

IN THE  
DEVIL'S  
GARDEN

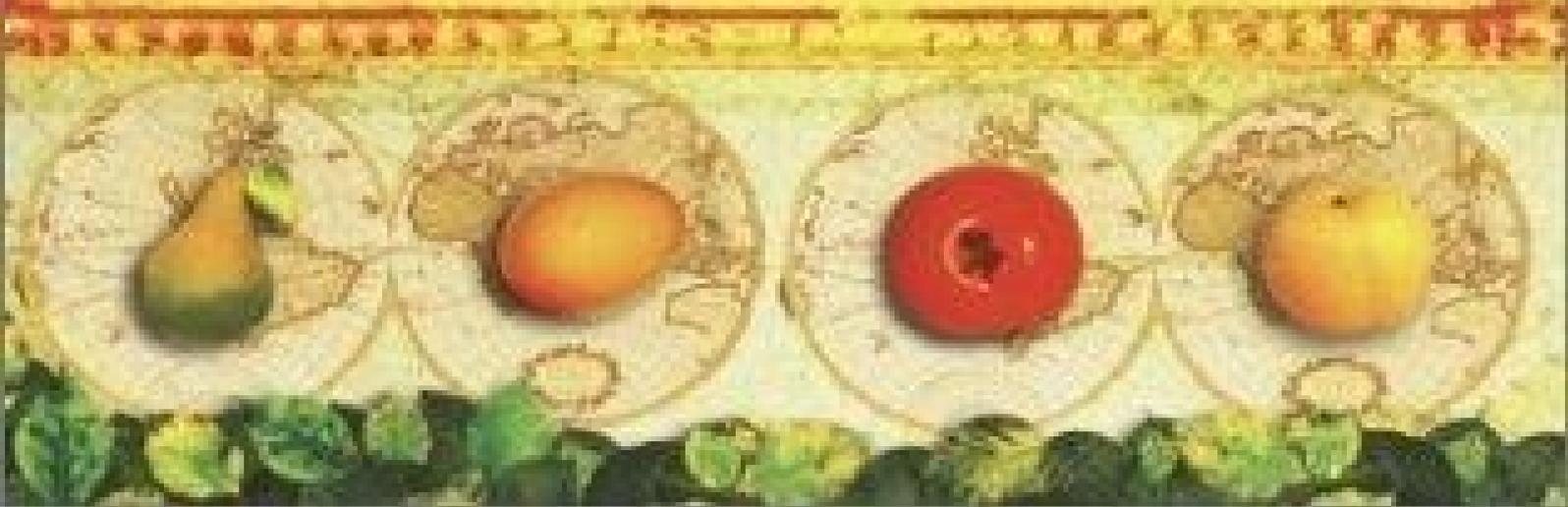
A SINFUL HISTORY OF  
FORBIDDEN FOOD

STEWART LEE ALLEN

*Author of The Devil's Cup*

"Clever . . . *In the Devil's Garden* will amaze your dinner guests."

—*San Jose Mercury News*



# Table of Contents

[Title Page](#)

[Dedication](#)

[Epigraph](#)

[Praise](#)

[Introduction: - ON SIN, SEX, AND FOR BIDDEN FOOD](#)

## [LUST](#)

### [First Bite](#)

[Enveloped in Sweet Odor](#)

[Likeness of a Roasted Crab](#)

[Love Apple](#)

[The Ketchup with a Thousand Faces](#)

[Venomous Green](#)

[Tulsi Ki Chai](#)

[The Ecstasy of Being Eaten](#)

[The King's Chocolate](#)

[Haquetzalli](#)

[Gay Gourmand](#)

[Beijing Libido](#)

[The Rainbow Egg](#)

## [GLUTTONY](#)

### [Original Sin](#)

[Porcus Troianu](#)

[Ovis Apalis](#)

[Cocktails with the Devil](#)

[The Sultan's Date](#)

[Angel Food Cake](#)

[Saints and Supermodels](#)

[Bitter Herbs](#)

[Red Lady](#)

[The Joy of Fat](#)

[Mitterrand's Last Supper](#)

## PRIDE

### The Egotist at Dinner

[The Dirt Eaters](#)

[A Dinner Party in Kishan Garhi](#)

[The Last Supper](#)

