

# BOOK REVIEWS

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*Michele Field*

The initials of the reviewers signify the following: MF, Michele Field ([michelefield@blueyonder.co.uk](mailto:michelefield@blueyonder.co.uk)); AKD, Andrew Dalby ([akdalby@hotmail.com](mailto:akdalby@hotmail.com)).

## **The Restaurants Book: Ethnographies of Where We Eat**

David Beriss and David Sutton, editors

Berg | 2007 | 240pp | £17.99

An uneven collection of 13 essays which in various ways ask whether restaurants are not the bulwark between us and the creeping standardization of food. The word ‘ethnographies’ shouldn’t scare you, as despite all the writers being American academics most have been reined in. Sutton’s ‘anthropological meditation on tipping’ spills over the reins – but is almost amusing when discussing why men tip women. MF

## **The Vegeteranean**

Malu Simoes and Alberto Musacchio

Simon and Schuster | 2008 | 204pp | £25

Brilliant recipes and none that the rest of us might read speculating how to adapt to make a proper meal. The authors own a country-house in Italy and came up against Italian law that required an ‘Agriturismo’ to raise its own meat as well as its own crops. As a vegetarian restaurant, must you have a few lambs and chickens to get your accreditation? Their ‘cause’ gave them attention, and now their talents are on the page. MF

### **The Food Times**

Edited by Karla Cook

New Jersey | [www.thefoodtimes.com](http://www.thefoodtimes.com)

A daily bulletin of food news and links to mostly *New York Times* stories (the editor herself writes for the paper). The content leans towards nutritional issues, not the gastronomic. It does, however, have a good eye for shocking stories, such as how 17% of beef in the American food chain comes from old, emaciated dairy cows. MF

### **Citrus: A History**

Pierre Laszlo

University of Chicago | 2007 | 239pp | £14

Biographies of particular foods have to hit the right mark between erudition and popular history. This one is perfect, and it is the work of a retired chemistry professor who sees that even something as God-given as a lemon has different personalities in different cultures. (The lemon peel in Dutch still lifes represents the sensuality of climates like Brazil's.) Laszlo also writes recipes with the chutzpah of Alice B. Toklas. MF

### **The Earth Only Endures: On Reconnecting Nature with Our Place in It**

Jules Pretty

Earthscan | 2007 | 274pp | £18.99

In the academic world of Agricultural Science there is now a cadre of environmentalists. About a third of this book is about 'Food and the Land' and may rile readers who think food issues should start with people and work backwards. Here the health of the soil takes priority over its productiveness. Pretty makes a case of 'exceptionalism' for soil, although we drain the earth of its other resources and do not bargain about the repayments. MF

### **Advanced Kitchen Chemistry**

Patricia Christie

MIT OpenCourseWare 5.S16 | 2008

free access at [www.OCW.mit.edu](http://www.OCW.mit.edu)

This university in Boston has made its courses part of Creative Commons (CC, as this section of PPC is). You can 'take' courses for no charge. This particular course has trivial bits (health benefits of garlic? Pineapple in beauty products?) but also gems. The Reading Lists are good for browsing, even for scholars. A link to a full degree in 'candy making' at the University of Utah suggests there is a smile on Utah's face. MF

## **Allergy: The History of a Modern Malady**

Mark Jackson

Reaktion | 2006 | 288pp | £14.95

Although other substances are responsible for more allergies today (eg household cleaning chemicals) the focus stays on food as the main culprit. Here is the long perspective – how the allergy story ‘evolves’ through decades (your children may be allergic to something you can’t foresee), and how it stays a fringe diagnosis, the way melancholia was. The book opens into spaces it can’t cover: did we ever understand milk allergies? Are we allergic to smells as well as ‘fumes’? MF

## **Meatpaper**

Sasha Witzansky and Amy Standen, editors

Quarterly journal since 2007 | see [www.meatpaper.com](http://www.meatpaper.com) | \$28-\$36 a year

No food nowadays is as contentious as meat. This magazine is not the ‘how-to’ of hamburgers but rather meat in cultural, legal, historical and artistically inspiring roles. It looks at the intense reactions that ‘meat consciousness’ generates, and at the jokes. One piece points out that though men sometimes eat penises to improve their sex lives, ‘rarely do people eat breasts to get bigger breasts’. MF

## **The Bali Cookbook**

Lonny Gerungan

Kyle Cathie | 2007 | 192pp | £15.99

It is a lot like being a start-up website now as compared to 20 years ago: being a writer of cookbooks with a ‘niche’ appeal is not the thrill that it was. Too much here has become ‘current’, but Snails in Spicy Broth, and Steamed Jackfruit are two I have not met before. This book reminded me of approaches I tried once and want to try again, but it also a book to put it aside until I can find the right dried salted fish to deep-fry. Although even hopes wilt. MF

## **Kitchen Memories**

Anne Snape Parsons and Alexandra Greeley

Capital Books, Virginia | 2007 | 366pp | £12

Pulling together ‘family recipes from around the world’ is perhaps the destiny of most small presses. But on the side of critics, a book like this ‘accommodates’ ancestry without grasping how a 1906 Iranian recipe from an American immigrant, is today barely Iranian at all. The philosophy that the best cooks left their native places and perfected their personal recipe versions in the States, is no doubt true. For some. MF

### **Food Fights**

Stefan Nadelman

<http://tv.boingboing.net:80/2008/04/17>

Why does so little about food try to amuse? This is a five-minute animation (there is a longer version too) on the 'Best of bbTV' that relates the history of war since WWI as 'fights' between the hamburgers and the other native dishes. The food artillery is splashy and maybe not as funny for food historians as for schoolchildren. I watched hoping that pundits like Jamie Oliver would wander into the line of condiment fire. MF

### **Arranging the Meal: A History of Table Service in France**

Jean-Louis Flandrin

University of California | 2007 in English | 109pp | £19.95

The late J.-L. Flandrin was a known barrier-crasher in food history. This is such a good book, how did its first publication in French in 2002 take so long to reach the English reader? His chapter on meatless meals in Catholic France is a story about food substitution and how gourmet recipes for mushrooms were given a clear road. The prohibition against eating fish and meat in the same meal also had strange effects. MF

### **The Future Control of Food**

Geoff Tansey and Tasmin Rajotte, editors

Earthscan | 2008 | 266pp | £18.99

The Quakers have supported this book. Here are reams of information on 'intellectual property' in food types versus biodiversity, and pages about governments playing with agreements to forestall conflicts that may arise over food supplies. This book is one with a good heart but desperate for practical suggestions. However, as we all have to think about these crises, it is where your reading should start. MF

