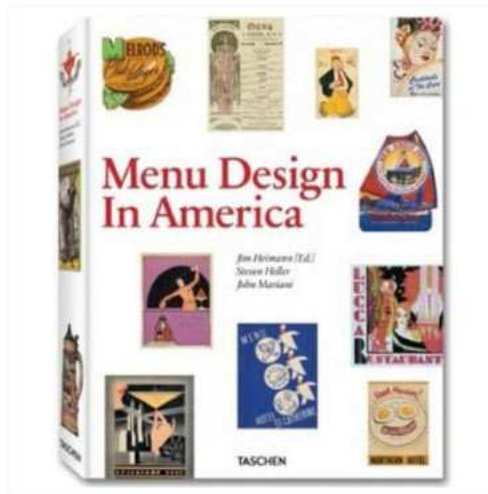


PSYCHO-GOURMET -- Geoff Nicholson on food, sex, obsession and the madness of the mouth.



Last week I went to the launch party for Jim Heiman's book "Menu Design In America, 1850-1985," a title that speaks for itself. It was held in the Taschen bookstore in Beverly Hills.



The party coincided with Jim's wedding anniversary, 38 years married to the divine Roleen, and the mood was suitably celebratory. Some of the food was provided by the Beverly Hills Cheese Store, and knowing how much they charge for their cheese it seemed there must have been a grand's worth of the stuff.



Pizza was provided by Wolfgang Puck, and the man himself put in an appearance, somehow looking even more like himself in person than in photographs, if that makes sense. (These photographs here are from the Taschen website). Not for the first time, I wondered how Mr. Puck have got on in his career if he'd been called Fritz or Johan. Nobody forgets a Wolfgang.



A while back, I interviewed Jim about the book for Gourmet Live – and that interview will be appearing in due course, though I think not any time soon.

One of the things that didn't make it into that piece was a discussion about nudity on menus. Jim said that when he started collecting menus he was amazed by just how raunchy certain designs were.

His explanation was that in the late 19th and early 20th twentieth centuries restaurants were largely male preserves. Women, at least decent women, weren't to be found in restaurants so menus could be as explicit as they liked. There were "ladies" to be "offended."

Even so it comes as a surprise to find the menu below showing a semi-naked woman, a giantess I suppose, with multicolored liquid (some kind of cocktail?) pouring from her breasts and a group of tiny men below catching it in glasses.

I don't know exactly what went on in the French Casino in Chicago, but something tells me it can't have been nearly as much fun as the menu suggests.

Posted by Geoff Nicholson at 10:07 AM 

Labels: [Jim Heiman](#), [Nude menu](#), [Wolfgang Puck](#)