

# Cardonnacum

A Place of Thistles





*Cardonnacum*  
A Place of Thistles

Photography by Virginia Caputo

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*A rose is a rose is a rose but a thistle is:*

- in Latin carduus.
- in Swedish en tistel.
- in French un chardon.
- in German eine distel.
- in Italian & Spanish un cardo.

*Cardonnacum*

- The Latin word for a place with thistles.



# The Thistle in Quotations

**A** man that hoards up riches and enjoys them not, is like an ass that carries gold and eats thistles.  
*Richard Burton (1925-1984)*

**T**he destroyer of weeds, thistles, and thorns is a benefactor  
whether he soweth grain or not.  
*Robert Green Ingersoll (1833-1899)*

**W**ho gathers thistles, may expect pricks.  
*Proverb*

**N**emo me impune lacessit.  
*Latin motto of the Order of the Thistle*  
*Translation: Nobody provokes me with impunity.*

**W**here you tend a rose, my lad, A thistle cannot grow.  
*Frances Hodgson Burnett (1849-1924), The Secret Garden*

**H**e that has a good harvest must be content with a few thistles.  
*Spanish proverb*



I'll be Gus, the lovable chimney sweep. Clean as a whistle, sharp as a thistle. Best in all West Minster! Yeaa!

*Bart Simpson*

This memoir is a splendid artichoke of anecdotes, in which not merely the heart and leaves but the thistles as well are edible.

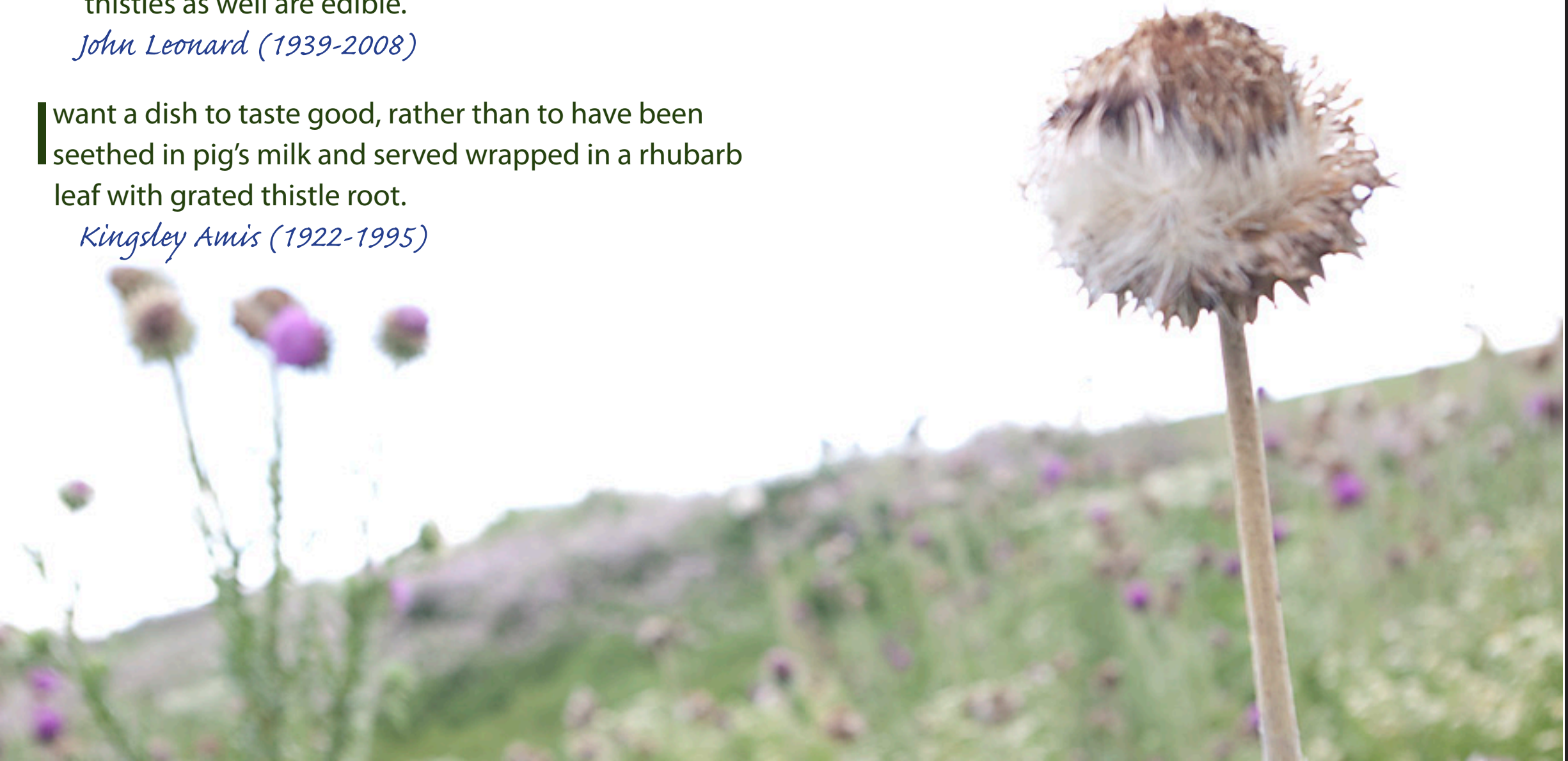
*John Leonard (1939-2008)*

I want a dish to taste good, rather than to have been seethed in pig's milk and served wrapped in a rhubarb leaf with grated thistle root.