### **Local Breads**

Daniel Leader

Norton | 2007 | 355pp | £22

Despite the doughy muck on bookshelves about bread, this title is appreciated. In food writing about bread there are trip-wires between the technique and the results. I could handle my sourdough adventures (although I thought that a Helpline, like for my computer, would be good too). Baking genuine German rye is my 2008 aim and the rye sourdough for 2009. Bread-book authors think that life is leisurely – but their lives run on a long gauge. MF

**The Artificial and the Natural:  
An Evolving Polarity**

Bernadette Bensaude-Vince and  
William Newman, editors

MIT Press | 2007 | 331pp | £25.95

In food issues today no debate is bigger than this philosophical one: what is 'natural' (hybrids? highly selective breeding of crops? vanilla essence?) and at what point anything crosses into being 'artificial'. Kaufmann's essay on how Arcimboldo's paintings of fruit and vegetables made us see 'nature' in a new way is brilliant – but the book is not about food. It is about the historical discomfort (and sometimes, comfortableness) with the question. MF

**Culinaria Russia**

Marion Trutter, editor

Ullmann | 2007 English translation  
| 371pp | £24.99

The series is best when its view is so wide as to be Martian. This German editor gives menus for picnics on graves (Ukraine); she explains Georgia's claim to having invented pasta, and the 'lore' in Azerbaijan that the gender of an unborn child is read in the throat of a boiled lamb's head. If you think that less-is-more you won't like the incessant photographs, but there is grit in the prose and less gloss in the recipes than you might imagine. MF

**Colonial Virginia's Cooking  
Dynasty**

Katherine E. Harbury

University of South Carolina Press  
| 2004 | 479pp | \$59.95

This is a book outside the 'age' range for our reviews, but we want to be the first to apologise (among others who should apologize too) for overlooking it for three years. It has the air of an expanded thesis, but it also has exotic information. Sugar had 60 London refineries in the 1660s which converted South Carolina's more or less 'local' product and shipped it back to the colony. When this loop became significant, the prejudice against sugar-any-colour-but-white developed. MF

**Out of the East: Spices and the  
Medieval Imagination**

Paul Freedman

Yale University Press | 2008 | 288  
pp | \$30

Title and subtitle say it all. Spices in cuisine, in drugs, as aromatics; spices in trade, their rarity, dangers, mysterious origins. They had been at the heart of European cuisine since Roman times, and humoral theory contributed to the heavy demand for spices in medicine and food. Serious stuff; lively quotations. AD

### **Medieval Cuisine of the Islamic World**

Lilia Zaouali

Wiley | 2007 in English | 224pp | £14.95

This is an Italian description of medieval Islamic food – there is no bigger one-upmanship than this Mastermind topic. The third of the book that is background is good about querying the margins of ‘exotic’ (where did ‘the East’ then end?). The two-thirds that are medieval recipes have been adapted in other books, though maybe not ‘Beef with Rosebuds’ or ‘Salted Fish with Raisin Sauce’. A good example of the ‘workable’/historical approach. MF

### **Leviathan: The History of Whaling in America**

Eric Jay Dolin

Norton | 2007 | 479pp | £17.99

I read this book hoping to learn why the Japanese relish whale as meat (minke whale curry is a new Tokyo favorite), and American whalers used the whale only for fuel and scrimshaw. In their more than 300 years of whale-hunting, why did Americans never create a Moby Dick matelote? This fine book is disappointing on that one level only. MF

### **Eat, Drink, and Be Merry (Luke 12:19): Food and Wine in Byzantium**

Leslie Brubaker and Kalliroe Linardou, eds

Ashgate | 2007 | 272 pp | £50

A conference in 2003 at Birmingham celebrated Anthony Bryer, Byzantinist extraordinary and food-lover: at last, here are the papers. Everything about Constantinopolitan food, not forgetting the city’s Jewish and Muslim communities, food choices of potential saints, Byzantine food in Chinese texts, medieval Greek wine in England: ‘More Malmsey, your Grace?’ AD

### **‘The Lunatic National Animal Identification System’**

In Hightower Lowdown | vol 9, no 9 | September 2007 | <http://www.hightowerlowdown.org/node/1364>

This is one of the most important food articles published in the past year: a kick in the groin to those want more ‘traceability’ in the food chain. The American proposal is for every animal to be given a ‘barcode’ from NAIS (National Animal Identification System), and traced from cradle to plate. The system suits agri-businesses but not small farmers nor importers of ‘foreign’ meat. It is surveillance gone mad. MF

## **Mediterranean Food: Historical, Environmental, Health & Cultural Dimensions**

Michael Scoullos and Vasiliki Malotidi

www.mio-ecsde.org | 2007 | 112 pp | ask nicely

Teaching materials, soon to be translated into several languages for use in schools all around the Mediterranean. The focus is on local foods, traditions that need preserving, cross-cultural influences, sustainable development. With a short 14-language glossary of Mediterranean food. AD

## **Wiki.foodhacking.com**

Marc Powell

Various www only – eg. <http://up13.org>

We always knew that innovation would not stop with Adrià, nor with Heston Blumenthal, but where it would go... ? A variety of websites in the States now use the ‘hacking’ analogy (splicing recipes, using amateur chemistry) to rethink what food is. A review of this approach in the prestigious *Nature* journal (6 March) does not joke about blood ice cream – it enquires about what is being done in food laboratories as seriously as if they were discovering DNA. MF

## **Heathy and Sustainable Food for London**

London Development Agency  
Palestra | 2007 | 21pp | free and a pdf on [www.londonfoodstrategy.org.uk](http://www.londonfoodstrategy.org.uk)

In 2006 the Mayor of London launched a 139-page ‘Food Strategy’ for the city. As nothing much was seen to happen afterwards, in the autumn of 2007 they printed this glossy statement in languages from Urdu to Chinese, using phrases like ‘fantastic, healthy food on the plate’ and the over-used ‘vibrant’ and ‘vibrancy’ (since when do these describe food systems?). There are no specifics on the £1.5 million budget, no links to those responsible for ‘implementations’. MF

## **Gumbo Tales: Finding My Place at the New Orleans Table**

Sara Roahen

Norton | 2008 | 293pp | £15.99

To discuss a conventional cuisine as if it is exotic, nowhere is easier than New Orleans. But this book actually gives a sense of how hard (not easy) it is to sustain distinctions between po-boys and ‘loaves’ – into both of which fried oysters are stuffed with more ceremony than space allows me to say. Most revelatory is the chapter on chicory and coffee (today chicory is pricier and the ‘substitute’ myth is dispelled). MF

## 1080 Recipes

Simone and Inez Ortega

Phaidon | 2006 | 975pp | £24.95

After the success of *The Silver Spoon*, the English translation of the 1950 cookbook for Italian kitchens, the publisher has done the same for this 30-year-old ‘classic’ of Spanish meals. The second book is more surprising – just how many ways can you serve cold bonito? Yet, overall the surprise is how similar domestic food in Italy and Spain has remained, though the Spanish are freer of American and English influence. MF