[Humble Pie](#)

[A Prophetic Chicken](#)

[Impure Indian Corn](#)

[The Butterfly People](#)

[Sky Blue Corn Flakes](#)

[Ghost at the Dinner Table!](#)

[King's Cake](#)

## SLOTH

### The Job of Eating Well

[The Wonderful World of English Cookery](#)

[Toast](#)

[The Incredibly Sad Tale of Philippe the Shoemaker](#)

[The Virgin's Nipples](#)

[The Root of Laziness](#)

[Potato Wars](#)

[The Last Drop](#)

[In the Green Hour](#)

## GREED

## The Greedy Diner

[Lazy Luscious Land](#)

[The Magic Cannibal](#)

[Smoked Green Makaku](#)

[The Laughing Man](#)

[Thou Shalt Not Eat Thy Mother](#)

[Got Milk?](#)

[American Pigs](#)

## BLASPHEMY

### The Sacred Act of Eating

[The Jewish Pig](#)

[Dinner with the Spanish Inquisition](#)

[The Kosher Question](#)

[The Lawyer in Us](#)

[Lent Egg](#)

[A Well-Risen Messiah](#)

[For What We Are About to Receive](#)

[O, Dog](#)

[Holy Cow](#)

[You and Your Beautiful Hide](#)

## ANGER

### The Civilized Sauce

[The Sadistic Chef](#)

[Deep-Fried Murder](#)

[Only if It Has a Face](#)

### Hitler's Last Meal

[Little Nigoda](#)

[The French Connection](#)

[Vicious Little Red Man](#)

[Insanity Popcorn](#)

[Stinking Infidels](#)

[Five Angry Vegetables](#)

[Feasting to the Death](#)

## [THE EIGHTH SIN](#)

[When Everything Is Allowed and Nothing Has Flavor](#)

[BIBLIOGRAPHY](#)

[END NOTES](#)

[Acknowledgments](#)

[About the Author](#)

[Also by Stewart Lee Allen](#)

[Copyright Page](#)

TO NINA J.

*“The serpent poured upon the fruit the poison of his wickedness, which is Lust, for it is the beginning of every sin—and he bent the branch to the earth and I took of the fruit and I ate.”*

*—Eve as an old woman  
describing humanity’s last day  
in Eden The Apocalypse of  
Moses First century A.D.*

*“Too long, too late, I lost the taste for my own pleasure.”*

*—Marguerite Duras The Lover  
1978*

## Praise for *The Devil's Cup* by Stewart Lee Allen

“Who knew that the story of coffee was such a fascinating saga of cruelty, madness, obsession, and death? *The Devil's Cup* is absolutely riveting, alternating between the informative and the hilarious. Essential reading for foodies, java-junkies, anthropologists, and anyone else interested in funny, sardonically told adventure stories.”

—ANTHONY BOURDAIN  
Author of *Kitchen Confidential*

“Stewart Lee Allen is the Hunter S. Thompson of coffee, offering a wild, caffeinated, gonzo tour of the World of the Magic Bean. His wry, adventurous prose delights, astonishes, amuses, and informs.”

—MARK PENDERGRAST  
Author of *Uncommon Grounds: The History of Coffee and How It Transformed Our World*

“Funny as hell. [*The Devil's Cup*] whisks the amused reader past Ethiopian bandits, around Parisian waiters, and into aromatic dens from Turkey to Brazil. Good to the last drop.”

—MARK ROSENBLUM  
Author of *Olives* and *Secret Life of the Seine*

“Delicious . . . A highly stimulating read . . . Allen has created a cracking piece of investigative journalism mixed with entertaining travelogue.”

—*The List*

“A terrific read . . . Great fun . . . Allen has as many words for coffee as the Eskimos have for snow. *The Devil's Cup* does for coffee what *Shogun* did for Japan, *Geek Love* did for freak shows, and *Accordion Crimes* did for accordions. I'll never look at my morning brew the same way again.”

—JEFF GREENWALD  
Author of *The Size of the World*

“A thoroughly entertaining, absorbing, and often hilarious jaunt through the history and geography of coffee. . . . A must have both for Java junkies and travel lovers.”

