

Eating Mud Crabs in Kandahar: Stories of Food During Wartime by the World's Leading Correspondents

Matt McAllester, Editor

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Technically, the author of the title piece didn't sample the mud crabs pulled from the trench where she and Hamid Karzai were taking shelter from Russian tanks in 1989. That was when commanders sent her into Afghanistan with their troops, disguised as a *mujahideen* in men's baggy pajama trousers. New to "the Camel Corps" of foreign journalists, Christina Lamb went on to win Britain's Foreign Correspondent of the Year award five times.

Hers is just one of the savory stories collected by editor Matt McAllester, a Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist himself, about food under fire, survival rations, and the other eating adventures of eighteen print journalists who served as "the eyes and ears" of great metropolitan newspapers. They also developed a taste for terror that no amount of food—or drink—could entirely wash away.

"Before embarking on a story, a journalist needs to prepare," notes Scott Anderson in "How Harry Lost His Ear." In areas like war-torn Northern Ireland, that means serious beer "training" before hitting the IRA bars with the Lads in Belfast. For Christina Lamb, it means "you would eat whatever you liked for weeks at home, then spend weeks of near starvation trekking up and down mountains in Afghanistan or some other godforsaken conflict zone."

This book is like a meal where each course keeps getting better and better. "Amid the awfulness of war, food is a rare, regular comfort," writes the editor. What links these tales is a hunger for news and a gutsy curiosity about remote places, leaders, and situations rocked by violence and despair. As longtime *Washington Post* foreign correspondent Lee Hockstader puts it, "I have the makings here of a feast."

TRINA CARTER (Winter 2012)

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