## Secret Ingredients: The New Yorker Book of Food and Drink

Edited by David Remnick

Random House | 2007 | 583pp | \$29.95

No other magazine has done so much to encourage ‘proper writers’ to write about food. Everything is embraced from the black-and-white Food Allergy Ball (‘mock-epic’) to the ‘mystical microcosm’ (Steven Martin satirizes a menu that includes the Fried-butter Appetizer). Those are the two categories into which *New Yorker* epicure Adam Gopnik says all food writing falls. Good prose marches on its stomach much further than Michelin usually takes it. MF

## Modern Mezze

Anissa Helou

Quadrille | 2007 | 160pp | £18.99

Admirers of Helou’s book *Lebanese Cuisine* will applaud her undertaking a popular work drawing on recipes from across the Persian world from which mezze came. She has turned the tidbits of restaurant mezze into larger plates for family meals. The fish in tahini sauce is terrific; the Lebanese raw-meat kibbe is probably for some families more than for others. MF

## ‘The Rise of the Gastronomer’

Jane Levi

In *Food*, edited by John Knechtel  
MIT Press | 2008 | 330pp | £10.95

When particular food situations are described they seldom give insights into human nature, but Levi looks at the food that the first astronauts were ‘served’ in space and how it reflected attitudes about this kind of adventure. She observes that while Americans dealt with eating in a weightless environment by making consumption tidy, ‘the Russians decided to accept the inevitability of crumbs’ and thought about how to collect them. MF

### **'Plant Diversity in the Human Diet'**

Serban Proches et al

In *BioScience* | vol 58, no 2 | Feb 2008  
| pp 153-161

This research stung more than the 'localistas' of the food world. It looks at an ordinary McDonalds meal and, from the more than the 7000 plant species eaten by people today, finds 20 in a Big Mac, fries and coffee. When a Third World society may exist entirely on no more than 50-100 species, the fact that 20 turn up in a fast-food meal argues that even McDonald's sustains diversity. It is the plus that comes with globalization. MF

### **The Nonequilibrium Nature of Culinary Culture**

Osame Kinouchi et al.

[www.arxiv.org/abs/0802.4393v1](http://www.arxiv.org/abs/0802.4393v1) |  
15pp pdf

Five scholars from the Physics and Society department of the University of Sao Paulo have looked at international classic cookbooks from the Middle Ages to now, and discovered an evolutionary mechanism in the way ingredients move across spans of time. Some ingredients come and stay for strong reasons – nutritional, flavour, grow-ability – but others 'persist by default'. This is a gripping read for food historians. MF

### **Propitious Esculent: The Potato in World History**

John Reader

Heinemann | 2008 | 315pp | £18.99

The potato should be a hero in the story of 'food security'. More often, cultures have treated it like a cheap date. The days when the Parisian aristocracy would not eat potatoes, to today when rural China is the world's biggest potato-producer, seem to say something about whom potatoes are for. The author overlooks the potato's great coup: the chip arrived in the 19th century. Now ingenious 'performances' of the potato may be part of the problem (souffléed like that cheap date). MF

## LONGER REVIEWS

Julia Abramson: *Food Culture in France*: Greenwood Press, 2007: ISBN 0-313-32797: 197 pp., \$49.95.

*Food Culture in France* is the thirteenth volume to appear in Greenwood's series *Food Culture around the World*, edited by Ken Albala; the fourteenth and reputedly final volume, on south-east Asia, is yet to appear. The first twelve volumes were the subject of my review essay, 'Culturing Food', in *Gastronomica* 6:4 for Fall 2006, published before Abramson's book appeared. Here I will consider her volume, as the others, for its representation of cultural perspectives and how its author works 'from inside the large system...to give the reader the deepest possible understanding of how people [in this case the French]...relate to food and the principles by which they produce (or acquire) and *ideologically reproduce* their cuisine' (*Gastronomica* 6:2, p. 102).

Aside from the obvious fact that the French enculturate and socialize their children to bear French culture, including culinary culture, and to function in French society, we are not made privy to how this happens in the culinary sphere, as Abramson tells very little about the varieties of grass-roots kitchen life, household larders, home cookery in different places and social strata, or the subtleties of aesthetic judgment that govern the consistent reproduction of the cuisine and its component dishes. Abramson is a scholar of French language and literature, not a culinary anthropologist or sociologist committed to working at those levels. She has, rather, produced a fine general overview with its own strengths.

Abramson's historical 'Timeline' and 'Historical Overview' cover a broad diversity of topics from ethnic/tribal components of the French population and crop introductions and usages to dining styles, the rise of different kinds of restaurants, the appearance of various landmarks of culinary literature, and the contemporary politics of foodstuff authentication and food safety. In her masterful chapter 'Major Foods and Ingredients', which follows the plan of a standard meal (and includes alcoholic and other beverages), she addresses many aspects of cookery techniques and identifies families of dishes produced similarly from similar ranges of ingredients. The chapter 'Cooking' runs the gamut from places to shop, through home kitchens (briefly), to professional cooks and cooking, to media coverage of cookery in print and beyond.

The chapters 'Cooking', 'Typical Meals', 'Eating Out', and 'Special

Occasions' depict a heavily urban, post-peasant nation in which both men and women work outside the home and cook 'post-classic' meals at home – a France in which culinary traditions once moulded by religious strictures have been secularized and increasingly marked by the consumption of foodstuffs that were once luxurious, sometimes beyond reach, or forbidden by laws of fasting. The French now dine out more often, though Abramson says most eat at home most of the time. She covers well both the history of restaurants and their varied modern types, along with professional cooks and something of their social condition. Her focus on the full range of eating establishments – rather than on the cathedrals of haute cuisine – is necessary and refreshing. The extent to which the tradition and techniques of haute cuisine enter bourgeois consciousness or usage, and the roots these may ultimately be seen to share with home cookery await a different kind of study, but Abramson covers the development and range of French culinary literature on which such a study, or others, would in part rest.

French scholarship about France has long been distinguished by its attention to the way in which formal and informal institutions implant national consciousness in the populace. Abramson follows this important path to discuss the implantation of gastronomic consciousness and culinary concerns in schools, between regions, among travellers, and in France's relations in the European Union and farther abroad – the latter two being frankly political as well as cultural endeavours. Abramson's excellent treatment of how babies and young children are fed and her attention to gastronomic enculturation in schools help to redress the weaker coverage of home life. And in a wide array of contexts she is able to discern important principles that govern French gastronomic culture and, concomitantly, health.