—*Kirkus Reviews* (starred review)

## *Introduction:*

### ON SIN, SEX, AND FOR BIDDEN FOOD

Jackson was lying on the kitchen counter allowing his father to change his diapers when a mysterious silver fountain rose up from between his thighs. Jackson's eyes popped open in amazement—did I do that? What a splendid effect! What a glorious sensation! The eighteen-inch geyser hung glittering for an instant. Then it collapsed, to break directly over his father's head and splash down his back. The crowd of relatives burst into applause. Jackson's mother, Paula, rushed over to give her boy a congratulatory kiss. Even Troy (his father) shook his hand. I mention all this because, while flapping his little arms in triumph Jackson came upon a pale green grape bouncing across the blue tile countertop. He immediately popped the fruit into his mouth. Paula's coo changed to a gasp of horror. No, Jackson! she screeched, No, no, no! You don't want to eat that! Bad! She yanked the forbidden fruit out of Jackson's maw and his jubilation was turned to grief.

The lesson my nephew learned that day was simple. Piss on your father, spit at your mother, but don't eat *that*. And *that* is the topic of this book, forbidden foods and their meaning, from chocolate to foie gras to the potato chip, from the Garden of Eden until today. It took Jackson's little adventure to bring home to me how profound our feelings are on this matter. Life, after all, is at heart an act of eating and so when we make a dish taboo, there is usually an interesting story to tell. The Bible used a tale of forbidden food to define all of human nature, and since then our religious and political leaders have been manipulating the notion so vigorously it has come to flavor every emotion we have about what we eat. We now judge a dish largely by how guilty we feel about eating it—at least judging from today's advertising—and if it is not considered “sinful” we find it less pleasant.

It's a situation that has led to the criminalizing of hundreds of common dishes throughout history, and, since we ban things because of their association with a particular sin, I've organized this book into sections corresponding with the famous Seven Deadly Sins: lust, gluttony, pride, sloth, greed, blasphemy, and anger. Within each section are the stories of delicacies tabooed for their association with a vice that the society in question found particularly abhorrent. The first chapter deals with lust, in honor of Eve's illicit snack and the ensuing roll in the hay. Food and sex are a heady combination; a quarter of all people who lose the ability to taste dinner also lose their sex drive, and Freud believed all humans experience their first sexual and culinary thrill simultaneously when they begin suckling on their mother's nipple. Our lust for aphrodisiac foods has led to the extermination of entire species and the fall of empires, per the curious tale of how hot chocolate became a risqué player in the French

Revolution.

The book continues sin by sin to cover everything from how the first recorded image of God relates to certain taboos in Asia and the West, to how modern corporations manipulate our subliminal hunting/violent urges to make junk food more appealing. Since whom we invite for dinner can be as important as what we serve, there are stories on how these rules have played a part in events like the crucifixion of Jesus Christ. Disputes between “chefs,” like the one that split Europe in half, make an appearance. There are also recipes. A plate of Joël Robuchon’s famously sensual mashed potatoes should give the flavor of the sloth-like ecstasy that led the English to try to ban the root in the 1800s. The ancient Roman dish gives a taste of the gluttonous decadence that Caesar tried to stamp out when overindulgence was threatening the world’s mightiest empire.

These food taboos were so important to our ancestors that they often starved to death rather than violate them, and at least half of the world’s current population—from cow-crazy Hindus to kosher Jews to young Western vegetarians—still live with severe dietary restrictions on a daily basis. For many, these laws are crucial in defining themselves in relationship both to God and to their fellow humans, and fundamentally shape the societies in which they live. Even in the West, where outright bans are rare, food taboos still operate below the surface. Many scholars believe that psychological diseases like anorexia, which kills tens of thousands of people a year, stem in part from the complicated social psychosis left by ancient dietary laws. And sometimes when we ignore these rules, catastrophe has resulted; at least one of the greatest calamities of the twenty-first century is directly related to our violating deeply held taboos against cannibalistic activities.

What struck me while writing this book was the surprising extent to which people have judged, fought, and slaughtered others because of what they had for dinner. These laws about forbidden food give more than a unique perspective on history. They tell us quite a lot about the nature of pleasure and can turn the daily meal into a meditation on humanity’s relationship to the delicious and the revolting, the sacred and the profane.

But getting back to that first apple . . .



