

# Full Tummy Dreams

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It was the first full week of August, my favorite week of the year – Wileyville's *Full Tummy Festival Week*. Actually only five days, but what a wonderful five-day period! Yet, even though considered the all-time festival eating champion, it seemed best that I not participate this year. Sad, but it was the best decision. Folks asked me, "Why, Bobby?" I just smiled and said, "Personal reasons you might not understand."

It was all you can eat from 6 to 11 PM, Wednesday through Sunday. The five-day cost was \$75 for a badge to eat food from any restaurant in town. Each place went all out preparing. With folks coming from all over, it was a big thing for our medium-size town and great advertising for its many small restaurants.

Most folks wandered about sampling a little from place to place and then generally eating a full-course meal at one restaurant. Then they strolled down Main Street to the City Hall lawn where the Presbyterian Church ladies had set up a homemade desserts table and big pots of strong coffee.

There were no trophies or cash prizes, not even a certificate. In fact, there was no designated winner. Folks always knew who the champ was. Big groups followed certain known eaters of mass quantities of edibles as they went from restaurant to restaurant. I usually had what would amount to a busload of fans.

I'm what one would call a "Big Boy." How big am I? Let's put it this way. My wife wants children, but I am so big that we can't even get close enough anymore. However, after last year's experience I started on a diet. I'm a lot smaller now, but it's still hard to find clothing that fits. My wife solves that with her sewing skills. The long-term goal is to drop about 150 more pounds.

My technique was to not waste time going from restaurant to restaurant, but to pick five places in advance, one for each night. Five specially selected restaurants – I figured that each type of food should give birth to some particularly fantastic dreams. Eating all that good food always caused me to have the wildest and craziest dreams a person could ever have. I loved those dreams; they were as much fun as eating.

Sal, my wife and best friend despite what I am going to tell you, always left town those five days to go visit her sister Mildred over in Tyler City. She just couldn't put up with the ruckus; my ruckus that is. Before she left she said, "Now you remember, you can't sleep in our bed. Go sleep in the spare bedroom, the little one."

Let me tell you what happened last year. Hope you don't get too hungry and stop reading this because your gut got to growling so much that you just had to go out and get something to eat. However, if you do, enjoy! Food is good for you, but it can also do you in.

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The first night I went to Carlos and Rosa Martinez' *Ciudad Guacamole* at the far end of Main Street. It was uphill from my house, but I figured I would eat my way down the street by just sort of rolling home with a full belly.

Carlos and Rosa warmly greeted me. They knew I was a great advertisement for their restaurant. People watched me go in and followed, knowing the food would be good.

It was a small restaurant with Mexican flags and colorful tablecloths. Saltillo tile covered the floor, upon which rested heavy dark wooden tables and chairs. Mariachi music played from two decrepit wall-mounted black speakers.

I started with a couple of bottles of Modelo Negra cerveza. I can't remember the order the foods I ate, but here is the list of food I took in stages from the buffet:

*Carne a la Tampiqueña, carnitas maciza, machaca, chiles rellenos, carne de puerco adobada, spinach enchiladas, chalupas, pollo con salsa de mole poblano, camarones al Diablo, chicken enchilada verde, chimichangas, pescado a la Veracruzana, camarones Tampiqueñas, Yucatan cochinita pibil, camarones al mojo de ajo, pechuga de pollo con crema, and a big combo order of steak, chicken and shrimp fajitas. I threw down some appetizers such as queso fundido and guacamole, no chips, waste of time and space. Dessert was not something I really wanted, but Rosa said to try the Banana Taco, a cinnamon and sugar taco shell filled with Bananas Foster, a garnish of chocolate and whipped cream. In addition, I saw the strawberry and cream cheese empanadas. Finally, I had a Blue Margarita and a strong coffee to wash it all down. BURP!*

Downhill along Main Street I rolled, collapsing in the spare bedroom. Whoa, that was almost too much! Needed to pace myself.

The room slowly changed to a poorly lit, hot and humid jungle. Lianas hung from tall trees. Calls of birds and monkeys resounded through a canopy of broad-leafed trees.

