

CLOUD EARS

Maura Stanton

Looking closer at my recipe, I discover that I need five cloud ears for the fancy dish I promised I'd make you. Cloud ears? They're a kind of mushroom but they sound expensive. Perhaps they grow on the highest floors of skyscrapers, and are harvested by window washers. Or maybe baskets are attached to airplanes on routes through fertile skies. Could I grow my own? A big cloud is drifting through my town this February. If I put on my gloves, and gathered some mist and gloom, placing it carefully into Ziplock bags, I might be able to induce growth in the freezer. In a week I could defrost five perfect cloud ears. I could call up my friends for a cloud ear party, and keep them on shaved ice until we'd all gathered to admire their delicate beauty. Somebody who'd had too much wine would be bound to pick one up. It would be you, of course. Yes, you'd stand there holding the frozen cloud ear against your own human ear, as if you could hear what it heard, up there in the clouds. We'd watch you close your eyes, sway, smile, sigh happily. But the rest of us would hear nothing.