## LUST

*“And when Eve saw that the tree was good for food and that it was pleasant to the eye, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband, and he did eat. And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked. . . .”*

*Genesis, 3:8–12*



### LUST MENU



#### *APÉRITIF*

*Blue Chocolate*

#### *SALADE*

*Salade de Jardin*

*Late-harvest Eden apples tossed with fig leaves.  
Served with Paradise vinaigrette.*

#### *ENTRÉE*

*Fruits des Homme*

*Cold, poached sea cucumber served with Sambian  
mayonnaise.*

*PLAT PRINCIPAUX*

*Pâté aux Mon Petit Chou  
Homemade lingamini smothered in  
love apple and screaming basil.*

*DESSERT*

*Chocolat du Barry  
Louis XV pastry topped with well-whipped cream.  
Eaten with the left hand.*

THREE PENIS LIQUEUR WILL BE SERVED IN THE LIBRARY.

## First Bite

It was still dark out when we left the monastery. Dawn was breaking a midnight blue etched with icy rain. Ocean waves crashed against the cliffs below. To the left and farther up the trail loomed the solitary Mount Athos.

“Some Christmas,” I grumbled when George and I finally found a sheltering cave. I handed him a soggy cracker. “It is the twenty-fifth, right?”

“Yes,” he said. George was a Greek fellow I’d met in a refuge run by an exceptionally grumpy monk. “But don’t wish any of the monks here a good Christmas! The people of Mount Athos believe Christmas doesn’t come until January, and they don’t like to be reminded that the rest of the world is celebrating it on the wrong day.”

Mount Athos is a six-thousand-foot-tall mountain that stands at the tip of a peninsula near the Greek-Turkish border. Surrounded on three sides by the Aegean Sea and on the fourth by roadless forests, it’s controlled and run by the Greek Orthodox Church, which has kept out almost all foreign and modern influences since the eleventh century. Military patrols search all visitors. Non-Greek males are allowed in on a strictly limited basis, and there have been no females, human or animal, allowed on the mountain for a thousand years. The only inhabitants are hundreds of robed monks who live in cliff-hugging monasteries exactly as their predecessors did twelve hundred years ago. There’s no electricity, no roads, no cars. Foods not specifically mentioned in Christian writings are avoided. Even time is different on Mount Athos because the monks follow the ancient Julian calendar, which, among other things, places the birth of Christ in mid-January instead of on December 25. Aside from farming, which is done by hand, the main activities are chanting, prayer, and creating illuminated manuscripts.

It’s a perfectly preserved slice of medieval Europe, the ideal place to find out how the apple came to grow in the Garden of Eden. The Old Testament does not reveal the exact identity of the Fruit of Forbidden Knowledge, and how the apple came to be identified with the evil fruit remains a mystery. George and I were trying to reach a monastery on the other side of the mountain where I’d been told there was a monk with opinions on the subject.

After our breakfast, George and I continued up and over the sea cliff, then headed toward the mountain. The rain turned to snow, and soon we found ourselves hiking through a landscape covered in silver ermine. Bunches of crimson holly berries encased in ice glittered on the leafless trees. It was like walking into a Noël fairy tale, so perfect and clean and clear, Christmas before all the lies. But as morning

progressed, the snowfall turned into a blizzard. The trail disappeared, then the trees, then the mountain. All I could see were whirling flakes of snow, and even they dissolved into a surreal void as my glasses became encased in inch-thick ice. The snow was up to our knees. Then my head bumped into something. It was George. He was clawing at his face and shouting. It took awhile for me to realize he was saying that his eyes had frozen shut.

I defrosted them by cupping my hands over his sockets, but it was clear that the mountain did not want any visitors that day, and so we turned around and started back the way we had come. We were, of course, hopelessly lost, and it was only by chance that after some more wandering we discovered a rundown shack with a plume of smoke rising from its chimney. In a few minutes we were warming ourselves by a little coal stove and being clucked over by two grandpa monks with their beards tucked into their belts. They were hermits—the so-called “crazy of God”—who refuse the comfort of monastic life and live alone in the crudest of conditions. These two had “married” when they had grown too old to survive alone. I’ve never met a cuter couple. The quiet one prepared us a meal of raw onions, bread, and a homemade sherry while George explained our quest. The other monk pulled out a tiny red apple.