The principles Abramson calls *balance*, *moderation*, and *pleasure* underlie the composition, size, and sociable context of French meals, and underlying these in turn is the cultural stress upon the *full meal*, the preferred form in which the French take nourishment. This marginalizes both snacking and fast-food meals taken on the run from cultural ideals, which instead underwrite multi-course meals of modest serving sizes taken in sociable circumstances. Abramson notes 'the sense of ceremony that accompanies eating' (p. 163) and also the persistent internal structure of the meal even when the number of its elements is reduced (p. 106). She finds the ideals of balance, moderation, and pleasure, along with that of structured full

meals, actualized not only in how the French eat at home but also in how they eat away from home, even in institutional settings and in the rush of urban life. The guiding ideals are revealed throughout the book in the various topics explored and their importance deepens with each chapter.

Most readers carry aspects of French cuisine in their heads and will bring varied kinds of prior knowledge and experience – not to mention opinion and appetite – to the reading of a book like Abramson's. Her book may not stimulate the reader's taste buds as readings of Escoffier, Menon, or many others might, but Abramson's readers will carry away much that they did not carry in.

SUSAN TAX FREEMAN

John Dickie: *Delizia! The Epic History of the Italians and their Food*: Sceptre, 240 pp., £20.00.

Paul Richardson: *A Late Dinner. Discovering the Food of Spain*: Bloomsbury, 320 pp., £16.99.

Time was a traveller's holdall would be crammed with Baedekers and Blue Guides. Palaces, churches, galleries and temples, sometimes a garden, maybe a vista, would make the holiday checklist. No longer. The Michelin guide, a handbook for shopaholics and helpful studies of food habits, phrases and markets are more likely candidates for hand luggage today. Our parents may have cantered down the aisles of Nôtre Dame, we prefer the produce aisles in an Ipercoop (Italy) or Leclerc (France). If you are of this mind, much profitable reading is in store in both these books.

They approach the business of eating from opposite directions. John Dickie is an historian, Paul Richardson an intelligent journalist. Dickie has chosen to write of the relationship of Italians to their food, but not a history of Italian food itself. Richardson composes a present-day travelogue, almost a restaurant guide, but plumbing quite sufficient, and enlightening, depths of historical, culinary and anecdotal knowledge to raise it far above the one-star, two-star preoccupations of Michelin or Gault-Millau.

Dickie's big theory is that we should forget our worship of the Italian peasant and his (or her) perfect diet and concentrate instead on the influence of the big cities. Italy was never a country, always an agglomeration of small city-states. While peasants starved, or scratched terrible meals from meagre materials, the city elites lorded it over their markets and dependent agricultural territories. As if to emphasise the

point, Dickie gives each city a chapter, pinpointing a single foody moment or culinary angle in its past to construct a clever and provoking account of Italy's history as if from the engine-room of its daily life. His choice of topic is invariably piquant, acting, as might seasoning in a dish, to expose unexpected perspectives, flavours and ingredients.

Richardson is concerned to a greater extent with the now of Spanish cooking. The work of master-chef Ferran Adrià at El Bulli in Catalonia is but the apogee of a root and branch renewal of Spanish food that dates back to nouvelle cuisine and its adoption by Basque cooks and restaurants in the late 1970s. He seeks to explain this transformation of what might be thought a pretty iffy style of cookery. (Certainly, there were few English travellers who ever had a good word to say for the food they met on their visits, while undeniable that today, Spanish restaurants and Spanish chefs are at the top of the culinary tree.) His big theory is that this renaissance could never have happened, and would have had no meaning, were it not undertaken by men with their feet planted firmly in the soil of tradition. He delights in discovering the most stellar restaurant, with a chef happily turning out deconstructed classics of Basque or Castilian peasant dining – deploying every modern trick of foams, low-temperature cookery, liquid nitrogen, big jokes on the plate and so forth (think Heston Blumenthal with a Spanish accent) – where the acknowledged start of it all was a neighbourhood bar run by said chef's parents (mother of course cooking her socks off) transformed by the wild ambition and creativity of the younger generation into something else entirely. So, if Dickie traces Italian cooking through its social and economic elites, Richardson is looking constantly back to the humble origins of the food of Spain. One subject, two stories.

The rewards of these books lie principally in the pleasing contradictions they explore in our present attitudes to the food we eat. Think, for example, of our glorification of the peasant lifestyle. Would the River Café or Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall have much meaning were the nebulous backdrops of a Tuscan farmhouse or a straw-chewing Dorset labourer not ever-present? Neither Dickie nor Richardson has many illusions about the wonders of the peasant diet. Dickie quotes the horror of one English lady offered a pork soup near Ferrara containing the 'hog's head, with the eye-lashes, eyes, and nose on; the very food the wretched animal had last eat of before he made his exit remained sticking about the teeth.' Richardson makes the

very nice point that seventeenth-century Spanish literature portrayed food not in terms of plenty and delight but in those of hunger and deprivation: 'the perpetual search for food is the underlying theme'. Nor, save in the broadest sense, does either writer suggest that peasant cooking was the be-all and end-all of their respective national styles.

One of Dickie's killer facts, with which indeed he opens his account, is the existence in Tuscany of Il Mulino Bianco (The White Mill) a restaurant that offers the culinary epitome of old Italy. In fact, it was no peasant paradigm but the set for an advertising campaign for a leading brand of biscuits. Dreary industrial wasteland was not a fitting frame for the product, hence their choice of this mill. A constant flow of visitors still asks the chef if he makes the biscuits himself.

Such mismatches of perception are seen most forcefully in our current yen for offal. Send a foody to Palermo and he will ignore every monument until the famous spleen sandwich, the *guastella*, has passed his lips. Asked to account for the glories of the cooking of Cadiz on the Spanish Atlantic coast down by Gibraltar, Paul Richardson embarks on a catalogue of dishes cooked up by the fishermen who for 3,000 years have sat astride the straits waiting for the run of tuna entering the Mediterranean basin. These include casserole of tuna skin, tuna entrails with chickpeas, tuna heart with vinegar or tuna cheeks with potatoes. But all these delicacies, like the udder (elder) of East Lancashire or the tripe of Caen in Normandy, were the leavings, the rubbish, the poor man's feeding from the trough of luxury. A Tudor duke of Somerset didn't wake in the morning crying 'Whoopee, it's Tuesday, time for ox-palate stew!' but he countenanced its appearance at table because if you've killed an ox, then you had better eat it: down to the last toenail. Waste is a sin. Or you passed it along the food-chain to your impecunious tenants.

On such matters, both Spain and Italy have plenty to say. It's holiday reading to satisfy broad appetites for context and which informs as well as enlightens. But don't forget the cathedral once the waiter has been tipped.

