

POUR
SOME
SUGAR
ON
ME

Though we've had wars in its name, sex is actually the great unifier. It's the one topic almost all women have some interest in. This issue, we look at hot new topics (can your cervix be trendy?), offer some simple advice (it's time to buy a vibe, babe) and even show you how falling in love is like a good shot of whiskey. Bottoms up!



FORGET YOUR G-SPOT

All the buzz is on the cul-de-sac these days.

The female body, while we love it so, seems to produce new and more mysterious sexual ways every day. The G-spot and clit were hard enough for us to figure out, but now names like “cul-de-sac” are being thrown about. (No, it doesn’t refer to a circular dead-end street.) Sex educator and “spots” expert Jessica Bain chats with fellow Good Vibrations alum Yana Tallon-Hicks to help us figure this one out.

What is the cul-de-sac and where is it?

The cul-de-sac refers to the area of the vagina around the cervix. I have to say, this is a clever little moniker, and the first time I’ve heard it. Anatomically speaking, this area is the fornix, the area of the vagina into which the cervix protrudes. Pleasurably speaking, some people refer to the anterior fornix, on the front of the vaginal wall, as the “A-spot” or the “AFE (anterior fornix erogenous) zone.”

How do you stimulate this “A-spot” you speak of?

Stimulation of the A-spot is similar to that of the G-spot, but not exactly the same because anatomically they are different. Direct, focused pressure is what seems to be the most universally satisfying. Motion, or hooking, which works against the

G-spot’s spongy tissue, doesn’t seem to be as pleasurable for most folks as simple firm pressing.

Now that I know what to do with it, how do I find it? Can I find it on my own? Do I need help from a partner or toy?

You can find this area on your own so long as you can reach that far into your own body, but the search would probably be much more fun with a partner doing the reaching. A good idea is to familiarize yourself with the area before you get your sex on, as in, when you’re not turned on. Most people aren’t that familiar with how the inside of their vagina feels that far in. So, dig in and figure out where that area is around the cervix, then let your partner know about it.

As far as toys go, any longer, firm, G-spot toy with a defined curve at the end will work lovely with the A-spot as well. Also, there are some great wands on the market that are geared toward prostate stimulation for male-bodied folks. These typically have a distinct curve on the end and then an extra bump an inch or two down. These are great toys to use with vaginas as well, because they hit two birds with one stone—the curve presses against the A-spot while the bump pushes into the G-spot. Marvelous.



HAVE YOU EVER FAKED AN ORGASM?

62% Yes
38% No

According to a curve-mag.com poll

What are some good cul-de-sac-ish positions for dykes to try out at home?

If you are looking for a sex position or activity that's going to hit the A-spot, fisting can be a good option, if it's feasible for a person. Also, any position where the recipient has her knees tucked closer into their chest will make it easier to get to the A-spot, whether you're doing it with hands, a toy or a strap-on.

Does A-spot stimulation lead to orgasm?

What people experience from A-spot stimulation varies. I've read in some academic papers that the AFE zone causes the vaginal walls to lubricate more when stimulated. I'm not sure what the scientific explanation is behind that, so I can't quite jump on board with that theory yet. What I do know is that the sensation evoked when stimulating the A-spot is very deep and so, in my opinion, it can lead to very intense orgasm. What is important to keep in mind, though, is that rarely is an orgasm the result of a singular sensation. The key is to incorporate a number of stimulating activities into your sexual encounters to better increase your chances, or number, or intensity of orgasm.

So, should I just run around pressing the A-spot of every girl I take home?

It is important to remember that every single person's body is different from the next. Some women may like A-spot stimulation, others may care less and some may even find it uncomfortable. Communicate with your partner to figure out whether or not it feels good. Also important to note is that the A-spot is right next to the cervix, so be careful. I can say, without a doubt, that most women don't like pressure on their cervix, so know where you're pressing before going for the gusto, or you're likely to get kned in the jaw.

Is there really an A-spot, or is it like the G-spot, where some people swear by it and others just think it's a myth?

Some people speak of the G-spot as if it were a mythological region, and I've heard the A-spot referred to in the same way. Your body is not a myth, folks. These areas exist whether you believe they do or not. *All* vaginas have a paraurethral sponge (the G-spot) and an anterior fornix (the A-spot). Whether or not they are pleasure zones is what differs between one vagina and the next. The myth is that these "spots" are orgasmic miracle workers. The real orgasmic miracle workers are communication, self-knowledge and experimentation. Have at it! ■



5 FACTS ABOUT DOWN THERE

There are so many great things about being a woman—the ability to create life, have multiple orgasms, multitask and order a fruity umbrella cocktail without being judged, to name just a few. But with these privileges come responsibilities, one of which is learning how to live with a pelvis that is inherently unstable. Anything that needs to be watertight and also allow for the safe passage of an infant's head has got to be both strong and flexible. A healthy pelvis can ward off potential health problems such as incontinence, painful sexual intercourse, the inability to orgasm and, maybe worst of all, pelvic organ prolapse (an agonizing problem that occurs in up to 50 percent of women who have given birth, in which organs such as the uterus, bladder or bowel protrude into the vagina due to weakness in the tissues that normally support them). So here are five facts you should know about keeping your pelvis happy and healthy.

1. Three groups of muscles make up the pelvic floor, including the outer-most muscle, which is shaped like a figure eight surrounding the anus and the vagina. These muscles work together to keep some things in (gestating babies) and let other things out (urine, feces, babies who are ready). Yoga instructor Leslie Howard leads pelvic floor workshops for women where she uses pictures, 3-D visual aids, exercises and metaphors to help women visualize their anatomy: "Think of your torso as a tote bag for your organs," she says. "The pelvic floor is the bottom of the tote bag. Someone with a weak pelvic floor has a tote bag that is about to have the bottom fall out."

2. Up to 50 percent of all women experience some incontinence during their lifetime and one in four women over the age of 18 experience episodes of involuntarily leaking urine. Because of the shame associated with incontinence, many women give up things they love, such as running, dancing or even leaving the house in order to hide their problem. If you are struggling with the common postpregnancy double whammy of incontinence and weight gain, be aware that many exercises, such as crunches and squats, put extra pressure on the muscles of the pelvic floor and may cause more problems than they solve.

