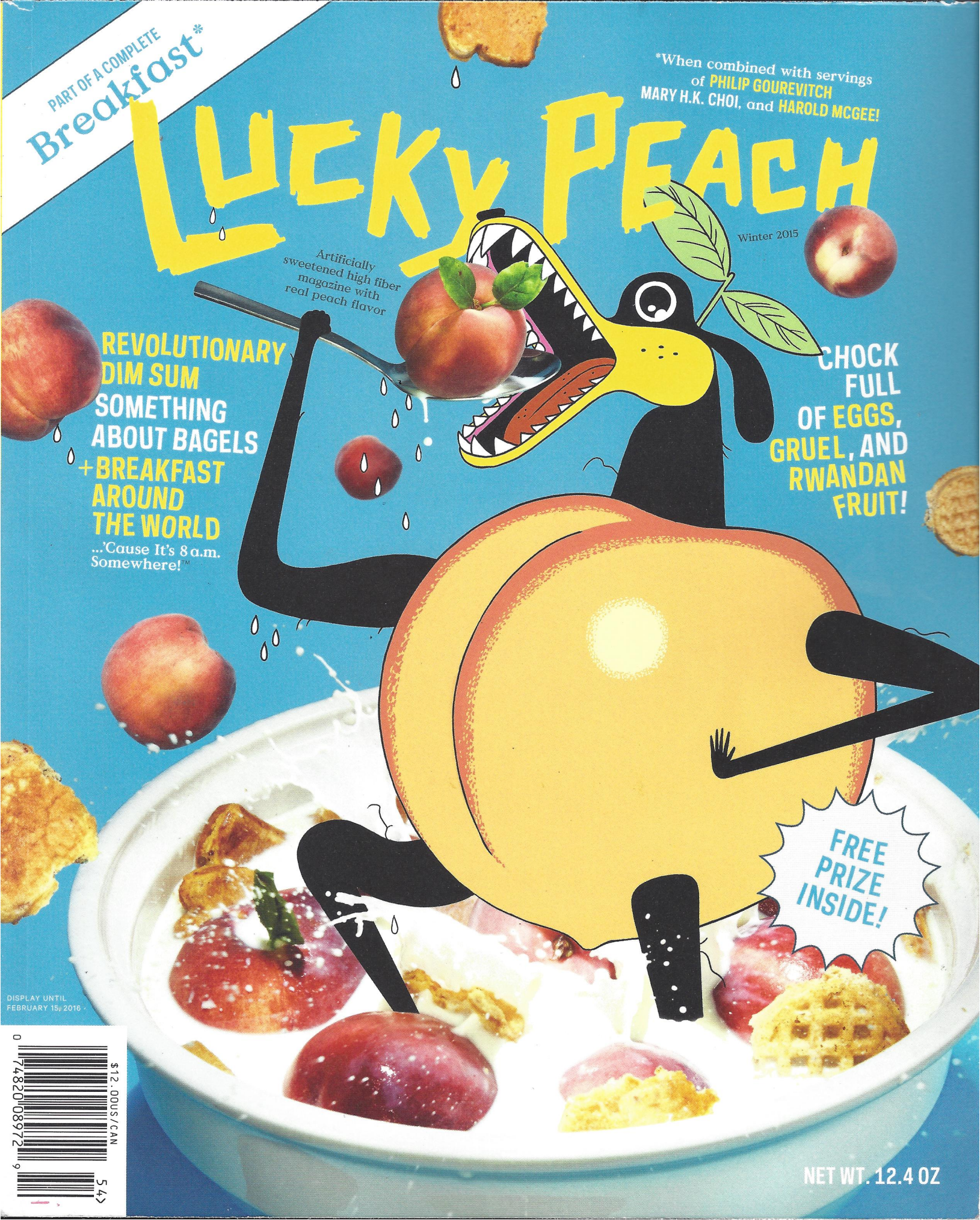
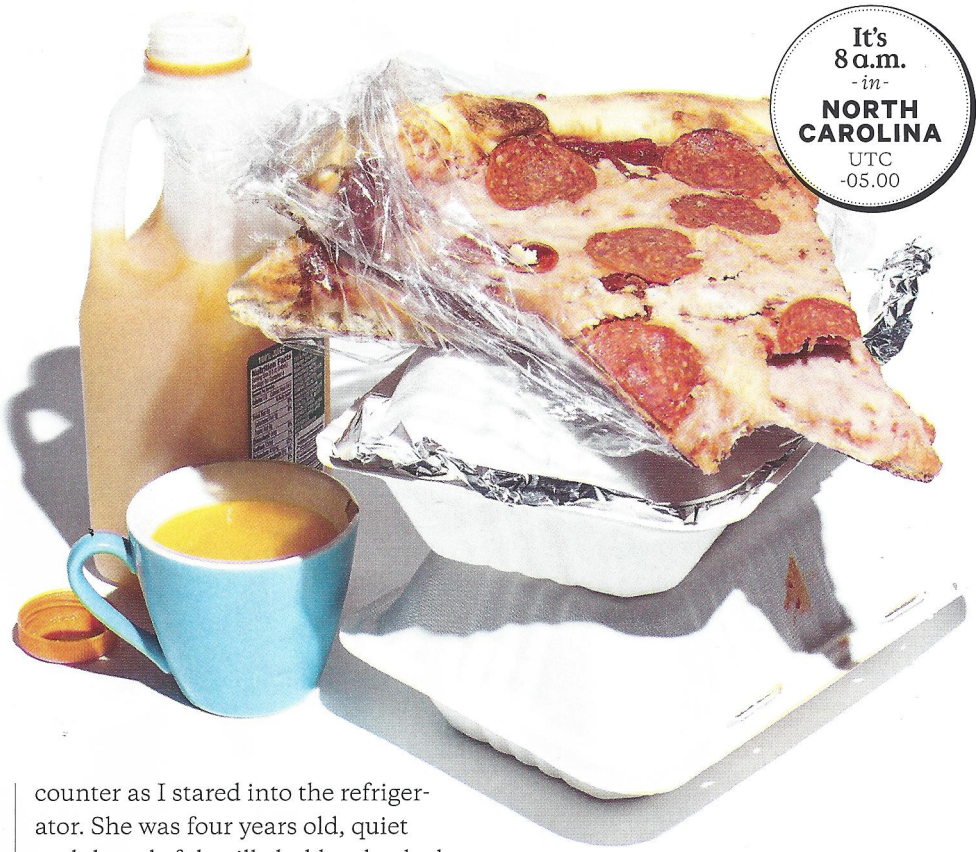