(This review was written in the first instance for *The Guardian*) TJ

Christmas Cookery Book Round-up written for *The Guardian* in 2007:  
The excellent writer Peg Bracken, who died in October and whose 1960 *I Hate To Cook Book* was a beacon of hope to we culinary incompetents,

remarked that every woman had a 'big fat cookbook that tells you everything about everything.' Its drawback was that it contained too many recipes. 'Just look at all the things you can do with a chop, and aren't about to! What you want is just one little old dependable thing you can do with a chop besides grill it.' The situation today has changed. Popular authors dribble out an annual allowance of recipes covering beneath a flashy superstructure of typography and photographs. The search for something useful on lamb chops may cover twenty books and as many minutes.

This year sees no staunching of the flow. As the Jacobean dramatist Philip Massinger had it, 'portly and curious viands are prepared to please all kinds of appetites.' First in point of size is *1080 Recipes* by Simone and Inés Ortega (Phaidon, £24.95): a translation of a long-running favourite from Spain. The same publishers were responsible for *The Silver Spoon* from Italy, which had a remarkable, some say incredible, commercial success. They each work to the same recipe: mainstream sales of millions at home seem to guarantee English-speaking readers the tantalizing prospect of authenticity. But just as a 1950s reworking of Mrs Beeton was hardly all that's best in British cooking, so these are pale reflections of robust national character. The first recipe I turn up in Ortega is for little bread rolls with a slice of ham and Philadelphia cream cheese, hardly the daily fare of Galician fisherfolk. This is a bourgeois cookbook for the urban middle classes, the recipes removed from their original contexts (nor is any given in editorial commentary) and refined to appeal to homogenized palates. This is not entirely to the book's disadvantage. We sometimes make too much of a business about genuine this and genuine that, when what we really need is to produce a meal on the table at eight o'clock sharp. And here are a thousand dishes, much as they would be cooked in metropolitan Spain, with plenty of salt cod, a chapter on offal, and the full low-down on flans and caramels. Another recommendation is that it looks and feels like a heavyweight gift.

Production values are high with this and with other Phaidon books such as *Creole* by Babette de Rozières (Phaidon £24.95), translated from the French, which explores the cookery of the French West Indies. While hot stuff on acras, blaff and anything to do with coconut, indigenous cookery is prettied up to tie it to modern fusion (though having spent some time in Martinique in search of good food, I might say that such prettification is no bad thing). And handsome too, though whimsical, is their *Pork and*

*Sons* by Stéphane Reynaud (Phaidon £24.95) which offered a French take on pig cookery (though none on making sausages or hams, which seems fairly hopeless).

The most successful recent British contemplation of the pig was Fergus Henderson's *Nose to Tail Eating* to which he has added a second part this year, in collaboration with Justin Piers Gellatly, called *Beyond Nose to Tail* (Bloomsbury £17.99). This is no big book but confirms that small is surely beautiful. Nor is it just pig (though I pant to discover whether the sale of pigs' ears has increased as a consequence). The range is select and the recipes remarkable for their earthy yet refined simplicity. Half the book is given over to baking and sweet things, with plenty of puddings and ice-creams. What is most pleasing is Henderson's laconic style. You read, and cook, the book with a smile. Everything feels as if it has been done before, many times, to the authors' satisfaction. This can be reassuring.

Genuineness of address is important to a cookbook and that quality so nicely developed by Fergus Henderson is also found in the latest instalment from Sam and Sam Clark. In *Moro East* (Ebury Press £25) the restaurant (Moro)-owning couple venture physically no further than the Manor Garden allotments (now bulldozed for an Olympic highway) where they have dug for seven years in concert with a heterogeneous band, each apparently intent on growing a little piece of heaven in Hackney Wick. The right tone never deserts them: from English earth sprout Mediterranean wonders, drawn from north Africa, southern Spain, Turkey and the Middle East but never much from Italy or France. The transformation is magical and captured as appealingly by the photographs as by the recipes themselves. Gardeners will find clever inspiration to use their products to the last leaf (anyone for onion tops or poppy leaves?); cooks will want to try something different. The Clarks' earlier books had a solemn tinge to them, this is simply joyful. And if you can't be sure, eat it at Moro before you try at home.

Another writer who encourages you to take a culinary chance is Simon Hopkinson. As a professional cook, he would produce dishes of exemplary comfort that made you feel much better. But he was also more open to experiment and innovation than you might expect. I may be showing my age, but it was he who first introduced me to Thai fish sauce. In his most recent outing called *Week In Week Out* (Quadrille £20) – which he frankly admits to being another airing of his weekly column in the *Independent* that

ran from 1994 to 2002 – he combines the simple (grilled fillet steak with mushroom and tarragon butter) with things we are less likely to carry in our file of old stand-bys (squid dumplings, aubergine with miso and sesame). What sets Hopkinson apart is that you want to eat everything he writes about. Another angle might be that he is an Elizabeth David tribute band with an infinitely expanded repertoire.

This round-up has been mostly concerned with good cookery books, leaving no time for anything more tangential. Among a wealth of alternatives (some good, many middling) I would strongly urge a reading of *Beans* by Ken Albala (Berg £14.99) which entertainingly unravels that most complicated of legumes through space and time; and *A Movable Feast* by Kenneth F. Kiple (Cambridge £15.99) which draws on the donkey-work put in by *The Cambridge World History of Food* (one of the most indigestible books ever published) to construct a succinct and instructive single-volume account of human diet, its spread and its consequences.

TJ

Stefan Gates: *In the Danger Zone*: BBC Books, £15.99.

Chitrita Banerji: *Eating India*: Bloomsbury, £12.99.

Some conversations encourage hyperbole: between fishermen; of teenage boys on sex; over dinner about food. Then, talk will drift to restaurant bills we have known, wines of unimagined age, and dishes of furious unpleasantness. On this last topic, Stefan Gates would stop the banter dead. He really has eaten everything; and written about it too: yak's penis and assorted genitalia (always male, except once when he hears of donkey vulva - which even his Chinese guide thinks disgusting), insects and grubs of every hue, fresh whale blubber, eyes, tongues, and the most unlikely vegetables. He seems unshockable, which serves only to irritate his Mexican minder as he swallows fly eggs, ant eggs, duck tripe, braised snake and chicken-blood tortillas without demur.

Gates's book arises out of his television series when, each week, he flies off to a new and hairy part of the world where man has managed to bugger things up. The causes of disaster are infinite: war, of course (Afghanistan); civil war (Uganda); displacement (Ethiopia); the caste system (India); technological catastrophe (Chernobyl); the impact of modern civilisation on traditional cultures (Canada); trading arrangements and commercial bullying (Haiti and Mexico); political and cultural craziness (China).

During his visits, he looks at the food being sold and eaten, the reasons it is like it is, and then will try his hand at cooking it. The cooking makes good television, the rights and wrongs of each situation, however, make better reading, or would if it were not such a helter-skelter catalogue of impossible dilemmas. How many disasters can you pack into 250 pages? Gates may here be vying for a world record.