3. Kegel exercises are named after Dr. Arnold Kegel, a Los Angeles-based gynecologist who began promoting them as a cure for incontinence in the late 1940s. Though everyone with a vagina owes a tip of the hat to this pioneering doctor, who helped many women cure their incontinence without surgery, Howard firmly believes that the most-frequently prescribed vaginal exercise should not be named after a man. She prefers to call them "diamonds." Also, his exercises were never intended to be performed without biofeedback, as they are much less effective without it. His kegel perineometer allowed women to feel, measure and develop greater control of their pelvic floor muscles. Unfortunately, after his death this device fell out of common use and women were left squeezing in the dark once again. If you embark on a mission to retrain your pelvic floor muscles, make sure you find a qualified professional, usually a physical therapist, to provide you with the education and biofeedback that will greatly increase your success.

4. Yet another reason to hate episiotomies: the all-too-common birthing practice cuts through the pelvic floor muscles, decimating their strength. Though episiotomies are no longer a standard part of vaginal birth, many experts still feel that they are performed far too often. If you're having a baby, make sure you tell your doctor your opinion of this practice.

5. Learning to relax and strengthen your pelvic floor muscles not only reduces incontinence and other problems, it increases sexual satisfaction. Everyone can benefit from stronger and suppler pelvic floor muscles. [Heather Robinson]

SEXY TOYS GET SMART

The latest buzz on today's titillating technology. By Yana Tallon-Hicks



WHAT'S YOUR NAUGHTIEST POSITION?

48%
Against a wall (or shower or whatever...)

22%
My feet, her shoulders ('nuff said)

17%
Reverse cowgirl (any type of cowgirl, actually)

10%
Everyone gets a go (don't make me count it out)

3%
Solo (I just never liked sharing)

According to a curvemag.com poll we borrowed from our straight-girl counterpart, Cosmo

Afraid of being outsmarted by new-fangled sex toys? Today's sex toy lines now boast greenly rechargeable toys, endless vibration patterns, memory cards and price-justifying one-year warranties. With all the new technological advances, the sex toys of 2010 are giving any tech-savvy girl something to tweet about. They can't preprogram the perfect girlfriend upgrade yet, but they're getting closer with these high-end brainiac vibrators whose futuristic functions will have you calling them anything but toys.

JE JOUE'S SASI: As the advertising promises, "like a good lover, SaSi remembers what you like." This intuitive rechargeable vibrator takes sex toys to a new level, with a rotating nub that makes Je Joue's SaSi the only vibe on the market to create a sensation that feels an awful lot like that little something ending in "lingus." In one mode, SaSi puts you in control of its countless nubby sensation patterns, and in the other, this intelligent vibe takes you through 36 preprogrammed settings, allowing you to single out your favorites with a click

of a button. And then it remembers them. Unforgettable in more ways than one, SaSi actually records your top picks into a "favorites" memory bank for you to come back to. (\$149, goodvibes.com)

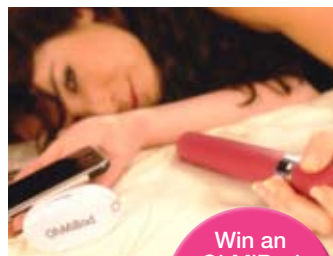
WE-VIBE: Rechargeable and designed every step of the way with a woman's input, the We-Vibe is the only vibrator made specifically to be worn internally during sex. A vibrating motor in each end of this C-shaped vibe has this toy working simultaneously on the inside and the outside, reaching both the more accessible "C" spot and that harder-to-reach G-spot and leaving your hands free to roam. Be warned that everybody's body is different, so if this toy has a vibe you can't get into, get creative with its nonbulky ultra-flexibility. Dyke Tip: The We-Vibe fits *purr*fectly underneath a harness for a little extra motivational boost. (\$130, babeland.com)



LELO'S MIA: While Lelo's Swedish line of sleek-looking rechargeable toys are always a classy pick, the Mia was made especially with femmes in mind. Perfectly disguised as a tube of lipstick, this tiny vibe packs a powerful punch and won't cause a stir if kept in your purse (especially with its practical travel-lock). Futuristic femmefobs on-the-go will love the added perk that this PC- and Mac-compatible toy charges in the USB port of your computer. Convenient. (\$64, lelo.com)

OHMIBOD'S CLUB: Do your regular nights at the local dyke bar need a pick-me-up? Tuck in the Club Vibe next time you go out. Small and discreetly wearable, with a clip-on controller for pockets and belts, this ultimate party favor helps you keep the beat with three settings: Plain ol' "manual" has you surfing through seven vibration patterns, while "music" connects straight to your iPod and vibes to the beat and volume. Been there, done that? The Club Vibe turns it up a notch with "ambient," an innovative setting that picks up the patterns of sounds around you through a speaker in the battery pack, and then vibrates accordingly. Crank up the tunes at home, go out to a bass-happy club or simply whisper sweet nothings in its ear. You'll know it's listening. (\$49, ohmibod.com)

JIMMYJANE'S FORM 6: JimmyJane has dolled up the vibrator so much with its wonder-vibe, the Form 6, that it is now being sold at your neighborhood Bed, Bath and Beyond—as a neck massager, of course.



