

Unusual Fare

by Liz Gibbons

When we lived in Colorado Springs in the 1970s my husband practiced law. One of his clients, James Smith, sometimes invited us to dinner in the Penrose Room at the Broadmoor Hotel. My husband and I were familiar with La Tavernne dining area at the Broadmoor, but we did not want to pay the prices in the upscale main dining room, so we had never eaten there. The Penrose dining room was elegantly decorated, and we were seated at a table that was set with what seemed like ten pieces of silverware at every place setting.

James asked if he could order for us. The first course was escargot. We each were served six of them on a special plate that had indentations to hold the shells in place. Vic and I had never had escargot and had no idea of the proper etiquette for eating this delicacy. The wise thing would have been to say to James, "This looks delicious, but I am not familiar with the proper way to eat this. Could you show me?" Instead Vic went ahead and used a fork to get those little critters out of the shell. James politely said nothing but picked up the scissor-like tongs on the table above his plate with his left hand to hold the shell, and with the accompanying narrow fork in his right hand, he deftly removed the escargot from the shell. So we caught on and followed his lead.

Vic also had as clients the Janitell brothers who owned a big motel at the south end of Colorado Springs plus many other properties. They had a private jet and once took us to Las Vegas for a long weekend. At that time meals were very inexpensive at the casinos, and we ate our fill. The casino meals were served buffet style. There I was introduced to a food I had never eaten before—papayas. I loved them and often my breakfast was mainly papayas.

Another experience with exotic food was the year I taught biology at Livonia High School near Detroit. The other biology teacher learned that there was a restaurant nearby that served octopus. We decided to place a big order for it and let our students taste this unusual food. It came on a platter piled high with octopus tentacles and a dipping sauce. Some of the students were a little squeamish, but most of them really enjoyed this.

My son who lives in Los Angeles said if I ever get back to Los Angeles he will take me to a seafood restaurant that he and his girlfriend ate at recently. They partook of the "bug" offerings on the menu and had a medley of small scorpions, silk worm pupae, ants, and crickets, along with more mundane frog legs. The bugs were fried, and were accompanied by several different sauces. My son said they tasted pretty good. I am in no hurry to try that meal.