Then they came, one by one at first, then in great numbers. All wanted some part of me. They began to bite and claw and squeeze, jaguars and

crocodiles, constrictors, and spiders of all sorts. I thrashed and hit back with a branch I grabbed. I dashed through piranha-ridden waters. They swarmed all over me. Vultures sat waiting. Screaming, it was the end!

It was morning. I was alive. It has been one of my “full tummy” dreams. It was a good one, not the best, but good. However, the spare bedroom was a mess. Everything in the room had been thrown about, including the lamp/branch that I had been wielding. The bed that had been the crocodile I was jumping on had broken in half. What a night!

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Most of the afternoon was spent resting and evacuating in preparation for night number two. Mexico had been tough. This second night it's *Ming's China Wall Restaurant*, just a bit further downhill on Main Street.

Ming had spent big bucks decorating his restaurant in Mandarin red cloth and gold gilt paint on elaborate carvings and pillars. His restaurant was very neat, with some sort of oriental stringed instrument music playing. Ming's gave me peace. It was like a Tai Chi exercise, lowering stress and creating harmony. I was ready. There is nothing better than a Chinese buffet. It makes me feel like a kid in a toy store. Where do I start?

Here I would say I cheated a bit. Ming is a good friend. He provided an advance list, so I was able to prepare a focused gastronomical attack rather than running around in confusion pushing food into my face and eating too many spring rolls.

Ming had placed a large pot of green tea on my table, so with no delay I started, hiding the list in my shirt. Hmmmm ... good!!!

*I warmed up with a Puu Puu tray for two, with a flaming hibachi, BBQ spare ribs, Cho Cho fried shrimp, shrimp toast, chicken rings and Crab Rangoon. Chinese appetizers have to be the best, as the fried wontons and pot stickers rapidly disappeared. A small bowl of Dragon Soup washed that down.*

*Then came the big rush along the Great Chicken Wall of China as I called it: Kung Pao spicy chicken, chicken with plum sauce, Hunan chicken, hot pepper chicken and Ta-Chen spicy chicken. At this point, Ming moved silently to the table with a Tsingtao beer to cool me down. On to the seafood, curry shrimp, sizzling Happy Family, Moo Shu shrimp, Dragon and Phoenix combo, and my favorite spicy Szechuan shrimp. Beef and pork dishes followed, orange beef and cherry beef, fish-flavored pork, hot pepper pork, and sweet-and-sour pork. I wound down with some Lo Mein and Chow Mein dishes. Some preserved kumquats in a sweet syrup, with more green tea ended the night*

Rising from my chair, Ming handed me a small lacquered black tray with a fortune cookie on it. “Your life will become complicated by others. Be alert at all times. There is much danger in the future.” My life is always complicated, who writes these things?

The evening was fresh as I waddled homeward, glancing into restaurants to see who was participating this year.

Let’s see, the spare bedroom is in bad shape. Oh well, that goes on the “Honey Do” list. Yes, the couch in the family room, that will do fine.

Everything turned red and golden as I fell asleep. Looking upward, I could see the entrance to a treasure cave on the yellow cliff high above red desert

sands. Slowly I climbed. I said I was a big boy, but the marvelous thing about dreams is you can do things beyond normal capability or common sense.

I heard a high-pitched hiss. A small flying snake darted at me, but missed. Squeezing into a large crevice, I heaved stones at it until it flew away.

Almost to the top, I reached my left hand upward to pull myself across the rim. I was on the top at the entrance to the cave. As I looked in, a gigantic green dragon came flying outward toward me. Its fangs missed, but not its talons. Upward it carried me. Then it released its hold and I fell toward the red sand floor.

The red faded to gold; it was morning. Yawning, I looked about. The couch was upside down on top of me. Pictures were all over the floor as were books from a tumbled bookcase. I must have been climbing it. The knocked over television was on. It was the "Morning Show." Not too bad. Just a mess, nothing was broken. It must be the Tai Chi grace of Chinese food.