Win an OhMiBod Freestyle! Details on page 43

Work out those kinks with this six-mode toy that somehow manages to be rechargeable and waterproof. Enjoy the spice of life with vibration patterns ranging from “gentle oscillations” to “exhilarating pulses,” as well as two different insertable ends and dual motors. Feeling a little fuzzy afterward? Form 6 will power itself down if you forget to turn it off and will remember which vibration combination you ended with, which it will then resume for you when you’re ready for more. (\$185, jimmyjane.com)

EARTH ANGEL: Are rechargeable vibes just not green enough for you Birkendykes? Try out Irish-born vibe the Earth Angel, the “world’s first green technology sex toy.” Made completely from recycled materials (in product and packaging), the greenest of the green can power up this wind-up vibe with a crank built into the base of the toy. The power core in the Earth Angel generates enough juice for instant intense vibration and will store unused energy for later, with external light patterns indicating how much power you have left. Seeing that four whole minutes of cranking will bring you just 30 minutes of vibration, you may be better off using that cranking hand elsewhere, but this one-of-a-kind concept is still worth mentioning. (\$89, goodvibes.com) ■

VAJAYJAY WORKOUT

According to a recent poll, almost half of you know what Kegel exercises are but don’t do them. Kegels work out your pubococcygeus (PC) muscles, which contract during that little thing called an orgasm. The stronger the PC muscles, the stronger *and* more frequent the orgasms. Now, you might be thinking, I don’t even have time to have an orgasm, and now I’m expected to sit in one place, concentrate on my breathing and isolate some vague crotch muscles 10 to 15 times a day? *Please.*

Lucky for you, busy power-lesbian, just like talking to your girl on your BlackBerry, even Kegels have gone hands free. Luna Beads by LELO are two connected weighty beads inside silicone shells, which are inserted (lube helps), leaving the string outside the body, much like a tampon (but with sexier results). Once inside

the body, the heavier ball moves with your body movement and breathing, causing your PC muscles to react. Imagine: If someone tapped you on the arm, your muscle would tense up; similarly, the round shape and rattling of the beads will cause the vaginal muscles to flex, giving them a good workout. They’re discreet and comfortable—you can tone while you vacuum, grocery shop or watch TV. Add a lil’ extra oomph to your run, shake up your commute or stick it to the man while paying your bills. Be careful not to overexert yourself though. PC exercisers vary in how heavy they are, so start light, or, better yet, with LELO’s four-pack of differently weighted Luna Beads. Do a little winter-training regimen before the, uh, spring season starts. [Yana Tallon-Hicks]



A SMART GIRL’S GUIDE TO HER FIRST VIBE



opportunity to think solely about *yourself*, keeping these handy tips in mind.

1. Get Your Questions Answered. Today’s sex shops aren’t relegated to dark alleys. Vibrators are being sold in places as innocuous as Wal-Mart and CVS drugstores. Best yet, women-owned stores like Good Vibrations and Babeland employ an open-minded, educated staff and offer a comfortable, queer-friendly shopping environment.

2. Know Your Materials. While you can disinfect silicone toys with good ol’ soap and water, you’ll want to use condoms over porous elastomer and jelly rubber, as they can hang on to residue and germs.

3. Consider the Ins and Outs. Longer toys can be inserted or used as external vibrators, while giving you that extra reach for partner play. Something with a curved end will make the G-spot less allusive, and

“twice-as-nice” toys (like the Rabbit) work both internally and externally.

4. Check Your Speedometer. While that tiny one-speed bullet may be cute, if its single setting doesn’t take you there, you just wasted 20 bucks. A vibe featuring multiple speeds, strengths and even pulsations allows you to explore what works for you.

5. Calculate. Vibrators don’t last forever. The price generally reflects a toy’s lifespan, and that rare one-year warranty is usually worth the extra cost.

6. Get Specific. Aquatic? Get something waterproof. Shy? Vibes disguised as lipstick tubes or bath toys are extra-discreet. Green? Invest in something rechargeable.

7. Final Notes. Trust your instincts. If something just seems right, chances are it is. And I promise, whatever vibe you choose will serve you even better with good lube. [Yana Tallon-Hicks]

Today, the vibrator is as common in households as the toaster. According to two new national surveys in *The Journal of Sexual Medicine*, 53 percent of women report having used a vibrator. But, it turns out, your mom was right: Everybody is different. And this is especially true when it comes to vibrators. Like food, the sex toy that one person finds absolutely delicious may just not suit another’s taste. So before you drop \$90 on the Rabbit just because you saw it on *Sex and the City*, take this unique



FALLIN' HARD FOR A WHISKEY DRINKIN' GIRL

Learning to appreciate the sweet burn of a love that got away.
By Heather Robinson

As I write this, there is a glass of bourbon whiskey beside me, its golden liquid seeming to glow from within. Looking at whiskey used to make me wince. I dreaded its harshness and mean taste. At bars I ordered a beer and sometimes a vodka cocktail if I wanted something more potent. I would probably have left the brown stuff alone forever if it hadn't been for my Banjo Girl.

We met on my 30th birthday, when I found myself at a red-neck bar without the sense to realize that asking every girl in the bar to two-step might not be warmly received by the local color. After several whirls around the floor, I returned to the bar thirsty, sweaty and revved up. That's when I first saw her, staring at me in a shameless way. She wore tight Levi's on her long cowgirl legs and had her shiny dark hair pulled back into braids. I forgot that I was thirsty and asked her to dance. Later, she told me she had always wanted a girlfriend.

Banjo Girl had road-tripped down from Canada with only some bluegrass music and her big white dog for company. We kissed in the moonlight and I remember the sharp bite of whiskey on her breath. On our first date, we hiked up a mountain and ate chocolate and strawberries at

the peak, and I learned that my cowgirl was an archeologist who shopped at the organic food store, played the banjo and drank whiskey straight up. Since I wasn't planning on learning to fingerpick or eat kale nuggets, I decided I would learn to like whiskey. How hard could it be?

Damn hard, it turns out. Even though Canadian whiskey tends to be lighter than whiskies made in Europe or America, (and also spelled differently—in Ireland and America, whiskey is spelled with an "e"; elsewhere, without) I couldn't get used to the afterburn, aftertaste and afterfeel.

As Banjo Girl and I got to know each other better, I started keeping the mysterious brown liquid in my pantry, in hopeful anticipation of her visits. While she was there, I would drink through my pain, trying to hold back my grimaces. Banjo Girl was so gorgeous, with her irresistible accent, dry wit and flushed cheeks, that I was willing to drink almost anything for her. Then she moved back to Canada, where she still roams and drinks, and for a while I stopped trying to acquire a fondness for whiskey.

But I still wished I had learned to love the stuff. Whiskey is a lonely prairie night in a glass, a gulp of wild cowgirl with overtones of campfire, leather and *Thelma and Louise*. Whiskey is the drink of the heartbroken, the restless, the nomadic wanderer, and I wanted it to be my drink, too.