Using food as his touchstone does throw up some chewy points about things we take for granted. We usually reckon to avoid acute hunger pangs; we expect a certain level of flavour; and we are happy to ignore great swathes of the food chain (feet, heads, innards, seeds and roots). We rarely think of using food as a weapon of social discrimination, of war or of political domination. Yet all these negatives and diabolical positives are everyday realities in the places that Gates visits. Some of the spectres are so large he cannot get a grip – how to convey the sensation of hunger, for instance – but when dealing with tangible facts like the incessant tedium of splodge and porridge made from World Food Programme maize flour and corn soy blend in Uganda, or the four-hour hunt for three minuscule frogs and one tiny fish to add variety to the rice dole of Karen refugees on the Thai-Burmese border he hits many bulls-eyes of wonder and outrage.

The problem, of course, lies in finding a solution, or even of pinpointing a true cause. Most of these disasters are cumulative, so that decades of misrule, overpopulation, the punitive Big Brother tactics of Washington and agricultural dumping that seems to benefit no-one save the pig breeders of the Carolinas results in the desertification and rock-bottom ghastliness of Haiti. It seems an insult to devote a bare twenty pages to the subject, but Gates (who only occasionally irritates by his presence) does empathy well, as well as affront, and manages to pack in considerable enlightenment. It may be the wrong thing to say, but the book is enjoyable.

Gates's real villain is not the United States (which never comes out smelling of roses) but social change. You can't always do a lot about it. Chitrita Banerji tries to pin down similar shifting patterns of life in her own country of India in a travelogue that takes in most of its regions. Like Stefan Gates, food is her chosen subject, but it's difficult to exclude wider issues from the kitchen.

In her case, it's the big historical picture of invasion, migration and colonization. It's the bewildering mosaic of religions and their particular culinary taboos. It's the effects of modern economic development on

a relatively traditional society. Too much, the reader might say, for one small book, but she handles it well, indeed eloquently, with many telling examples to provoke further investigation. Why should the Hindus of Calcutta forbid eating radishes in the spring? Why should Jains exclude all root vegetables? What's with the Buddhists and meat? Although some taboos respond to functional explanation (dirt, ill health, etc.), others are a mystery. Then she fetches up among the Syrian Christians of Kerala, who have been there since the third century AD, and here is a group without one taboo, omnivores all. You lurch towards an explanation of the history of the world.

If only it were so easy. Banerji, though, is worth reading: thoughtful, well expressed, informative – even if sometimes the description of spices and flavours leaves you yearning for the foods themselves. A book like this is akin to a painter's biography without a single picture. What the hell is going on?

(This review was written in the first instance for *The Guardian*) TJ

Fuschia Dunlop: *Shark's Fin & Sichuan Pepper. A sweet-sour memoir of eating in China*: Ebury Press, 2008, hardback £16.99.

Matthew Fort: *Sweet Honey, Bitter Lemons. Travels in Sicily on a Vespa*: Ebury Press, 2008, paperback, £10.99.

Jay Rayner: *The Man who Ate the World. In search of the perfect dinner*: Headline Review, 2008, hardback, £16.99.

As our obsession with food deepens, so writers explore different means to sharpen our appetites. A recipe that mixes travel with memoir seems a current favourite. These three books rustle up the ingredients in different proportions but to the same end: tell me what you eat and I'll tell you who you are.

Fuschia Dunlop scooped the pool some years ago with two brilliant collections of recipes from the Chinese provinces of Sichuan and Hunan. You couldn't get more authentic, more arcane, or more impossible than dishes like steamed squab with red dates, longan fruits, lotus seeds, wolfberries and lychees (trying buying those at the Newton Abbot Tesco). They had an impeccable pedigree. Dunlop not only spoke and wrote Chinese (and several dialects thereof), she had lived and studied in Chengdu, the capital of Sichuan, and learned to cook at the feet of the masters of its Institute of Higher Cuisine. Her current book is an account

of the cultural immersion necessary to produce her recipes in all their glory. For many, it will be more informative and more interesting than the cookbooks themselves.

Ostensibly, she went to Chengdu to study how the Chinese treated ethnic minorities but, like many another foreign student, she found the experience of otherness sufficient mental exercise without the trouble of lectures and libraries. Interest in food led her down the cooking path, and where more rewarding and capable of exploration than China? For millennia, food and cookery have been of central concern; anything we benighted westerners might have thought of, they had done first; they invented gastronomy; they brought together diet and health; and anything that moved, they ate. She was in paradise, and her description of that heaven is many-layered and rewarding.

Intrepid to the point of foolhardiness, she spoke to anyone, went anywhere and tried eating everything. That last aspect may catch the headlines (from pig's brain to civet cat, sea cucumber to muntjak, scorpion to rabbit heads) but it is her stories of the Chinese she met, whether restaurateur, stall-holder, bright peasant made good at university, or survivor of the Cultural Revolution that hold the attention. Add to that her over-arching description of the whys and wherefores of Chinese cookery. These include the differences between one region's style and another's, the various methods of cutting up vegetables, and the approach the Chinese have to food resources (buy it live, kill it, then cook it – and certainly don't worry about its feelings, it has none). Exemplary, too, are her comments on the importance of texture to the eating experience, her description of wok-technique, and her setting of food in the wider historical and cultural context.

There were a couple of questions which intrigued me but remained unresolved. Is the richness of Chinese cookery only the result of a highly developed court culture on the one hand and on the other a complex and dense urban civilization, or is it susceptible to being traced back to a rural or pastoral archetype? A second was this one of eating everything. In Europe, the consumption of all parts of a beast was second nature to most styles of cookery until the fairly recent past. There are plenty of recipes for every bit of cow, sheep, chicken, goose, swan, etc. Similarly, most creatures were consumed, though granted there was little taste for dogs and cats and many rodents, and less for most insects. Was it a philosophical or conceptual

failure on our part that provoked our turning away from the delights of many innards and offal – a failure that left us insufficiently appreciative of texture and consistency? Or was it rather the result of plenty? Or, to turn the tables, do the Chinese eat and relish everything because they have to and have had the sense to make a virtue out of necessity?

Half-way through, her story of those heady years of study and introduction is complete and we move to self-contained accounts of visits to particular regions. The loss of narrative drive is noticeable, although the matters discussed – China and her Muslim minorities, eating wild animals, the end of Imperial China, environmental degradation – are gripping enough.

Towards the end Fuchsia Dunlop starts having doubts about her professional *raison d'être*. Is her relentless concentration on the table either sensible or justified? Look where the human appetite has landed us? Ingredients high on chemicals, landscapes laid waste, food for show not savour. The answer may be to go back to basics, follow Confucius, but this leaves a food writer somewhat high and dry. Jay Rayner found himself in much the same dilemma as he travelled five continents in search of his perfect dinner.

