

THE PICKLING OF LIMES

by Clare Chu

You are a fallen crop
Key lime yellow
I'm throwing you together
Away from the shaded grove of trees
To pickle you as if
You are Indian limes.

It will take two weeks
I quarter you, I blanket you
Wrinkled rind, corpulent flesh,
crimped seeds
With rock salt, dried chili powder
Turmeric

Cane sugar cast for balance
Burnish you under the sun

I unscrew the stiffened lid
The old Mason jar smells faintly
Of apricots.

A friend from Chennai calls
Asks if she can visit next month
Tells me lime and lemon are
just one word — neemboo.

Sun-soaked, slick with oil, fermented
I will add ingredients foreign to me —
Fenugreek seeds, roasted and ground
Hing powder, black mustard seeds
Sputtered in sesame oil.

Let the oil kiss your skin
As you age, you will taste
Fiery hot, a feast
Of chicken biryani, eaten with our hands
A glass of chilled Kingfisher
I pray my friend will stay awhile.