So, several tastings and a few years later, what I ended up liking about whiskey was the very thing I had originally hated. It refuses to go quietly, will not be gulped and, even when smooth, has a delicate burn. Good whiskey forces you to slow down and take notice, just the opposite of a light ice-cold beer. The flavors are earthy and complex, like smoke, oak, peat and burnt fruit. It's the closest thing I've found to meditation in a glass. As I've gotten older, I've learned to crave that gentle burn, like a broken heart that's had a chance to mellow. It's a sweet pain that brings me back and helps me remember all that I've lost and all that I still have. Though appreciating whiskey may take some effort, for me, it was worth the pain, like knowing Banjo Girl.

WHISKEY 101

Whiskey is essentially brandy made from beer instead of wine and is usually made in places where the weather is too inhospitable for growing grapes. It is believed that the first whisky was made in Scotland and was so fierce that only brawny Highlanders could get it down. The strong stuff made its way to the New World when European settlers brought their distilling traditions with them and started making whiskey in the British colonies. When the slave trade ended, drying up the supply of cheap rum, and the colonies revolted, whiskey became the spirit of choice for a young America.

Whiskey was as common as sweat in the settling of America. Anne Royall, considered by some to be the first female journalist in the United States, noted, "I am afraid my brave Tennesseans indulge too great a fondness for whiskey. When I was in Virginia it was too much whiskey. The Ohio



Want to impress her with a Manhattan? Find out how to mix the perfect whiskey cocktail at curvemag.com

story was the same: too, too much whiskey.”

In thirsty San Francisco, there was one taproom for every 100 men. Americans were so fond of their homegrown pick-me-up that when the government tried to tax distilled spirits, it succeeded in fomenting the Whiskey Rebellion of 1794. It took an army bigger than any assembled during the Revolutionary War to quell Pennsylvania’s angry whiskey-making farmers. Afterward, many of those rebels headed down to less-regulated Kentucky, where bourbon was born.

Whiskey is fiercely married to the land it comes from: Scotch whiskey must be made in Scotland, Canadian whisky in Canada; Irish whiskey must hail from the Green Isle and bourbon is usually made in Kentucky.

Bourbon, like jazz and *Sesame Street*, is a quintessentially American creation. For a whiskey to call itself bourbon, it must be made from 51 percent corn mash and must be aged for at least two years in new charred oak barrels. It can be made anywhere in the United States, but more than 95 percent of bourbon is made in Kentucky, where the local water is said to make the grass blue, the horses frisky and the women beautiful.

Whiskey needs to be aged and mellowed in order to fully develop. When freshly made, it’s colorless, flavorless and only good for getting smashed. Only after sitting around and thinking about what it has done does whiskey gain the character and flavor it is known for. Most whiskey takes its flavor from the charred oak barrels it’s aged in, while Scotch whisky is dominated by the smoke of the peat fires used to dry the malted barley it is made with. Some whiskeys are aged for as little as two years, but the better brands spend 8 to 12 years developing. ■

BURNING LOVE

The best way to appreciate whiskey is by sampling different varieties and brands. Here are some faves to start with.



MAKER'S MARK KENTUCKY STRAIGHT BOURBON	TULLAMORE DEW 12-YEAR-OLD SPECIAL RESERVE	ELIJAH CRAIG KENTUCKY STRAIGHT BOURBON	GLENLIVET PURE SINGLE MALT SCOTCH WHISKY	LAPHROAIG SINGLE MALT SCOTCH WHISKY
A smooth delivery and rich oak taste make this a great option for neophytes; gentle enough to be sipped straight and also makes a great Manhattan.	This Irish whiskey features a beautiful golden hue and a soft taste that lingers, leaving a mild hint of sweet honey.	Darker and stormier than Maker's Mark, but still smooth enough to sip. If it's your first time at the whiskey rodeo, the robust and strong flavors may be a bit overwhelming.	You'll have to channel your inner Highlander to knock this stuff back. The flavor is aggressive and the burn feels like a four-alarm fire in your mouth.	This 10-year-old whisky features the smoky, peaty flavor that Scotch is known for. Laphroaig, pronounced "la-froyg," is a Gaelic word meaning "the beautiful hollow by the broad bay."



BRENDA ARMENDARIZ (GIRL ON BAR)

OUR SEXPERT BIOS




JESSICA BAIN is a Good Vibrations sex educator and “spots” extraordinaire who knows everything about those hard to find places. When she’s not helping us discover ourselves, she’s making pottery, including a line of nipple-centric ceramics.



YANA TALLON-HICKS majored in queer, gender and sexuality studies and received over 40 hours of training on sexual health, sex toys and anatomy as a sex educator and sales associate for Good Vibrations. She currently lives in Massachusetts with her girlfriend.



HEATHER ROBINSON is a personal trainer and health writer. Her sex education has consisted almost entirely of on the job training. She encourages talking through awkward moments, using lots of lube and stretching regularly.



Keep an eye out for our article on orgasmic pregnancy with sexpert co-authors **DANIELLE CAVALLUCCI** and **YVONNE FULBRIGHT, M.S. ED., PH.D.** in our annual Family Issue this spring!

VALENTINE'S DAY BY HAND

These sensual foods will have her licking your fingers.
By Vanessa Barrington

Why not head into the kitchen and get in touch with your sensual side this V-Day? Food is already sensual to begin with, but this menu is designed to make it even sexier by encouraging you to experience the textures of the different components with your fingertips. When you eat with your hands, you slow down and savor the food—and the company—even more. There are plenty of aphrodisiacs in these Southeast Asian-inspired dishes, like garlic, aromatics and chocolate. The flavors are big and lusty, yet the menu is light. It will leave you inspired and ready to indulge in each other.

GARLIC-LIME MARINATED CHICKEN

Make some sticky rice to go with this and you won't need utensils. Simply pick up a ball of rice with your fingers and then tear off a bit of chicken. Dip them in the sauce together. Sticky rice is available at Southeast Asian grocery stores and is easy to prepare by following the instructions on the package, but you must allow several hours to soak the rice.

