

*Kitty Crider*

**Kimmie Rhodes**

**The Amazing Afterlife of Zimmerman Fees**

**Sunbird Press**

As if she didn't already have enough on her plate (so to speak) as one of Austin, Texas and country music's most outstanding singer/songwriters (not to mention as a burgeoning playwright and actress), Kimmie Rhodes decided to add fiction writer to her resume with the publication of *The Amazing Afterlife of Zimmerman Fees*. Or rather, more precisely, the titles of fiction and culinary writer, for not only is the locally distributed (available from Sunbird Press, PO Box 90183, Austin TX 78709, or [www.kimmierhodes.com](http://www.kimmierhodes.com)), novella-sized book a dandy piece of southern-fried supernatural fantasia, but it is also a tome that could be added to any kitchen bookshelf worth its salt. The book contains the subheading "a metaphysical story and cookbook," but prospective readers, music fans, and food aficionados should not allow that lofty conceit to dissuade them, as the story acts primarily as a framing device and divertissement that holds together and connects the real, um, meat of the book. That is, the collection of recipes, many of them straight out of the Gracey-Rhodes family kitchen. The general premise of the story involves "one Zimmerman Ellsworth Fees," a struggling songwriter from Nashville who is killed in a freak accident in the first couple pages of the book. He then proceeds to make his way through a very idiosyncratic afterlife of indeterminate space and time, during which he falls for a saucy French girl and travels around the world sampling various dishes, before an assembly of gods (among them Jesus, Zoroaster, Shiva, and Isis) debate over what should be his eternal fate. This segment of the presumably ongoing story (the "To Be Continued" at the end suggests as much) closes with Zimmerman bronco-bucking a dragon through the universe. The writing is delicious and accomplished, frequently breathless and funny, a mixture of lovely florid passages and saltier, down-home-Southern colloquialisms, and the story provides an ingenious way to navigate through the various regional cuisine (Southwest, Italian, French, Swiss-German) and not only say a little something unique about the cooking experience but also delve into some lovely observations about displacement and spirituality. This is speculative fiction that should be served with the finest red wine, a tasty morsel for the palette and the brain.