (the

whole Island's connected: Michael's daughter takes art classes from her), and about printing, and typography, and about Victoria, and electoral districts, and school zones.

Before we left, Michael generously agreed to sell me a mug that wasn't technically for sale, a lovely specimen sporting exquisite typography. I will use it for coffee every morning.

6. The Bonshaw Hills

In the wake of a controversial highway realignment several years ago, the provincial government, perhaps as a sop to the frustrated and angry, or perhaps because it ended up with a lot of forested land on its hands, greatly expanded the trail network around Bonshaw Provincial Park.

We are not hikers by nature, but we had a dog in need of a walk, and were curious to see what new developments had emerged in the park over the winter, so we stopped for a look.

We ended up exploring the new bridge-under-the-bridge that allows access from the parking lot across the highway to the other side of the West River bridge. We continued down the trail on the other side, snaking our way downriver until the trail started to head inland. It was a beautiful, crisp spring day and the forest was alive and colourful.

This life teeming through the forest made Ethan the dog nothing but frustrated: he wanted to *explore*, and wasn't content to be on the end of his lead, what with all the new smells, and chipmunks and squirrels. So the walk wasn't *quite* as peaceful as it might have been. But we enjoyed ourselves.

Before getting back in the car we explored the edges of the new playground in the park: Oliver's set himself a goal of improving his balance, and the park sports new ropes running 6 inches off the ground between posts, which turned out to be great for balance-development. So we took 10 minutes and improved our balance.

And then back into the car and onward.

7. Clow's Red & White

When we lived on the Kingston Road between 1995 and 2000, Clow's store was our lifeline: it's where we got milk, and vegetables, and rented movies on VHS. It's where I went to get a snow shovel, or nails, or some metal strapping. And it was where we got advice about where to find a good plumber or a place to get firewood.

In the years we were almost-daily customers, we got to know Bobby and Verna and Norman and Gary and their staff, and in the years since we moved to town, whenever I'm driving west and my tank needs gas, I try to stop in and fill up, doing my tiny part to ensure that the store survives for another generation.

I gassed up, grabbed a litre of milk, and we were off.

8. Lowell & Cathy

I worked with Lowell Croken at Elections PEI for more than 15 years, and over those years he became a trusted and valued friend, as did his wife Cathy.

While I'm not a "pop in" kind of person, Lowell had, the last time I'd seen him, encouraged me to drop in for a chat the next time I was in the area, so we swung around to the Loyalist Road after leaving Clow's to see if Lowell and Cathy were home.

We were in luck: their front door was open, and, when I tentatively approached the side door, Cathy waved me on in.

We spent 90 minutes, over tea and juice and peanut butter cookies, catching up with Lowell and Cathy, and I was reminded, yet again, of why giving Oliver "Lowell" as one of his middle names was one of the best decisions we ever made.

Not wanting to overstay our welcome—the last thing I wanted to do on a rare-for-me pop-in was screw up the generally accepted operating procedure—we said our goodbyes just before 5:00 p.m. and headed toward home.

Set in Sorts Mill Goudy,
a 'revival' of Goudy Old Style and Italic
by Barry Schwartz.



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