1/2 teaspoon whole black peppercorns, divided
2 garlic cloves, peeled
1/2 a small shallot, peeled
pinch of salt
1/2 teaspoon sugar
1 tablespoon fish sauce
6 tablespoons lime juice, divided (about 2 limes)
1/2 to 3/4 pound boneless, skinless chicken thighs

- ▶ With a mortar and pestle, pound together 1/4 teaspoon peppercorns and the garlic, shallot and salt to make a paste.
- ▶ Add sugar, fish sauce, and 3 tablespoons of lime juice. Stir to dissolve the sugar. Put the chicken in a baking dish and pour the marinade over, rubbing it in so it penetrates the chicken well. Marinate for 30 minutes at room temperature.

- ▶ Preheat the oven to 400 degrees.
- ▶ Make a dipping sauce by pounding the remaining peppercorns until coarsely ground. Add the remaining lime juice. Set aside.
- ▶ Bake the chicken for 20 to 25 minutes, until cooked through and beginning to brown, basting occasionally with the marinade in the pan.



SOUTHEAST ASIAN LETTUCE WRAPS

So fun to eat! Alternate between nibbles of these fresh, crisp lettuce wraps and the garlicky chicken and rice.

Dressing:

2 cloves garlic, peeled and finely chopped
1/3 cup fish sauce
1/3 cup freshly squeezed lime juice
1 tablespoon sugar
1 teaspoon Thai chili sauce

Garnish:

peeled and finely chopped cucumber
finely diced red onion
finely chopped cilantro, mint and Serrano chilies, with seeds
chopped roasted peanuts

Filling:

1 tablespoon peanut oil

12 ounces firm tofu, cut into 1/2-inch cubes, or one catfish filet
1 tablespoon soy sauce
1 tablespoon sugar
1 tablespoon fish sauce

Wrap:

Whole iceberg lettuce leaves, washed and dried

- ▶ Whisk together the dressing ingredients in a small serving bowl. Set aside.
- ▶ Prepare the garnish and place on a large platter in little piles or in individual bowls.
- ▶ Heat the peanut oil in a heavy skillet over medium-high heat. Add the tofu and let it cook, stirring, occasionally, until it is warmed through and beginning to brown. Add the soy sauce, sugar and fish sauce. Cook, stirring, for a few minutes, until the flavorings fully coat the tofu. (If you're using catfish, cook the filet on both sides until cooked through and then add the sauces and sugar to coat.)
- ▶ Place the filling in a bowl and serve with the garnishes and dressing on the side, place the lettuce leaves on a separate platter.
- ▶ Fill the lettuce leaves with tofu or catfish and garnish, spooning the dressing over each portion. Wrap and eat out of her hands.



CHOCOLATE-LEMONGRASS POTS DE CRÈME

Serve these with fresh fruit and buttery cookies. No need for utensils.

4 stalks of lemongrass
1 cup whole milk
1 cup heavy cream
4 ounces pure dark chocolate (70% to 80%)
6 egg yolks
1/4 cup sugar

- ▶ Cut off both the roots and the thin ends of the lemongrass, so you have about four inches of the bottom part of the stalk. Pound the stalks with the dull edge of a knife to break them down a bit. Cut them into slices and put them in a small, heavy saucepan.
- ▶ Pour the milk and cream into the saucepan and heat slowly over medium-low heat, until the mixture is scalded but has not boiled. Tiny bubbles will form just under the surface. Turn off heat, cover and let steep for 30 minutes.
- ▶ Meanwhile, chop the chocolate into small pieces and set it in a medium metal bowl over a saucepan of simmering water to melt slowly, stirring occasionally. Once the chocolate is smooth, turn off heat and let sit.
- ▶ While the oven is preheating to 300 degrees, put the egg yolks in a medium bowl and add the sugar. Whisk vigorously for about three or four minutes until the yolks are pale yellow and airy, and the sugar has dissolved. Set aside.
- ▶ Set eight four-ounce ramekins (crème brûlée dishes) in a large roasting pan. Pour water into the roasting pan until it comes halfway up the sides of the ramekins.
- ▶ Strain the cream into the melted chocolate, discarding lemongrass, and whisk to combine. Pour the mixture into a blender and process until there are no flecks of chocolate.
- ▶ Pour a few tablespoons of the chocolate-cream mixture into the egg yolks and whisk to temper them. Pour a little more in, whisking until the egg yolks are roughly the same temperature as the chocolate. Combine the two completely and whisk well.
- ▶ Pour the custard mixture into the ramekins, dividing it evenly. Cover the pan with aluminum foil and transfer it carefully to the oven. Bake for 35 to 40 minutes, until the custards are just barely set along the edges and still liquid inside. Allow to chill in the refrigerator for at least two hours before serving to your lucky lady.



ISTOCK (LETTUCE WRAP), IKATJA DE BRUIJN-GOVORUSHCHENKO/ISTOCK (GIRL)

NAUGHTY OR NICE?

The gifts you didn't get last month, but should have.



1

THE NAUGHTY

1. Size Matters

Mile High's compact and discreet Tease Mobile Intimacy Kit fits perfectly into a purse or coat pocket and includes a whisper-quiet massager, lube, condoms and—our fave—a lipstick mirror. (\$23, mile-high.net)

2. Get a Grip

Stave off Carpel Tunnel Syndrome with the black nylon and neoprene La Palma Glove by SpareParts HardWear, which can be used with a dildo or alone for masturbation. The best part? It has two little pockets on the palm side, so the wearer can insert the two mini bullet vibrators it comes with. And the carrying case attaches to a chain that fits in your pocket. (\$140, kittystoybox.com)



5

2



3. Double Duty

Wish you had a pleasure machine so discreet it wouldn't get security guards giggling at the airport? Try the new Tinge, a phthalate-free, eco-friendly electric razor that is really a vibrator. With the cap on it's a "massager," and with it off it's a real razor. It's got a cordless charger (one charge offers over two dozen 10-minute uses) and comes with lube that does double duty, too (shave gel meets lube). (\$80, mytinge.com)