*Kingsley Amis (1922-1995)*

Die when I may, I want it said by those who knew me best that I always plucked a thistle and planted a flower where I thought a flower would grow.

*Abraham Lincoln (1809-1865)*



# The Thistle in Poetry

Thus to the Rose, the Thistle:

Why art thou not of thistle-breed?

Of use thou'dst, then, be truly,

For asses might upon thee feed.

*from The Rose and Thistle.*

*by F. N. Bodenstedt*

*Trans. from the German by Frederick Ricord.*

*Theophiles Thistle the successful thistle-sifter*

Theophiles Thistle, the successful thistle-sifter,

in sifting a sieve full of un-sifted thistles,

thrust three thousand thistles through the thick of his thumb.

Now....if Theophiles Thistle, the successful thistle-sifter,

in sifting a sieve full of un-sifted thistles,

thrust three thousand thistles through the thick of his thumb,

see that thou, in sifting a sieve full of un-sifted thistles,

thrust not three thousand thistles through the thick of thy thumb.

*Tongue twister, author unknown*

He sprang to his sleigh, to his team gave a whistle, And away they all flew like the down of a thistle.

*from 'Twas The Night Before Christmas  
by Clement Clarke Moore (1779-1863)*

For ilka thing a man can be or think or dae

aye leaves a million mair unbeen, unthocht, undune,

till his puir warped performance is, to all that micht ha' been,

a thistle to the mune.

*[Translation:*

*For every thing a man can be or think or do*

*still leaves a million more unbeen, unthought, undone,*

*Till his poor warped performance is, to all that might have been,*

*a thistle to the moon.]*

*from A Drunk Man Looks at the Thistle*

*by Hugh MacDiarmid (1892-1978)*

*(real name Christopher Murray Grieve)*

































































## Why the thistle?

For several years in the late spring I had noticed the deep pink blooms of thistles that grew in grassy areas along the sides of the roads in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania where I live. As a photographer, I was interested in photographing the thistle, especially the “perfect thistle”, but I procrastinated. I could think up so many reasons not to stop.

I was always in a car on my way somewhere and I would tell myself that stopping was inconvenient. I told myself that I would come back later to photograph it. There was too much traffic that day on the road and the cars were going too fast. I didn’t want to inconvenience my husband. The weather was not quite right. I didn’t feel like it. Lots of excuses. I noted each place I saw the thistles so that I would remember and go back but I didn’t go back.

Soon the thistles were far past the stage of blooming or were cut down and the opportunity lost till the next year and then I would go through my excuses again. Until this year in May when I finally did stop to photograph a gorgeous *perfect* thistle. The ice now broken, I decided to make thistles the subject of my Sofobomo 2010 book.

Although a weed, and a most difficult weed at that with its prickly points on the edges of its leaves and stems, I considered it a perfect flower. It is ornamental, gorgeous, deep in color, an interesting shape.

A survivor, it is well designed for seeding itself across the fertile landscape with thousands of fluffy seeds that blow in the wind. Herbicides have been created to get rid of it along with its annoying neighbors of poison ivy, dandelions, burdock, and poke weed that few want to see in their gardens.

A lovely but unappreciated flower, the thistle’s methods of propagation and self protection outweigh its transient beauty for most who would prefer less spiny plants in their fields.

Alas, poor thistle, unappreciated by farmers, gardeners, and anyone who has tried to walk through a field of thistles! However, its thorny nature is acknowledged in a positive way in the Latin motto of the Scottish chivalric Order of the Thistle. The motto is “Nemo me impune lacessit.” That translates to: “Nobody provokes me with impunity.” The Scottish thistle is the national flower of Scotland. Legend has it that a Scottish castle was saved from a Viking invasion by the tell tale shout of an invader who stepped with a bare foot on a thistle, alerting the inhabitants of the castle to their approach. Nemo me impune lacessit!

My book is called *Cardonnacum* which is the Latin word that means “a place of thistles”.

There are two places where I found thistles to photograph. One is along Route 272 north of Lancaster near the Oregon Dairy. The other is at the edge of a field north of Lititz along Route 501.

