

A hot mouthful delivers a rush of pleasure as powerful as a martini, I tell you.

8:30am: Working on my new novel, I consume three cups of black coffee; a big bowl of yogurt, berries, and granola; lentil soup; and microwave popcorn.

6pm: This week is my birthday! To celebrate, my husband and I go to one of my absolute favorite restaurants, Mattie’s at Green Pastures. (When invited, my daughter proclaimed, “There is nothing I want more than a frozen pizza and being alone.” Fair—and I can relate! We leave her at home.)

Housed in a gorgeously restored historic Victorian estate, the restaurant offers patio tables overlooking live oak trees, with peacocks roaming freely, emitting creepy cries. (My husband disagrees that the peacock cries are creepy.)

The menu is jazzed-up comfort food: Things start with a farmhouse salad containing the absolute freshest greens and sugar snap peas, plus honey-laden, mahogany-colored biscuits with an almost-but-not-quite burned crispy exterior. A hot mouthful delivers a rush of pleasure as powerful as a martini, I tell you.

Then come rainbow-hued carrots, wood-grilled until they are perfectly tender and tasting of caramel and fire, served over hummus with a crunch of chopped pistachios. Rounding out the starters are fried green tomatoes that make me realize I don’t actually hate fried green tomatoes.

For mains, my husband has the chicken fried steak special and I order what I always order: the best fried chicken in Texas, served over Kennebec mashers with gouda and bacon. (I didn’t touch the baby kale salad, but I’m sure it was great.)

For dessert, I order a cherry crumble with cashew sorbet and brown sugar oats. I keep saying to my husband, “No, you have a cherry,” and then, when he tries to take a bite, my hand instinctively swoops in and takes the one he’d angled toward. Look, he knows who he married.

Over the course of the meal, we’ve sipped through one Phony Negroni and two Topo Chicos.

On our way out, we chat with the valet, Langston, about the peacocks and the trees. I take a deep breath. For a moment, it feels as if everything in this crazy world is going to be OK. All for the bargain price of **\$195.99**, including tip.