4. Give Me a Hand, er, Finger

Ophoria Finger Vibes are silicone-sleeved one-touch toys in a rainbow of pop colors. Simply slide the colorful sheath over your finger, press the button and get to work. Your hand never felt so good. (\$14, goodvibes.com)

5. '80s Retro in a Lube

Wet's new Kiwi Strawberry Flavored Intimacy Gel smells wonderful, like those fruity Lip Smackers your high school crush wore. I challenge you to use it without imagining a time when your hormones were raging, the girls all smelled so nice and you longed to show the world you were a big ol' dyke. (\$6, drugstore.com)

6. I Rub My Wormie & I Rub My Duckie Pirate

Yak all you want about your Rabbit but there is no vibe cuter (and more exciting to leave on your bathroom shelf) than the I Rub My Duckie in all its various forms—from the original to the Red Devil to this super-cute new Pirate (one more reason to think of Keira Knightley while you're in the tub). Just like the Duckie, the Rub My Wormie looks like an innocent toy, but it buzzes and has nubby feet on the underside. (\$21 and up, edenfantasys.com)



3



6



4

JESSE VENDETTA (LA PALMA), KINA WILLIAMS (TINGE)



THE NICE

7. A Different Kind of Anniversary

Celebrating your 25th, but she's not the type to wear jewelry? Try the upscale, urban sterling silver belts (like Fishtail, Guava, Ice) from Jill Platner as a gift she'll really love. (\$990 and up, jillplatner.com)



7

8. Pay It Forward

Spread the love with a gift from Heart Is Hot. These glass hearts are made from recycled glass in accordance with eco-friendly processes, and \$2 of the purchase price goes to charity. (\$25, heartishot.com)



8

9. Warm and Cuddly

Janska's fleece Arm Warmers are perfect for chilly East Coast winters. They hug comfortably, elbow to hand, and slide nicely under a winter coat, while gloves glide over them with ease. Their Polartec MocSocks with contrasting leg warmers are great for indoors. (\$19, janska.com)



9

10. Screw Tradition

Help your recently dumped friend celebrate V-Day by moving on with the Break-Up Kit, which comes with a Run Loser Run tee, handmade voodoo doll, ice cream scoop, a breakup journal and instructions for how to safely burn the stuff your ex left behind. (\$99, tarakits.com)



10

11. Edible Delectable

For the ultimate sensory Valentine's Day, cover your sweet in Earthly Body's edible massage oil or drip some candy-flavored wax, which doubles as massage oil, onto her body. Give her a tasty body rub you'll both remember. (\$15, earthlybody.com)



11

12. Pandora's Box

Sure, you want to hide your "marital aids" from Mom's unexpected drop-in but the Devine Toy Box and Devine Satchel are both, well, divine for storing plenty of other things too, from jewelry and makeup to old love letters and vintage watches. The boxes look amazing (we loved the pink corset and the red faux croc) and only two keys in the world open it (one for you and one for her). (\$40, edenfantasys.com)

12



By Beren DeMotier,
Stephanie Schroeder,
Edie Stull and Diane
Anderson-Minshall

CANDY DISH OF THE DAMNED

One lesbian has a moment of truth. By Stacy Bias

?
WHAT IS
YOUR MOST
COMMON
SEX DREAM?

33%
Being
"taken"

31%
Seducing a
friend

13%
A celebrity
liaison

12%
Hooking up
with my ex

11%
Public
nookie

According
to a curve-
mag.com poll



Somewhere around the time I was watching a woman willingly being dragged by her ankles and turned upside down, having a speculum inserted and becoming a human candy dish as a crowd of onlookers tossed colorful candies towards her in a debauched game of horseshoes, I realized that I was standing at a crossroads.

A container of candy was slowly being passed down the row of giddy onlookers—their hands reaching in and launching the inevitable seeds of a really bad yeast infection. I shifted in my seat. Between myself and the certainty of hell,

there were exactly 12 hands and a Tupperware container. I was going to have to make a decision.

I've had a couple of these moments in my life. I call them "Snap" moments because they feel like the emotional equivalent of a rubber band being stretched as far as it can go without snapping. In this case, the two ends of the rubber band, curled around an opposing metaphorical thumb and forefinger, are "New Me" and "Old Me": New Me being this strangely empowered, innately curious, highly sexed and (apparently) morally bankrupt queer femme. Old Me being the church-going, God-fearing, doe-eyed innocent of my youth.

The first Snap moment came a few months prior to the candy experience as I drove with my good friend toward the Oregon coast. The week previous I had received a Tarot reading from the "pussy psychics" at a local BDSM vendor fair. Gathered around a table, clad entirely in pink faux fur and marabou, we clasped hands and bowed heads. Admittedly, I was skeptical—but having just escaped a painfully vanilla, six-year, monogamous relationship where a trip to Home Depot was the most exciting part of most weekends, I was more than grateful for a little bit of weird. I overcame my hesitation and committed to the surrealism of it all as the pussy psychics swayed, hummed tunelessly and nodded knowingly at one another. My "pussy vibes" were accordingly absorbed by osmosis and the cards were cut. Frankly, I felt a little violated—but the resulting reading, unsurprisingly, zoomed in on my

Candy Dish of the Damned continued on page 62

DMITRY BAIRACHNYI/ISTOCK (CANDY), ALF ANDERSEN (GRAVITY)

Gravity Plays
Favorites



MEET ME IN ST. LOUIS

While performers Michelle Mynx and Katrina Dohl may have taken their troupe name—Gravity Plays Favorites—from a Dresden Dolls song, their sexy brand of performance art is fully original and may have you looking at the stripper's pole in a different light. In the St. Louis-based performers' trademark burlesque dance, both women work the pole simultaneously, in perfect harmony.

"It involves a lot of trust and love," says Mynx. It's no wonder that she and Dohl steam up the stage. As former lovers, the two display a striking chemistry that goes beyond just plain teamwork. "She is one of the best friends that I've ever had in life," says Mynx. "Our relationship transcends any title that you can give a relationship."