PART OF A COMPLETE Breakfast*
*When combined with servings of PHILIP GOUREVITCH MARY H.K. CHOI, and HAROLD MCGEE!
LUCKY PEACH
Winter 2015
Artificially sweetened high fiber magazine with real peach flavor
REVOLUTIONARY DIM SUM SOMETHING ABOUT BAGELS + BREAKFAST AROUND THE WORLD
...'Cause It's 8 a.m. Somewhere!™
CHOCK FULL OF EGGS, GRUEL, AND RWANDAN FRUIT!
FREE PRIZE INSIDE!
DISPLAY UNTIL FEBRUARY 15, 2016
$12.00US/CAN
NET WT. 12.4 OZ

Last Night This Morning

by George Weld



In my mother's childhood home in Wilmington, North Carolina, the family would sit down every morning to a hot breakfast of grits, eggs, and pancakes with molasses.

There might have been fish my grandfather had caught, hot cod-fish cakes, or fried mullet or shad roe. There was usually pork from the family farm in Virginia—country ham, bacon, sausage, but also brains scrambled with eggs and trotter meat picked off the bone and made into fritters. After breakfast the family would adjourn to the living room, and my grandfather would lead everyone through the morning prayer for families from the 1928 *Book of Common Prayer*. Then everyone would go off to school and work and do whatever else they had to do that day.

It took one generation for that entire breakfast ritual—the array of foods, the formal seating, the structured morning—to disappear from our family. By the time I was growing up, the only ghost of it was my mother's excellent (but meatless) "pig's feet pancakes" made from the batter recipe that once served to bind together my grandfather's fritters. The name was a vestige of a breakfast I shuddered to imagine: a foot wrapped in a pancake, hoof and bone ruining everything.

I've spent the past ten years making breakfast for a living. I've thought often about this generational change, the sudden constriction of what we imagine as possible for breakfast. But it hit home in a concrete way one morning when my daughter, Margaret, sat on a stool at the kitchen counter as I stared into the refrigerator. She was four years old, quiet and thoughtful, still chubby cheeked. From the cracked skylight overhead, the early-morning sun streamed down and lit up her hair. I looked at her, a picture of purity, and I looked at the greasy box in the refrigerator.

"Sweetpea? I could make you biscuits? Or you could have pizza."

She didn't seem insulted, didn't seem to realize I'd just invited her into that darkest of cuisines, the hangover kitchen. She made a show of considering the question and then—to my great relief—answered, "Pizza."

After that, it wasn't long before she was starting her days with leftover pad thai, chicken teriyaki, cold steak. I'd still make pancakes and biscuits on weekends when we had nowhere to be. But when school loomed and we had leftovers in the fridge that she liked, I not only felt it was okay to serve up last night's take-out, I persuaded myself—mostly—that it was a moral imperative. If she'd eat leftover pizza for breakfast one morning, maybe on another I could make her brussels sprouts or fried rice—maybe she'd grow up believing breakfast was a real meal, not just Cheerios and milk to be wolfed down as quickly as possible.

And so it has turned out. I credit leftover pizza for wedging open the gap that changed breakfast for her, made room for different food on her morning menu. Sure, yesterday she had waffles and dark chocolate, but this morning she had duck breast. When we're out of sausage, I can cook her a pork chop and she doesn't bat an eye. She's ten now, but she's as likely to ask for carrots for breakfast as sliced oranges.

If my grandmother knew I sometimes feed my daughter the second half of last night's burrito for breakfast, she might well spend an extra five minutes on her knees praying for my parenting. But eating well means eating broadly and wasting little: it's those same values that led my grandfather to eat pig's feet and brains for breakfast. In spirit, anyway, a breakfast of leftover grandma slice isn't so far from that standard she set.