All of nature, he said in Greek (George translating), reflects the intent of the Creator: the shape of the clouds, the sound of the leaves, the flavors of the fruit on the trees. The monk thrust a knife into the apple. He pointed to the green opalescent drops dotting the tarnished steel. Come, he said, please taste. George and I dabbed our fingers into the liquor and placed it on our tongues. The first flavor was a scintillating, honeylike sweetness, followed by a tongue-curling tartness. Sweet flavors are lures meant to distract the faithful from the word of God, said George. That’s why every meal in Mount Athos is accompanied by a reading from the Bible, to keep the brothers from dwelling on the pleasures of the food before them, and treats like chocolate are avoided. So the apple’s initial sweetness was a sign of seductive intent. The tart aftertaste indicated diabolic influence, because bitter flavors indicate poison, and all poisons were thought by medieval scholars to be the work of the Devil. Some view the apple’s bittersweet savor as a literal allegory of the temptation of Eve; the sweet first bite represents the Serpent’s “honeyed tongue” while the astringent aftertaste foreshadows humanity’s ejection from paradise.

The monk sliced two thin wedges from the apple and handed them to George and myself. See how the skin is red like a woman’s lips? he said. And the flesh, how white it is, like teeth and skin. He told us to take a bite. Crisp and delicious. This, too, was considered an evil sign, because most fruits soften as they grow ripe. The apple, however, actually grows harder, an “unnatural” behavior that alchemists like Vincent de Beauvais claimed was “a sign of great devilry . . . and of an immoral, cruel and misleading nature.” Our friend sliced the apple in half, vertically, and pointed to the seeds. You see? he said: There, within the heart of the fruit, is the sign of Eve. There was no doubt that from this angle the apple’s core looked vaguely like female genitalia. Hardly compelling, I thought. But the monk was not finished. He pulled out another apple and cut it in half, this time horizontally. Do you see the star? he asked.

Sliced this way, the seeds that had looked like a vagina now outlined a five-pointed star, the pentagram, the ultimate symbol of Satan. The design was no larger than a dime but unmistakable. Even more alarming, at least to a religious fanatic, was how the seed design was highlighted by minute cavities of browned, charred fruit surrounding each pip. This is simply the result of iron-containing chemicals reacting with the air, but it really did look as if someone had magically burned the sign of Lucifer into the apple's heart.

“In the fruit trees are hidden certain of God's secrets,” wrote the famous medieval mystic St. Hildegard von Bingen, “which only the blessed among men can perceive.” Hildegard was describing the scientific philosophy of the Dark Ages, a discipline derived from the Platonic belief that all earthly objects are shadows cast by the true beings in the World of Ideas. Plato had been speaking in abstractions when he laid out this scenario, but medieval Christians had assumed his World of Ideas referred to their Heaven. They reasoned, therefore, that all earthly objects were symbols sent by God to communicate His intent. The priests' job was similar to that of a Jungian psychiatrist: they interpreted God's hidden “messages” and explained them to the unenlightened masses. The apple's seductive colors, its two-faced flavor, its suggestively feminine core, and, above all, the hidden pentagram, were interpreted as signs that it was the fruit that had grown on the Tree of Forbidden Knowledge.

The hermit laughed after he had explained. But the Bible never identifies the evil fruit, he said; it was the Roman Catholics who put the apple there. The Greek Church sees the forbidden fruit only as a symbol of pride and carnal desire. He pointed; these are only apples, my friend, which by God's will are now divided into four pieces, one for each of us. He handed the wedges around with a smile.

Now *eat*.

## **Enveloped in Sweet Odor**

For years after my Christmas on Mount Athos I puzzled over the hermit's comment that the naming of the apple as the forbidden fruit was a “lie of the Pope.” I knew, of course, that the Greek Orthodox Church and the Roman Catholic Church had been bitter enemies for almost a thousand years. So his remark could have been just a spurious attack on an old enemy. But another possible explanation can be found in the maps of pre-Christian Europe. The Old World at that time can be roughly divided into two groups. South of the Italian-Austrian border lived the Mediterranean race, a dark-complexioned people who, among other things, were lovers of the grape. Worshipers, really, because the vine provided their preferred intoxicant, wine, which was used as a mystical tippie by everyone from the pagan Dionysian cults to the modern Roman Catholics. North of this imaginary border lived a bunch of barbarians often called the Celts. Since grapes did not thrive in their climate, they revered the apple. Instead of wine, their priests, the Druids, are believed to have used an alcoholic cider in their

ceremonies. They even called their paradise Avalon, or Isle of the Apples, presumably with a cider press on the premises.