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Putting on knee-high stockings and Lederhosen that my wife had sewn up for me from an old green canvas tent, I strolled up Main Street on the third night, snapping my suspenders and adjusting my cocky little green felt hat with the red feather in it. I felt real German and ready for the onslaught of calorie-ridden Bavarian-style food.

Adolph Schuster's family came here in the late 1800s. Traditional German foods, unchanged over the years, made up the menu of *Adolph's Bavarian Bar & Restaurant*. I'm a dark beer drinker, so this is where I hang out on weekends.

The front door of Adolph's yellow stucco and dark wood restaurant was wide open. Music poured out the door as young girls dressed in those apron-over dresses carried large mugs of beer out onto the patio crowded with laughing singing diners. That's where I sat.

Adolph's was different; there was no buffet. You just asked for something and it came. So, I looked at the menu and placed my order and later more orders followed:

*For starters I ordered velvet pumpkin cream soup, some duck liver truffles with a pumpernickel coating, followed by potato pancakes with Westphalian ham and sour cream. That was a good base for the entrées of Bavarian duck with Savoy cabbage Karl-Heinz fries, schweinshanken mit Riesling-sauerkraut and bread dumplings, and a beef roulade with red cabbage and crown potatoes.*

*A pause for a foamy stein of Munich's famous Hacker-Pschorr and then a nice Spaten pilsner was followed by a much-enjoyed Jägerpfandl (easier to eat than to say, this is a fabulous pork tenderloin tossed with bacon-mushroom sauce served with spätzle) and surprisingly for Adolph's, a pan-seared Alaskan Halibut filet with asparagus risotto and a dill-lime sauce. Wow!*

*Leaning back, why not a dessert? Therefore, I went with two: Viennese apple strudel and a big slice of dark German chocolate cake. The espresso was rich and full-bodied.*

Smiling and satisfied I headed for home and bed. Let's see, where to sleep? There are no more beds. I pushed a bunch of blankets into the long and wide tile bathtub that was made for my big boy size and promptly fell asleep.

The sky was lit with flares and the artillery kept pounding the Germans. I lay in my trench, nervous. We had been told to fix bayonets and prepare to charge. A heavy rain had started to fall and the trenches were becoming muddier and more water-filled than before.

I refastened my British-issued doughboy helmet. Then the order was given and we rose, slipping and sliding out of mud. Rushing low across the field many of us were hit by the sporadic fire of machine guns. However, I finally reached the German lines and began to push my bayonet in and out, until hit on the side of my face by a gun butt. I collapsed face down into the mud and bodies; it became dark.

With a big sauerkraut beer belch, I opened my eyes. I was no longer in the bathtub; it was overflowing. The shower curtain was wrapped around me and the rod was in the sink, where I had stabbed the mirror and broken it. On my head was Sal's shower cap. Grabbing hold of the toilet lid, I lurched into a standing position and turned off the running water.

I grabbed an old hand drill and auger from the garage and punched a hole in the linoleum and wood bathroom floor, allowing the water to drain under the house. Sal will kill me for this one. Well, she wanted a new bathroom.

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Texas barbecue or Memphis barbecue? Which one is best? That's always the big argument. I have my opinions, but as I don't know where you are from, let's just say that I eat them all, and I do. That's what was on my mind and digestive tract for night number four.

The *Rockin' Chair Barbecue Palace* tried to please everyone, with a bit of barbecue from all over the south and southwest. Linda "Bony" Johnson, all 5 feet

and 300+ pounds of her, was the owner/cook. She loved to take care of us big boys.

Wandering into the gray weathered low ranch-house building, I sat at a long rough-hewn oak table and bench. Bony came up and covered it layers of newspaper. I'm not sure why the newspaper is used; the wood is just plain saturated with barbecue sauce and grease. A termite would have a feast on that wood!

The place was full of folks. The smell of barbecue attracts meat eaters like flies to a dead horse. Ha! Well, Bony's barbecue is so good it makes your tongue slap your brains out!

"Bobby, how about a Shiners before you start? How about two or three?" said Bony.

While I was drawing on the first Shiner longneck, Bony and her girls came out with big trays full of food. I have never seen so many drooling people look up so fast; maybe that's why the newspaper is on the tables. It's the drool!