In fact, his dilemmas are multiple. His project was the globalization of the restaurant business. How Gordon Ramsay is no longer content with kitchens in London, but must open in Dubai, Tokyo, New York and Paris; how the über-rich have provoked a diaspora of chefs that follow the money wherever it leads. Rayner trots off in their pursuit. Will he find a good meal? Will it be better for costing £200 per person? Will it be the best ever? Pretty silly questions, and the answers do not endear the author to his public. It is not easy to wax lyrical about the vulgarity and bad taste of Las Vegas, Moscow or Dubai; the metronomic repetition of high-end ingredients such as truffles, foie gras and lobster in rich men's dinners is dispiriting in the extreme; the ludicrous prices thought reasonable by some are enough to turn one Trappist overnight; and reporting on these excesses does few of us, Rayner included, any good.

It's not as if this cycle of globalization is very different from the first wave that occurred at the turn of the twentieth century as French haute cuisine was exported hither and yon to the Ritz-Carltons of the world. The complaint then, only banished when we started to look again at our culinary roots, was that a tournedos Rossini served to a rubber-prospector

in Manaus was the same as one served to a duke on his hols in Monte Carlo. This too is Rayner's point and it serves only to depress. The important variation is that the stars are the chefs, not the capitalists. But so what, you might ask, save that G. Ramsay gets what's due to him.

It is encouraging that our author starts having doubts before his journey's over, though he could have worked that out before catching the tube to Heathrow. Indeed, by the finish it looks as if he might throw in the towel altogether and start reporting something useful and uplifting. I am certain I never want to read another restaurant review: there can be nothing more tedious that someone else's meal.

In case this seems churlish, there are nuggets of gold in his descriptions of serious Tokyo cooking and of internet food bloggers. The first leaves you breathless for more, and the second reminds you that obsessives are dangerous yet charming. Do not be seduced.

Self-doubt and Matthew Fort are strangers. At least, so he presents it in this scooter-ride round Sicily in search of food and wine and their makers. Alas! here are more restaurant reports, in spades, but beneath his slightly bufferish exterior there lurks a man well versed in matters literary, historical and cultural. This leavens the longueurs of yet another dinner and allows us a broad view of Sicilian food and its multicultural origins. The island was a culinary vector: the Greeks discovered luxury and fine cooking in the fourth century BC; the Romans learned from the Greeks; the Arabs took up from the Romans (and the Persians) and taught not only the Italians what's what but even the English, as they wandered through on their way to the Holy Land. Throw in the Spanish and it's a right old melting-pot that yields any number of scrumptious delicacies. (He provides some recipes which are often worth a try, though I spent some time puzzling why he should include one for cornflour mould – yes, cornflour mould – even if it has the fancy name of *Crema di Latte*.)

These forays into foreign parts often need the Aunt Sally of dear old unreconstructed Britain to give them piquant purpose. If only we were more like the Sicilians, he wails, we would be healthier and better. And poorer, Matthew, and poorer. Maybe choosing baked beans over the early-modern sweetmeat *Mpanatigghie* is a small price to pay.

I sometimes dream of a foreigner visiting England and describing to his readers at home in Paris or Lublijana how Mistress Joyce, fat, cheerful and rosy-cheeked, goes to her chicken coop and picks up three eggs, then

draws from her store cupboard her best white flour, stone-ground and bolted at a local watermill, fine cane sugar from an importer and refiner who has been doing business since the days of slavery, and butter churned on a farm in Dorset. These ingredients she weighs out carefully, does this and does that, pops it in the oven and out comes a grand Victoria sponge. Well it's rubbish really, but is it more rubbish than hearing how one Italian or Sicilian peasant makes his weekly teatime staple?

I was also mindful, reading Fort's most entertaining book, how difficult is the transmission of knowledge. He is invited to a rhapsodic lunch in the country by a charming couple (she a teacher, he a banker). They are obviously red-hot cooks, impassioned by ingredients, methods and flavours. They delight, too, in a wood-fired bread oven the operation of which Matthew is anxious to witness. The reader may note that the bread is prepared and cooked by the gardener and his wife – nothing wrong in that, but one is immediately interested in knowing what level of culinary culture is being described at this point. Are the hosts Sicilians doing what they have always done, or are they educated Europeans seeking an identity? Anyway, as the baking progresses it soon becomes clear (or rather deeply opaque) that Fort has muddled his notes. Processes that happen at the end appear in the middle, fires are misplaced, long hours of rising or proving are ignored.

But these little questions detract little from a well-crafted narrative that leaves everyone better acquainted with Sicily and Italy.

(Most of this review was written for *The Guardian*)

TJ

Frances Bissell: *The Scented Kitchen. Cooking with Flowers*: Serif, £9.99.

Floral cooking gets an outing now and then, but rarely so thoroughly nor so creatively as here. You won't get a recipe for every bunch on the florist's display (chrysanthemums, a Japanese standby, get little mention) but you do get some very sound recipes and plenty of general instruction that will make even the diehard vegetable gardener think again about excluding every ornamental from his plot. You'll also get some wise words on toxicity: don't ever think of trying it on with daffodils (the bulbs especially), oleander, or even the harmless-looking sweet pea. There's more to foraging than meets the eye. Sticking to old faithfuls will still provide the headiest edge to your daily diet whether as rose petals filling a sandwich, fennel flowers giving a new angle to a chilli jelly or jasmine to give a sweet perspective

to a lobster stew or piquancy to a mango and almond crumble. She tells how the larder can profit from floral infusions to vodkas, vinegars, butters, sugars, syrups and jellies that will enable summer to linger the whole year through. If the view from your window is a deep shade of brown, just sit back and plan for the season to come.

(This review was written in the first instance for *The Guardian*) TJ

Constance B. Hieatt and Terry Nutter† with Johnna H. Holloway: *Concordance of English Recipes: Thirteenth through Fifteenth centuries* (Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies, volume 312): Arizona Center for Medieval & Renaissance Studies, Tempe, Arizona, paperback: ISBN 9780866983570: 136pp., 2006, £24.00.

I apologize for taking so long to notice the arrival of this important research aid in which have been listed all the recipes so far in print from thirteenth-, fourteenth- and fifteenth-century English texts. The concordance lists first the original names of the recipes, then the lemmatized (standard) names, then the printed source of the recipe and its approximate date. The alphabetical order is determined by the lemmatized or standard name. As can be imagined, this is already an invaluable tool to unscramble the jumble of medieval names for the same recipe. The next assistant is a glossary of recipe titles used as lemmas and a cross-index of variant titles. This helps the befuddled. There is an appendix concordance of Renaissance versions of medieval dishes printed in *A Proper Newe Booke of Cokerye*, A.W.'s *A Booke of Cookrye*, Thomas Dawson's *The Good Housewife's Jewel*, and Gervase Markham's *The English Housewife*. This amazing help was originally conceived and compiled by the late Professor Terry Nutter. Constance Hieatt and Johnna Holloway completed the work after the untimely death of Dr Nutter. We should be grateful to the Arizona Center at Tempe for making this available to us in so clear and handsome a form.