The two dancers, who met while they were employed at a strip club, came up with their partnering pole work as a practicality. "The main stage had three poles on it but the satellite stages only had one," says Mynx. "We still wanted to dance together but both of us wanted to be on the pole. So we found a way to do that."

Making their debut as a duo at 2005's Venus Envy, a women's art festival, Mynx and Dohl have since taken their act to Sweden and have even opened for the Dresden Dolls.

While Gravity's act does involve a pole, nudity is not actually a given. "We don't mind either way," says Mynx. "It just kind of depends on the situation and the type of event that it is." However, she admits, "It's harder for us to tone

BUMP-N-GRIND MEDIA

BOOKS

In *Burlesque West: Showgirls, Sex, and Sin in Postwar Vancouver* (utpress.utoronto.ca), Becki L. Ross depicts the twisting history of the traveling burlesque scene in a style that is as rich and intriguing as the dancers

she portrays. Urging the reader to shed any preconceived notions, Ross unveils, layer by layer, the complex dynamics of professional dancing, giving voice to previously unheralded club owners, patrons and performers through 50 first-person accounts. Each chapter shows the industry, and the women who formed its backbone, made feminist contributions to modern concepts of female sexuality. Resonating with the struggles and victories of queer women today, the book brings to light how female performers in the 1940s radically rejected the stereotypical role of woman-as-mother-and-wife to become sexual and gender outlaws in their own right.

Though shining an academic light on what happens behind the curtains of adult entertainment isn't a novel idea, the angles from which Ross approaches the subject matter are unique. Chapter five, for example, examines aging in the industry and why "everyone wanted to date a dancer, [but] nobody wanted to marry one." Throughout the entire book, Ross makes sure to cut across lines of race, class, gender and sexuality, even stopping to look at the place of queer identities in the

often heterocentric, yet homoerotic, business of selling fantasies. The book ends with the demise of Vancouver's thriving burlesque scene, telling of the dancers' losing battle with the "unstoppable McDonalidization of their trade," which flattened the individuality of the performers and transformed their profession into what one woman calls the "mega-quick buck, shaky-shaky, wet T-shirt shit."

Ross promises to "intellectually tantalize," and she does so in a work that removes more than fishnet stockings to reveal pride and heartbreak, victories and wit.



In *Burlesque and the New Bump 'n' Grind* (speckpress.com), Michelle Baldwin (aka Vivienne VaVoom, founder of one of the earliest neo-burlesque troupes) gives us

a great intro to burlesque past and present. In this highly visual coffeetable book, Baldwin covers the neo-burlesque scene across the United States as well as some of the great queer performers in it. And she compares today's burlesque scene with its roots (in the 1800s, for example, some troupes wouldn't allow women under 150 pounds—the standard of beauty at the time—while today's troupes go against the beauty standard employed by mainstream culture). The book's only flaw is inherent in the artform it chronicles: Things change quickly, so some performers in the book are retired or no longer living, but it is a must-read for anyone interested in the subversive art of stage seduction.



Shanghi Pearl struts in *Wink*

FILM

Deirdre Timmons' first documentary, *A Wink and a Smile* (firstrunfeatures.com), peeks behind the glitz of burlesque to follow 10 "ordinary" women as they learn the business from Miss Indigo Blue, a queer, award-winning burlesque performer and instructor based in Seattle, Wash. In this beautifully shot film, vignettes starring Seattle's professional dancers punctuate a story line that follows the students' rocky journey through the class. Honest interviews with the women about female sexuality, body issues and what learning burlesque means to them will tease your brain and pull on your heartstrings. Though the ending cuts short the students' graduation performances, you're bound to leave the theater empowered and wishing that you, too, lived in Seattle. [Yana Tallon-Hicks and Diane Anderson-Minshall]

it down than it is for us to bring it up."

As a lover of many genres of dance, Mynx explains that no two Gravity shows are the same. "We've done traditional burlesque and crazy modern carnival shows," says Mynx. "We learned that we love so many different types of music, and that gave us a chance to perform to everything, from crazy hard punk rock to traditional old jazzy burlesque music, to ethereal-sounding performance art music."

When not practicing her strength moves or donating her time to the Illinois Sexual Assault Victims Unit, Mynx teaches acrobatic pole work while Dohl studies dance. The act, though, remains their main passion. "We do our best to make a living out of it," says Mynx. "We're not exactly rolling in [money] but we're making ends meet by doing what makes us happy." [Briana Hernandez]



HyperGender Burlesque

HYPER ACTIVITY

Next time you're in New York City, go see *HyperGender Burlesque* at the Wow Café Theater. A creation of JZ Bich and N (probably not their real names), *HyperGender Burlesque* (hypergender.com) is the country's first post-neo-burlesque show, which combines political and performance art with video, drag, lip synching, poetry, sideshows and, basically, all that is radically queer in the city's underground art scene. It's NC-17 but beautifully provocative and full of wonderful full-frontal nudity, which is far from the most shocking element you'll see on the *HyperGender* stage that night. [DAM]

TROUBLE WITH A CAPITAL T

Filmmaker Courtney Trouble and the New Queer Porn scene.
By Lori Selke

At first glance, Courtney Trouble is just another typically arty San Francisco resident, with her fun and funky sense of style, a small dog named Cookie Party, a home office in her Victorian flat and lots of reclaimed furniture in the backyard. But she's also the brightest star in the new and burgeoning genre of queer porn. She is a headlining director with Good Releasing—the filmmaking offspring of the famous sex-positive shop Good Vibrations—and producing videos is now her full-time job. She has seven finished features in the can and more in the works, and she hasn't even been there a year. Her career, it's safe to say, is about to take off. With fireworks.

Queer porn is a small but growing genre that incorporates a potpourri of alternative sexualities—lesbians, gay men, trans men and trans women, genderqueers, kinky folks, femmes,

butches and more—and performers of all races, ethnicities and body types. Queer porn star Jiz Lee, who appears in the first three of Trouble's videos, says that queer porn is crossing gender and orientation boundaries, showcasing a larger spectrum of sexuality.