*Wiping off my own lips I looked at what had been placed in front of me and began my toothy sashay through Bony's goodies. First there was a big bowl of Brunswick stew and some deep-fried onion petals. OK, now for the barbecue. Texas-style beef brisket and some pulled pork were the first victims, followed by some St. Louis cut pork ribs, seasoned and slow smoked to the point where the meat could hardly stay on the bones. All you had to do for some of the ribs was to tilt your head back and let the meat drop down your gullet like an oyster.*

*Now fish is not thought of as being associated with a barbecue place, well perhaps catfish, but Bony had gone all out and prepared a ruby red Idaho rainbow trout smoked over hickory. I nearly died.*

*Next came a big bowl of Kentucky Burgoo and some chopped BBQ mutton. Then some Memphis-style ribs that were so smoky the fire alarm almost went off. Oh, almost forgot. There were three types of barbecue-baked beans, varying in degrees of smokiness, onions and chili-powered heat.*

*I closed out with some fine hickory-smoked chicken and a slice of pecan pie and a bowl of hot peach cobbler with vanilla ice cream on top. The last half bottle of a Shiner washed it all down.*

Where to sleep? Main bedroom? No way. Kitchen? Forget that! That left the garage. How about on top of the workbench? No, might fall off. Yes, the old car I am restoring. I squeezed into the back and lay down on the seat and went to sleep.

It was a poorly lit, hot and humid jungle. What, am I back in the jungle dream? No, the trees and plants look different, and I don't hear any birds or monkeys.

Before I could answer any of these questions a small dinosaur, one of those Jurassic Park raptor-types with lots of teeth came rushing past me. I kept telling myself, *this is a dream. Right? Cool!* However, I could feel the ferns on my face and had cut my hand on one of the spiny cycad leaves. This was real.

Looking out from my hiding place, I felt a bump from behind. There, looking right at me, mouth open was the chaser of the small raptor. I had no chance as he grabbed my head and bit down. I thrashed about as best I could,

but with no head, I wasn't the best of thrashers, more like a twitcher, sort of like a lizard's tail when it breaks off.

Screaming, I woke up. This had not been a good dream. In most dreams, I am able to control the outcome. I had fallen out of the old car in my efforts to survive and had succeeded in knocking over partially empty paint cans and nail jars and all sorts of tools. The garage floor was a multicolored mess and so was I, with nails and glass stuck to me.

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Maybe this eating wasn't good for me. The dreams were getting to be progressively worse or better, depending on what you wanted from a dream. However, I was a bit unnerved by that last one. I had paid my money and had to finish the five nights.

The fifth night was always my favorite night. The restaurants competed to have the best food that night, but I stuck to my plan of one restaurant. Anyway, what can Polish food do to you? Fattening, yes; dangerous, no.

Two blocks from my house was Stosh Jablonski's *Polish Extravaganza & Polka Hall*. It was a big high-ceilinged place with tables around a wobbly circular dance floor and a slightly raised bandstand. The polka music on the weekends got a bit loud, but it was a fun place. Lots of folks showed up for the dancing; I was there for the food. I could have come on Wednesday to listen to small quartet playing Chopin, but I still would have been there for the food.

*The food was great, starting with Kielbasa twists, salmon with caviar, smoked salmon potato pancakes and Kiszka – blood sausage to you. To settle this in place, some pickled pigs feet in gelatin were enjoyed with a Grodziskie beer, a very unusual smoked wheat beer.*

*I rushed through a vast selection of Polish entrées: pierogi ruskie, stuffed cabbage, a selection of Kielbasa, kotlet Schabowy pork, kopytka dumplings, placki ziemniaczane z sosem grated pancakes, and golabki z miesem meat and rice-stuffed cabbage.*

*Stosh came by with some glasses of Polish vodka. We shared a few and I continued my onslaught with kurczak pieczony baked chicken, pieczen rymska meatloaf with tomato sauce over the top, dorsz baked cod with a creamy dill sauce.*

*Sated, I ordered a small plate of strawberry Nalesniki crepes and a cup of coffee. Stosh toasted me with more vodka and I heaved myself out the door, swinging and swaying to the polka.*

The fifth night was over. It had been a lot of fun. A bit dizzy from the five-day effort I entered the house. There was nowhere to sleep. Any resting place was ruined or forbidden. Paint was still on the garage floor. I opted for the picnic table in the backyard. It was the only place. The yard was strewn with rubbish, yard sale acquisitions, broken lawnmowers and bicycles; it was a veritable junkyard that Sal was always hounding me about.