The Dionysian Mediterraneans merged their beliefs with Christianity to form the Roman Catholic Church. The Celts did the same with their Druid faith to create a brand of Christianity called the Celtic Church. Needless to say, the two groups loathed each other. Celtic monks would neither eat nor pray with Roman priests and considered utensils used by them to be contaminated. The Vatican, in turn, declared Celtic rituals to be heresy and threatened to execute the Celtic missionaries who were beginning to dominate western Europe. By the fourth century, the situation was threatening to split Christian Europe in half.

All of a sudden, the Tree of Forbidden Knowledge began sprouting apples.

*One Apple down from all of those upon the fatal tree  
Enveloped in sweet odor, recommended it  
For pleasing sigh, and offered it to Eve.*

This description of Eve's first insidious bite was written by the Roman poet Avitus around A.D. 470, near the height of the Celtic/Roman conflict. It could have been coincidence that the Romans chose that particular moment to use the Celt's sacred fruit to epitomize all evil knowledge. But there are a number of things peculiar about their selection. First, biblical writings indicated that the forbidden fruit was a fig. Second, the Romans actually invented the word that Avitus used to describe the forbidden fruit. The word is *pomum*, based on Pomona, the pagan god of harvest. They could have stuck with the word the earlier Greek Bibles had used, *malum*, which meant both *evil* and *fruit*. Ideal, really. Why change it? We'll never know for sure, but the obvious allegory in naming the Forbidden Fruit after a pagan deity would have been to remind new Christians that the older, non-Christian religions were heresy, i.e., forbidden knowledge.

Christians are notorious for baptizing pagan deities to cash in on their good karma. This, however, does not appear to have been a typical case of assimilation, because the Romans turned the existing myths and emotions about the apple upside down. The Celts believed that apples contained the essence of a divine wisdom that transported the diner to a kind of paradise. Yet the Christian myth clearly stated that apple-inspired wisdom led straight to Hell. This wasn't assimilation, it was attack, and apparently so successful that they repeated the stunt one thousand years later in the New World. The Aztecs of Mexico believed humanity had once lived in a paradisiacal garden where people ate flowers. The *xochitlicacan* flowers in the original Aztec myths were thought to impart divine wisdom in the most positive sense, just as Celtic mythology had characterized the apple. When Spanish missionaries arrived in the 1500s, however, they began suppressing Aztec beliefs and teaching a new version of the fall of man that replaced Eden's apple with a flower. According to accounts from the time, the Indians said it was the destruction of these sacred flowers and plants, often used to

make ritual beverages, that broke the heart of their culture.

Medieval Christians took their symbols much too seriously to have done all this while unaware of the repercussions. Particularly someone like Avitus. His poem, “The Fall of Man,” was among the first dramatizations of the Bible aimed at the general population and was so popular it earned him the nickname of the “Christian Virgil.” Since Avitus lived in the Celtic north, he would have realized with what fruit the word *pomum* would be identified. In fact, the Christians were so preoccupied with the hold the Celtic apple had on the popular imagination they created a bizarre series of myths that described the apple’s power actually draining into the body of Christ. In these stories, probably created around the eighth century, Christ is crucified on an apple tree. Then a “wild apple,” representing the Celtic faiths, is nailed into the same tree and its juices are allowed to seep into the Messiah. The end of the tale describes Christ growing out of the apple tree’s foliage like a nature spirit. (This kind of propaganda was not that uncommon, and, in fact, some Islamic scholars did the same thing about five hundred years later when they identified the Catholic grape as the Fruit of Forbidden Knowledge.)

