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# Meditation at Chez Panisse

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## MEDITATION AT CHEZ PANISSE

*with love and apologies  
to Robert Hass*

All the new cooking contains pasta.  
In this it resembles all the old cooking.  
The fantasy, for instance, that California reduces  
the numerous calories of our usual fix. That the rum-  
filled cheesecake following the pesto-stuffed breasts  
of some young boned chicken is, because coastal,  
some happy switch from our midwestern feasts  
of cream twinkies and spam. Or that other wistful error,  
that because there is no pair of pants  
to which my wobble of waistline corresponds,  
all food is deceitful once it gets past your lips.  
We ate too much stuff all day long, and in the mouth  
of my friend there were great dribbles of wine, and a moan  
almost audible. After more sips I understood that  
eating like this everything expands: **waistline,**  
**thighs, injustice, you** and **I**. There was a salad  
I should've eaten, and I remember when, loitering  
with my tongue in the arugula that day,  
I wished for the presence of extra tomatoes,  
sun-ripened, or grown in Alice Waters' own windowbox,  
her sweet lungs all out of breath from the hunting  
of mushrooms, called **shiitake**, which I don't know yet  
from shinola. It really shouldn't bother me.  
I'm hungry, I say, although my stomach is full  
of endless kiwi. Why should I care how I look?  
But I ate so much, I didn't want you to caress me,  
or to tell me that thing about blubber, so  
good-bye! There are days when the food is so much better  
than love, nights inside the fleshy voluptuary.  
Such memories, those languid brunches on the veranda,  
chewing **lasagna, lasagna, lasagna**.