Smiling and tired, I stretched out on the table and looked up at the Moon and the few stars that were visible in the Moon's glare. Sleep came promptly and so did the dream.

A light was shining on me from above. The Moon I supposed. It kept moving back and forth across where I lay on the picnic table. I sat up and looked at it. Then it moved away and turned off. I couldn't sleep, must be too much vodka.

There was a slight hum, then quiet. Suddenly two large yellow triangular-headed toothy space monster-like creatures jumped across the wooden fence and grabbed me with big chicken-like claw feet. Rolling about on the picnic table I fell to the ground and crawled beneath. The aliens moved about and began to tip the table over on its side with long thick blue tendrils. Before they could do that I was up and running through the yard debris, falling and cutting myself. They chased me over to the dense hedge – “Bobby you had better trim that someday or it will take over the yard.” Hiding inside I saw their chicken legs moving back and forth looking for me. They stopped in front of me and began to pull the hedge aside.

An old 28-inch lawnmower blade lay on the ground next to me. I took an old rag blown into the hedge and wrapped it around one end of the blade, jumping out of the hedge, swinging back and forth with all my might. The smaller of the two aliens stuck out its foot for protection as I slashed and slashed with the blade. Screaming unbelievable sounds, they rushed to the fence and clambered over it. Shortly there was a loud hum and a small spaceship rose up into the sky, rapidly vanishing.

Heart beating wildly and almost out of breath, I wobbled over to the picnic table, righted it and sat down. The bloody blade was still in my hand. I flung it and the rag into the bushes.

What was that? Over near the hedge was a big yellow claw-foot. I picked it up and threw it over the fence. “You forgot something assholes. Come and get it!” Back to the table I went to sleep.

Morning came. The sun warmed my face. It felt good. What a wild dream that was! The backyard was torn up, but you wouldn’t really notice it, considering that it had been such a mess anyway. Had quite a few cuts and bruises. Must have been from rolling about in the scrap metal. I was really sore.

Well, time for my big post-Full Tummy Festival morning walk. All the other, also now much bigger folks would also be out soon bragging about their efforts last night. I had bested them all again. With my big gut pushing and pulling me forward, I opened the gate to the alley and waddled down toward Olive Street. One big massive tornado-like fart made Mrs. Wilson's daisies wilt, even though they were on the other side of the fence. Yes, it had been a good night!

Sitting across from the alley exit to Olive Street was the Reverend Baltimore Jones. He was good in size also, but a minor participant in the food festival. He always laughed and said, "Doin' it fo' the Lawd. Praise Be!"

He hailed me over. "See yo' goin fo' yo' big walk. Yo' sho' be great las' night, made the other guys and gals think they wuz jes' a nibblin'. Come heah, set on the poach w' me a bit before yo' starts. This rocka' be strong enough. Haw!"

I lurched up onto the porch and gingerly lowered myself into the chair. Hmmm, that felt good on the feet.

"Well, I'll set a spell, but just 15 minutes or so."

"Looka' that silly ol' dog o' mine, wuz he got? Come heah, Soupbone!"

An old multi-colored dog came slowly wandering down the alley, dragging a piece of yellow dry wood, and whipping it about. The closer he got, the less it looked like wood. Then I recognized it for what it was. It seemed to be a big yellow chicken foot. Looking up at the sky I said, "Holy Shit!"

“Yo’ doin’ poorly?” said Baltimore. “Yo’ be white as a sheet. Musta eaten sumpin’ bad las’ night.”

“No, I think that it was something that almost ate me!”