

# Soup to Nuts

Steady Eddy  
returns to  
the Gazpacho Folio.

BY GEORGE VUKELICH

Steady Eddy was saying that a lot of the customers who were becoming regulars at his little cafe on Willy Street were suggesting that maybe he should put his recipes into a Steady Eddy Cookbook before the cafe's popularity crested and he was forced into selling live bait again.

"Well, not 'a lot' of the customers are talking about a cookbook," Steady confessed. "Mostly it's the Indian here, who is all enamored with our Blackened Creole Shrimp on Friday nights."

"I am not so much enamored," the Indian said, "as I am intrigued. Fixated, even. I feel like a deer on the interstate paralyzed by the headlights of an oncoming Toyota. The deer has to be thinking: Ah, something your size is winking at you in the hallowed Wisconsin darkness, and who knows? This could be your lucky night. So you brace yourself and look cool. When you get carried away by your emotions, it's hard to distinguish true love from a trailer-truck.

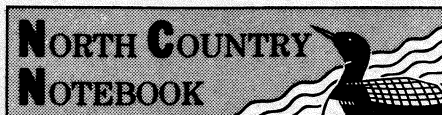
"So *why* is Steady Eddy's blackened creole shrimp different from everybody else's blackened creole shrimp? I think he should make the recipe public so the whole white-eye nation will know. What's he hiding in there?"

"It's the coal-tar marinade," Steady said. "It's like when people ask you if carp are good smoked. I say as long as you don't inhale, what could it hurt?"

"He's marinating them in something weird," the Indian said. "I think it's carbon black."

"I used to think I wanted to publish a cookbook," Steady said, "something colorful that captures the aroma and the savor of our riverine past when we sailed jauntily out of Northport stalking the wily, whiskered behemoths that filled the turgid Yahara backwaters like sunken logs. That book should be titled *Steady Eddy's Catfish Flats Cookbook*, with appropriate sections given over to the ABCs of riverine cuisine, namely Ales, Beers and Condiments.

"This man," the Indian intoned, "could make a fortune selling new cookbooks. Or used cars." "Cookbooks," Steady said, "are not our top priority right now. The Hungry Poet came in the other day with a batch of new summer poems. His Gazpacho Folio, he calls them. We traded again. I get the poems. He gets the blackened shrimp, and, just to be nice, I said he could bring along a special friend. He



said all his friends are 'special.' So I said, well, bring them all along. God, it looked like we were feeding the Packers in here last Friday. Pork City! I want him to publish his poems somewhere before he eats me out of house and johnboat."

Steady brought out a notebook page along with the soup. Haiku, gatha, gazpacho. Seasoned to taste.

We tasted the season.

In the summer garden  
two butterflies  
giddy  
as drunken sailors.

\*

Above the lake  
dragonflies mate  
Blue Lightning

\*

A fly  
walking on  
white paper, writing.  
Can you read it?

\*

Black ants  
pulling, pushing  
the dead horsefly  
home.

\*

In the eye  
of a fly  
one corpse  
is many.

\*

Cedar waxwings  
besotted  
on rotted red berries.

\*

August crickets  
filling the thickets  
of night  
with Joy!

"If you're taking hungry poems," the Indian said, "what's this one worth?

"Sometimes/Sitting on my tush,/I make believe I'm President Bush."

Steady said he wasn't into funding political statements. That's why hungry politicians had PACs and hungry poets had him. Steady did offer nachos. The Indian did accept. ■

*George Vukelich reads selections from North Country Notebook Sunday nights at 9:30 on Wisconsin Public Radio, WERN (88.7 FM).*