For Lee, that's the essence of queerness. "The definition of queer is supposed to have some kind of combative [stance] against rigid categorization and received ideas. In fact, queer porn deliberately plays with and against stereotypes. "I think it's reflective of a lot of queer art forms...take a definitive icon and queer it," Lee says. Thus, Trouble's movies feature "queered" takes on stereotypical porn tropes. In one upcoming project, for example, Lee plays a pizza delivery boy "who's not invited in!" she laughs. Another, more complex example is the "deep throat" scene in Trouble's second video, *Nostalgia*.

Nostalgia is a collection of scenes taken from classic film pornography and reimagined from a queer perspective. In the second scene, Madison Young re-enacts an iconic moment from *Deep Throat*, only this time she "is sucking on silicone cocks. She's not getting anybody else off," says Trouble. "She's strictly doing it for her own pleasure. Being able to take controversial scenes like that one and making them very visibly feminist and very visibly about female pleasure and our true desires is something that I think about all the time."

Lee, however, believes that the finale (a.k.a. the "suicide" scene from *Devil in Miss Jones*—now remade with voluptuous cover girl April Flores as the star) is the truest encapsulation of Trouble's aesthetic.

"If there was a clip that was going to sum up what her work is like...that clip would probably be it," Lee insists. Not just the set-up, where Flores articulates a desire to experience, for the first time, "lust, queer lust," but also "the music aspect, the cinematic levels that she plays with, and the vibe to it. The blood that drips at the end has glitter in it, you know?"

Another key to Trouble's process is her collaborative approach. "I think queer porn is a world where the directors take a backseat when it comes to the sex acts," the director says. Lee says that's one of the reasons she likes working with Trouble: "I like the collaborative aspect. I think it's an integral part of the way she works and thinks."

Trouble aspires to depict "people who are having sex the way they want to have it, and they're really enjoying themselves." For her, the definitive example of this is the gangbang scene in her first feature, *Roulette*. The star of the scene, Rozen DeBowe, chose the theme and the setting, and Trouble made sure to depict her as the one orchestrating the whole scene, from the bottom up.

While relatively new to feature films, Trouble has a long



Trouble surrounded by her cadre of performers

history in the queer arts. She began her porn production career in 2002 with a small website called NoFauxxx.com. She was 19 years old, a budding photographer, crazy about Riot Grrrl life and filled with ideas about how to authentically represent nonmainstream sexualities and desires. She wrote a mission statement that called out cultural appropriation and emphasized art, inclusive casting, a female and trans-friendly perspective, negotiation, consent and respect.

"I started the project to see what would happen," she says. Little did she know that she was taking the first steps toward the queer porn revolution.

NoFauxxx.com was a modest success for Trouble, riding the coattails of the alt-porn revolution. Alt-porn is a genre typified and represented by the well-known Suicide Girls—think pierced and tattooed punk, goth and skater girls. The unexpected success of the Suicide Girls franchise attracted a younger audience and a slew of younger, artier photographers and directors to produce the content their audience demanded.

But from the beginning, NoFauxxx.com was different. Trouble describes the state of alt-porn in 2002 as "a lot of skinny, white, straight-identified or straight-presenting women." That was frustrating to her, and she wanted to explore a different sort of alternative, one that queer women had been clamoring for.

"Fans of alt-porn like NoFauxxx because I have a lot of alt-porn models from other alt-porn sites," she says. "But on my site, they're doing something completely different. I try to get people as close to their authentic environment and their authentic desires as possible. I shot [fetish star] Lorelei Lee in her bedroom, surrounded by her books."

In 2006, Trouble started filming clips for what would become *Roulette*. It took three years to make. Working around day jobs, a lack of funding and other hazards ("I actually didn't own my own video camera," she notes), Trouble taught herself the craft of video-making scene-by-scene. "I learned how to make movies through making that first one," she confesses.

"My goal with it at the time was to make a DVD that was one of those porn DVDs that you leave out on the coffee table or you put on your bookshelf, because it's a conversation piece," says Trouble. "I wanted something that was accessible enough for people to talk about, and something different enough that people would talk about it." Originally, she intended to produce and market *Roulette* independently, through her website. As it happened, however, Good Vibrations was just starting up its sister film company, intending to produce three new lines of sexually explicit movies. The head of Good Releasing saw a rough cut of *Roulette* and not only offered to distribute it for Trouble, but also wanted to sign her on as a director for their proposed new line of queer-themed films, Real Queer Productions.

"Its happened really, really fast," Trouble says. Where her first movie took three years to make, her second took only

Trouble With a Capital T continued on page 62

ODE TO MACHO SLUTS

I remember walking away from A Different Light Bookstore in the late '80s, with a shrink-wrapped copy of Pat Califia's pioneering book *Macho Sluts* tucked under my arm, the button that had been packaged with it already proudly pinned to my lapel. I would sport that button for years to come, a proud identifier to the world at large that I was a "Macho Slut." This was a time when the word "queer" was still derogatory, lesbians were still using "womyn" instead of "women" and *Macho Sluts*—with its stories of dyke bathhouses, sex parties and girl-girl S/M—shocked everyone. It also set the stage for the formation of a real women's leather community.

Califia—who transitioned from female to male a decade ago and now goes by Patrick—was the first to write expertly and unabashedly about the kink potential of lesbian sex and he set off a firestorm that went far beyond the lesbian community. *Macho Sluts* became the focal point of the most famous censorship battles between Little Sister's bookstore in Vancouver and Canadian Customs.

Which is why this new edition, part of Arsenal Pulp's Little Sister's LGBT Classics series, is still such an important read. It has a magnificent new forward by Califia (which should prove to doubters why a book written by a lesbian who now identifies as a man is still worth your time) as well as essays by a co-owner of Little Sister's and the chief counsel in the trial against Canadian Customs.

Reading it again this week, I was reminded of how 20 years ago, the book was more than porn—it radicalized and appropriated pleasure and became a canon in the lesbian sex wars, a tome that pushed everyone to think beyond what second wave lesbian feminists taught us about sex. Famed novelist Dorothy Allison called Califia's work, "lucid, intelligent, brave, and true." A more accurate assessment is hard to find. [Diane Anderson-Minshall]



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