The Christian defamation of the apple did not end its consumption, but it did create a valuable tool to teach new converts in northern and western Europe of the dangers of heretic thought. Every peasant munching a McIntosh from then on received a visceral reminder of how the fruit worshiped by his grandfather had damned him to earthly purgatory. Its bittersweet flavor was a lesson in how sweet and tempting the teachings of non-Catholic churches might, at first, appear. It also changed the popular perception of the apple. The Celts had associated apples with the glorious wisdom from the sun (the Celtic word for apple, *abal*, is believed to derive from the name of the sun god Apollo). By the time the Christians were done, scholars had assigned it to “the jurisdiction of Venus” and lust. It became a low-class love charm sometimes associated with venereal disease.

The apple’s most telling transformation can be seen in the story of King Arthur and Merlin, a myth cycle that is in many ways the aborted New Testament of Celtic Christianity. In the original version, Merlin’s supernatural powers were consistently associated with the *abal*. He prophesied while standing beneath a tree dripping with crimson fruit, and his most famous writing, *The Apple Tree*, is an ode to the apple’s crucial role in resurrecting the Druid faith after its destruction by the Romans. “The sweet apple tree loaded with the sweetest fruit,” goes an early version of the poem, “growing in the lonely wilds of the woods of Cleyddon! All seek thee but in vain until Cadwaladr comes to oppose the Saxons. Then shall the Britons be again victorious, led by their graceful and majestic chief [Arthur]; then shall be restored to every one his own; then shall the founder of the trump of gladness proclaim the son of peace, the serene days of happiness.” The apple orchard in Merlin’s poem refers to Avalon, Isle of the Apples, where King Arthur is said to lie sleeping until his countrymen’s hour of greatest need. The poem is thought to have been penned in the fifth century, around the time that the real King Arthur led a rebellion against the Romans and Avitus wrote his version of the tale of Eden. But when the official Christian version of the Arthur myth

was put on paper seven hundred years later, the apple's role was again reversed. In this version, written in the twelfth century by the devout Geoffrey of Monmouth, the Druid priest/wizard Merlin is said to have been "driven mad and foaming at the mouth" by eating apples, which are described as being full of "the poisonous delights of women." Later versions tell of his being dragged into hell where his true father, Satan, awaited. The Vatican eventually banned the use of apple cider from its religious ceremonies.

In the end, however, it was the apple that had the last laugh. The Celts revered all trees—not just apples—and their priests used groves of oak and ash as places of meditation. It is these sacred groves that are the source of the trees we drag into our living rooms every Christmas, loving the forest smell that spreads through our homes, and admiring the globes that hang upon their branches: sacred *abals* every one of them, stylized, commercialized, but as red and green as any Pippin or McIntosh, our homage to an ancient vision of paradise.

## Likeness of a Roasted Crab

All anyone can definitively say about the Celts' sacred apple juice is that it was probably similar to the tippie called Lamb's Wool. The name is a corruption of the Celtic *lama nbhal* or *la mas ubhal*, or Feast of the Apple Gathering, which was held in the fall, and the drink's curious woolly texture, which comes from using mashed roasted apples, toast, and sometimes eggs. It seems to be an attempt to re-create the texture of the original drink, which might have been an alcoholic porridge similar to the fruit beers still served in parts of Africa. These are as much food as drink and, like Lamb's Wool, are traditionally served in a bowl.

The drink's religious antecedents are clear from the accompanying rite known as "wassailing," a custom that may have once included the sacrifice of a young boy. It's still extant in parts of Great Britain, where people fling some of the drink on the roots of the oldest apple tree in the area while shooting guns and shouting, "Here's to thee, old Apple Tree/Whence thou may'st bud/and whence thou may'st blow/Hats full, Caps full/Bushel bags full!/And my pockets full too!/Huzzah!"

*6 apples*  
*2 quarts hard cider, or a mix of cider and ale*  
*Up to 1/4 cup honey or 1/2 cup brown sugar*  
*1/8 teaspoon ground nutmeg*  
*1/4 teaspoon cinnamon*  
*1/4 teaspoon ground allspice*

*Core the apples and roast at 400° F for 45 minutes, or until they are soft and beginning to burst. Put the cider/ale into a large pot and dissolve the honey or sugar in small increments, tasting for desired sweetness. Add spices. Simmer for about ten*

minutes. Lightly mash apples and add one to each mug and pour hot cider on top. Sprinkle with cinnamon. Serves six.

