

# THE DESERT'S LEAVENING AGENTS

ACROSS ARIZONA, ARTISANAL BAKERS ARE ATTEMPTING TO REVIVE A LOST ART

ESSAYS: EXPLORING WALES LIKE A DYLAN THOMAS DEVOTEE / OUR REDHEADED WRITER TRACKS HER IRISH ROOTS



MARCH 01, 2014

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(Pg. 14)



# An Antiquated Art Form

**I'VE BEEN THINKING** lately that I should stop this writing business and start an Italian restaurant. You know: the kind where the atmosphere screams family first, even when the customers' kids aren't screaming; the kind that has strings of soft-white Christmas lights outlining and accenting the soft hues of the interior all year long; the kind that has an entire army of white-haired nanas in the kitchen cooking day and night and who nag you, even after you've had your fill, to eat somethin' 'cause you're too thin.

Maybe that's my future. I haven't stopped loving the written word, nor have I stopped believing that this job is — as I've stated on the record — my dream job. I still love to write, something I'd undoubtedly do even if I weren't receiving a paycheck every couple of weeks. It's just that my love of writing is contingent upon your love of reading. A lot of us writers are fighting what we believe is a noble fight to keep newspapers, periodicals and books in print, shunning Kindles and the like as we preach our message to anyone who will listen. The FAA didn't do any favors for me and my in-flight-magazine-editor ilk by allowing all y'all to use your electronic devices while taxiing. In fact, part of my spiel when speaking at industry conferences about why the in-flights are the last bastions of hope for ink-and-paper publications (and how we'll be around long after other forms of paper periodicals limp off to their dying places) is that whether you genuinely want to know about Jimmy Fallon (our cover subject next month) or whether you just need to know how to maneuver around Chicago O'Hare, thanks to the FAA's policy on electronic devices, we'd inevitably get your attention on either the 20 minutes up or the 20 minutes down.

All that changed recently when Kindles and tablets and such were green-lighted for never-ending in-flight usage. Truth be told, that bummed me out. It bummed me out enough to consider

whether it's time for a career change. Understanding, as I do, that the last seven words of any organization are, "But we've always done it that way," it's still hard for a dyed-in-the-wool, painfully overeducated journalist like me to rally around digital media. I enjoy retreating to my writer's hovel — or pulling out the laptop on a flight, as I'm doing right now on Flight 969 to Miami — and writing long-form magazine journalism. For you, my muses. I believe there'll always be a need for the written word, and as long as there's a need, there'll also be a desire for good writing. But that brings me to another conundrum: What if you don't think you're good enough to be one of the few writers left standing at the end of the day? What if my style becomes tired and ordinary? I still have a hard time believing that I'm good enough to write in this space for you, my muses, even though it's been five years now. Maybe the move of a smart man is to cut bait now before the clouds roll in and he's forced to take his line out of the water. I told my former book-writing professor from my days at Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism that I'm leery of my literary future. "You should write that book we discussed about growing up dyslexic," Sam Freedman told me. "Who would want to read that?" I answered. "And besides, to be honest with you, I don't think I'm a good-enough writer to write that book." Professor Freedman laughed at that. "I've got news for you, Adam: None of us think we're good enough. That never goes away."

Then the copy started coming in for this issue of *American Way*, and I got over myself real quick. This issue is so chock-full of good writing and consequential content that I not only stopped feeling sorry for myself, but it was my muse to write for you, my muses. Convoluted though it sounds, it's a straightforward message: A song needs a reason to rhyme.

Reading about Toni Morrison (page 60) is almost as enlightening as reading the Nobel Prize in literature recipient's work. Understanding the art and affection that goes into making craft breads in an antiquated manner in Arizona (page 68) is akin to turning phrases for you in the antiquated medium of print journalism. Finding out how the White House sommelier chooses wines (page 42) is a topic befitting an internationally read magazine, and learning about anatomy camp for underprivileged kids in Cleveland (page 38) makes me realize that I need to pull my socks up and stop my bellyaching. As for the story about Pretty Red on the Emerald Isle (page 46), well muses, that's just some darn good writing — the kind that will save my beloved profession and provide me with the inspiration to go on writing (and it'll keep me from food-poisoning you at my Italian restaurant).

  
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