



Emerson College

Letter to Brenda Hillman

Author(s): Louise Glück

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Louise Glück

Letter to Brenda Hillman

24 may

dear brenda,

i have three mfa letters to write; lately i have been obliging all my students to write on the same schedule, which means i have one week of very hard work, followed by, or interspersed with, three weeks of anxious leisure, in which i wonder what i ought to do with my time. instead of writing to the people who are paying for my attention, i thought i'd send you the pork recipe; when i finish, i will have that good moral feeling of having typed, which will either lead to the letters i should be writing or oil the mechanisms.

we had the pork last night, together with potatoes anna and grilled red peppers with garlic and oil. salad with sherry wine vinegar & olive oil. ethiopian honey bread. homemade ginger ice cream. this is my life: stay in bed until forced to awaken. then cook.

to cook *butterflied pork loin*.

1.

buy pork. the step you cannot get around. what you want is the sirloin end of the pork loin, as opposed to the rib end. you want it to weigh about 7-7½ pounds, bone in. then you want the bone out: any butcher will do this. you will be left in the aisle with a big piece of an ex-pig. when i did this rec-

ipe at your house, the meat was in thinner strips; there is no reason why you can't keep doing that, just be sure it isn't overcooked. (i overcooked ours that night. the fact that it stayed in memory proves what a peerless dish it is.)

2.

at home with boned pork. 24 hours before you plan to cook the pork, marinate it. chop very fine 3–5 large cloves of garlic. sprinkle with 2 teaspoons of salt, and mash garlic and salt together. ideally, you then add fresh herbs, tho dried will do. you have in your hand now a little bunch of rosemary, a little bunch of thyme. sometimes you have in your hand summer savory or marjoram. sometimes you have sage instead of either rosemary or thyme. it just depends where your hands have been. whatever is in them, chop. i like herbs, so tend to use a lot, upwards, that is, of a tablespoon. too much will taste like grilled rosemary with a side of pork; very nouvelle, as john says. now mash everything together, put in small bowl, grind in pepper and add about 3 tablespoons olive oil. mix. it should smell wonderful.

3.

baste something. it might as well be the pork. spread it out. there will be a big chunk of meat and a little flap (the tenderloin). put pork in oiled flat roasting pan, *fat side down*. paint meat with herb mixture. cover with plastic (not ancient tinfoil). refrigerate till next day.

4.

preliminary roasting. one hour at 375, or until pork is 140 on meat thermometer. roast in upper third of oven, basting regularly. you can also roast the bones, tho they will need longer than the loin itself (about 20 minutes more). they are nice leftovers. this step can be completed one hour before

final cooking. set at room temperature, cover with upside down bowl.

5.

final browning. about 10 minutes in hot broiler or over wood or charcoal fire. *turn pork over.* preheat broiler to very hot. with sharp knife, cut crosswise slashes $\frac{1}{4}$ inch apart in the fat. sprinkle with thin layer of coarse salt. put meat 3 inches from heat source to brown and finish cooking (160).

nice touch: skim fat from pan (or dump), and make a quick deglazing sauce with water, wine or stock. water works very well, since the pan by this time is really full of riches.

if anyone asks where this comes from, don't say from me; i will be accused of plagiarism. it comes from julia child; that is, everything but two cloves of (extra) garlic and the fresh herbs.

not much is new here. noah won a race. every several weeks, the various cubscout dens gather in the evening for what is called a pack meeting. the pack meeting centers on some event; last week, the event was physical fitness. toward the end of the evening, the older scouts (11–12) were to run $\frac{1}{3}$ of a mile, a feat every webelo (one level) has to complete. the younger children were encouraged to join in. noah told john he thought he wouldn't (pack meetings are usually father & son affairs). john said fine. then the rest of noah's den decided to run, what the hell. all the other little kids decided to run. john watched with great pleasure as the large (30-odd) mass of uniformed children moved toward the high school. noah was not in front—how could he be—but he was prominent. this meant that, driving home, when noah was depressed about the race, john would be able to tell him what a great start he'd made, what a great showing for a kid

his age. then the children disappeared behind the school, which the fathers watched with great attentiveness. then noah appeared. alone. and for twenty or thirty seconds stayed alone. people began to cheer (people beside john. john was yelling stretch it out, you can do it, and other loud encouragements). and at some point noah realized he was winning. he started looking from side to side, wanting company, getting slower and slower. then, when he was among others again, he speeded up, managing to actually win in the end. this was a great event for everyone. noah got a chocolate creemee; he would not tell the story himself, but permitted john to tell me. except when john said that afterward girls came up to him to congratulate him. noah said, dad, that's a lie. we were then asked to tell nobody (which meant, tell nobody while he was around, a fact i didn't completely realize at first. that is, i told nobody, and john told everybody and in the course of the next day i realized that noah wanted people to know the fact but not to assume he, noah, had any real stake in the race or particular delight in victory.)

the tulips, red, yellow and white, are dead. small things are coming up in the vegetable garden. twa changed the departure of the flight i'm on from 10:15 to 9:45. i'm nervous about the trip. it reminds me of a time just after i'd met john. we'd had our first rendezvous—in iowa city, as it happened. i had a reading, and he had enough love for the town & remaining friends there for the trip to seem intriguing. at first it was immensely awkward. when he was in the shower, i called my friend karen. i told her this was a terrible mistake, i had to get out. she said, give it a day. later, john made similar calls. a day later, we were very happy, and got progressively more and more happy until, two days after that, it was time to say goodbye. we had a magnificent parting. passionate embraces, affirmative reviews of the previous three days, and so on. then he flew back to missouri, and i flew to chicago,

from which i was supposed to go on to burlington. except that the northeast was locked in snow. no — that's wrong. my parents had noah; i was to go to ny. and ny was snowed in. it matters, because i had to call them. then it occurred to me that since i was going to be late anyway, i could fly to missouri for the night, instead of just sleeping in chicago. i stood on the long piedmont line. i can't remember what this fantasy cost. not a huge amount, but not a drop in the bucket. an amount i thought cheap for such pleasure, as i bought the ticket. then i called my parents, who knew the airport was closed. there didn't seem any point in mentioning to them where i was going; i just said i'd be home the next day, weather permitting. then i called john, who had said, as we parted with so much feeling only a few hours before, that he was having dinner with some friends. i called them and asked for him. he was surprised. then i said how about my coming down there? he paused. fine, he said. i hung up before i heard anymore pausing. on the plane, i drank 2 scotches very fast, thinking, i am ruining this wonderful romance. i am asking too much. i have no cool. i don't understand boundaries; i didn't see what an exquisite whole those few days made, how natural the end was. by the time i arrived, i was extremely anxious, tho drunk. we ate pizza in bed; i ended up staying up all night crying.

the point is, it was ultimately a good idea — it made the relationship more pervasive in both lives — but it might have worked out otherwise. when i think of getting on a plane to berkeley, i'm afraid the way i was afraid on that piedmont flight, flying thru the night because of greed. there had been those three days not stained by neurosis (as, now, there were four weeks). if i spend too much time out there, i'll begin behaving badly. o well.

will call sometime before all this happens to find out if it is ok to stay there, at least at the beginning & end. when i

know the schedule, and when you see how louisa is, we can think about the middle.

i'm reading your poems, more and more impressed — no great insights yet.

love,

Coni