## Love Apple

The naming of the humble apple as the Fruit of Forbidden Knowledge is the most unlikely bit of propaganda the Christians have ever cooked up. Everyone knew that so sinful a fruit would be a voluptuous pearl glistening amid a tangle of tropical greenery, and that it would grow in a land far, far, far away where naked bodies and free sex were as common as flies. It would come from Eden, in short, which every educated person of the 1400s could find by looking at a map—there it was, right next to India. Christopher Columbus was so sure of Eden’s location that he brought two crew members fluent in Chaldee and Hebrew, the languages thought most likely spoken by the Garden’s inhabitants, just in case his ships wound up south of their destination in Asia. When he bumped into South America, Columbus mistakenly identified the Orinoco River in Venezuela as the gateway to Eden, but refused to sail up it lest the flaming cherubim God had hired as security guards attack his ships.

So when Columbus brought a particularly luscious new-comer back from the New World, everyone jumped to the obvious conclusion. We call it the tomato, but most Europeans originally dubbed it *poma amoris*, or the love apple. The Hungarians came straight out and named it *Paradise Apfel*, the Apple of Paradise. The tomato was everything the Forbidden Fruit ought to be—a slut-red fruit oozing lugubrious juices and exploding with electric flavors. Clearly an aphrodisiac. But what made it particularly terrifying to the Europeans was its similarity to a plant called the mandrake, also known as Satan’s Apple or the Love Apple. It’s basically the fruit from Hell and has the distinction of being the aphrodisiac with which Leah seduces Jacob in the Bible, saying, “Thou must come in unto me, for surely I have hired thee with thy son’s mandrakes.”

Herbalists in the fifteenth century were well aware that the mandrake had natural narcotic powers. No real problem there. What really earned the plant its ghastly reputation was the way its roots resembled a withered, shrunken human body (or penis, depending on your personal obsession). Medieval Europeans believed the roots were alive, demon spirits that whispered secrets in their owner’s ear, and Joan of Arc’s alleged possession of a mandrake root was one of the crimes that sent her to the stake. Witches claimed mandraks grew best beneath gallows trees, where the semen dripping down from executed criminals produced appropriate fertilizer, and that when cut the plant emitted bloodcurdling shrieks that drove bystanders insane. The only safe way to harvest a specimen was to tie a black dog to the stem, block your ears with wax, and lure Fido toward you with fresh donkey meat until the shrieking plant was torn from the soil. The dog, of course, expired in drooling agony.

Both the tomato and the mandrake belong to the nightshade family. Both have

bright red or yellow fruit. But although people have bred them together to produce narcotic tomatoes, they're quite different from each other. The general population, however, considered them one and the same, and called both love apples for centuries. This confusion was reinforced by a maze of stories that seemed to connect the two plants to Eden. For instance, medieval writers believed that mandrakes were God's first attempt to make humans (hence those weird roots). This meant they originally came from Eden, which the popular imagination by the 1600s had firmly located in the tomato's native South America. This fit rather nicely with the belief that the Italian name for the tomato, *pomodoro* (literally, golden apple), referred to the golden apples that grew in the Pagan Greek Garden of the Hesperides. It seems Christian scholars had decided that The Garden of Hesperides—a walled enclosure guarded by spirits—was actually Eden, and that its magical fruit was actually Eve's famous snack. One popular tale even told how two elephants representing Adam and Eve were thrown out of paradise for eating mandrakes. Some people went so far as to claim that the tomato was actually Eden's *other* forbidden fruit: When an obscure Jewish-Portuguese immigrant named Dr. Siccaary brought tomatoes to North America in the early 1700s, he peddled them as being from Eden's Tree of Eternal Life, claiming that “a person who should eat a sufficient abundance of these apples would never die.”



*Medieval people believed the mandrake root was the first attempt to create humanity and came from the Garden of Eden.*

So cautious Christians snubbed the tomato for at least 150 years, and it wasn't until the early 1700s that it began to gain acceptance, mainly in Italy, as a decorative puree or garnish. But the rest of the West continued to drag its feet. They claimed tomatoes made your teeth fall out. Its smell was said to drive people insane. Many Yanks thought them just too ugly to eat. In the 1880s, the daughter of a well-known British botanist named Montague Alwood wrote that the highlight of an afternoon tea at her father's house had been the “introduction of this wonderful new fruit—or is it a