TJ

Paul Freedman, editor: *Food: The History of Taste*: Thames & Hudson: 2007, 368 pp., £24.95.

Kate Colquhoun: *Taste. The story of Britain through its cooking*: Bloomsbury: 2007, 460 pp., £20.00.

Two books with the same title but which could not be more different. Both deserve much longer notices than possible here (volunteers happily

entertained), but should be recommended to people as candidates for their permanent bookshelves. Kate Colquhoun writes well, she has a fine turn of phrase, a good eye for linguistic connections, and an ability to tell a connected story. The great strength of her book is the development of English cookery in the seventeenth to nineteenth centuries, told largely from close inspection of its cookery books. This takes account of most recent literature and is as good a summary as any to be found. Her extending this into the twentieth century (forwards) or backwards to prehistory may perhaps be seen as courageous, or difficult verging on foolhardy. Prehistory requires a different skill-set; modern times a longer and more nuanced memory if the author is to escape the fractious cavils of contemporaries.

Paul Freedman's book gets around the problem of skill-sets by using different scholars for different subjects. His choice is of great interest, drawing on European, English and American academics for some invigorating essays. These include Alain Drouard on French cookery in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries; Hans Teuteberg on industrial food from 1800; C.M. Woolgar on the Middle Ages; Joanna Waley-Cohen on China; Alan Outram on prehistory; Veronika Grimm on Greek and Roman cookery; and Brian Cowan on post-Renaissance dining. The whole is illustrated with a first-class selection of pictures. What is helpful from this book is that the outsider is offered an accessible survey of the present status of food history in the academic world. This, as many readers will recognize, is quite different from food history in the universe of the generalist.

TJ

Charles F. Foster: *Cheshire Cheese and Farming in the North West in the 17th and 18th Centuries*: Arley Hall Press: ISBN 0951838210: 1998, 116 pp., paperback, £9.50.

It may have taken a year or two for this to reach my desk, but it is so enjoyable a work I thought it should not go unnoticed. Charles Foster is the author and publisher. He has written other books on the agricultural history of his locality and home near Northwich in Cheshire. Here he looks at the rise of the Cheshire cheese industry and the export trade to London after 1650. A move to commercial dairying had a dramatic impact on farm size and structure, while the immense growth of the London market saw its influence move far beyond its immediate local region during the 18th

century. All this is nicely explained. As, too, is the effect of dairying on the construction of a farmstead of the period, as well as an analysis of farm work and farm incomes. I also wanted to stress how much food historians should look to the production end of their subject rather than concentrating on the consumer. This little book tells us a great deal about Cheshire cheese, and puts into neat context the way an 18th-century household relied on its own production for its staples. It gives perspective to Mrs Raffald and any other cookery book. It also offers one killer fact: the annual per capita consumption of cheese at Arley Hall was, he calculates, 120lb. That works out at 2.3lb per week. That's a lot of toasted cheese.

TJ

Panikos Panayi: *Spicing up Britain. A Multi Cultural History of British Food*. Reaktion Books: 2008, 283 pp., hardback, £19.95.

The good thing about this book is its discussion of the involvement of German immigrants in restauration and food supply in Britain before the First World War. There was a surprising number of them (60,000); they formed an important fraction of the waiting staffs of London hotels (he's interesting on waiters' associations too); they were significant in the baking trade; and they vanished overnight in 1914. The Swiss, however, carried on, or at least reappeared. It is a pity that he does not pay sufficient attention to a breakdown of the German community into its Swiss, Austrian and German components. Each has its own history. Otherwise, to be frank, the rest of the book (which I have come to think of as very New Labour) is expendable. I am not sure if it is the rewards or the pressures of academic life that cause a superfluity of books. This is surely superfluous: a good article perhaps. In book form, it has a lamentable grasp of English culinary history – indeed ignores most of it altogether. It has a grotesque interest in the doings and statements of latter-day chefs such as Jamie Oliver, James Martin and Antony Worrall Thompson (who will be, in the words of Mugabe, 'tiny dots on this world'). It spends page after page telling us the obvious or the already-known, and spewing, in that irritating academic way, references and citations to give body to vacuity. But for the Germans, look him up.

TJ

Linden Hawthorne, Elke Laver, Bridget Gillespie, editors: *The Northern Pomona. Apples for Cool Climates*: Pomona Publications, 2007: ISBN 978-0-9556653-0-1: 320pp, illustrations: hardback, £50.00. (Available through their website, [www.northernpomona.co.uk](http://www.northernpomona.co.uk).)

Fruit growing and fruit history inspire insane, extravagant enthusiasm, here evinced by this glorious book, the product of many contributions (see the list of subscribers) and years of selfless application to the cause of better apples, not least at the Helmsley Walled Garden in North Yorkshire, to the benefit of which are devoted the profits from publication. We have, in one easily-plucked container, a classic pomona of varieties known to and suitable for northern climes masterminded by Linden Hawthorne, illustrated with handsome colour paintings to aid identification (always a problem to disorganized gardeners like myself) executed with skill and brio by Bridget Gillespie; some well-judged instructions of cultivation, pruning, training and storing of apple trees and apples by Peter Blackburne-Maze; a very helpful account of northern apple history and comments on restoring old orchards by Barry Potter; an appraisal of e-commerce as a help to developing an apple business by Richard Borrie; and a collection of 200 apple recipes by Elke Laver. This is all so well executed, and so replete with good sense and enthusiasm, that it is positively a bargain.

## NOTES & QUERIES

### JAMBALAYA

Following Andrew Segal's article in the last issue I have been sent a copy of the late Rudolf Grewe's thoughts on the origins of the word and dish Jambalaya.

The origins of jambalaya are problematic. One theory is that the jambalaya was created or introduced in the eighteenth century by the French and possibly has a French, or Arab-French origin. The Louisiana was French during part of the eighteenth century, as a result of the Spanish war of succession, but not in the nineteenth century. But clearly, at that time, French cuisine had no influence from the Arab-speaking countries; France was interested, or involved, in Arab speaking countries only after the Napoleonic era, i.e. in the nineteenth century (Lebanon, Algeria, Morocco, etc). Besides, 'Arab cuisine' (if such a thing exists), has no major part in the New World before World War II.

However, a Spanish colonial origin of the "jambalaya" has no such chronological problem. The dish seems to stem from colonial-Hispanic ways of cooking rice, in principle similar to contemporary paella (soffrito, etc), and to the classic "arroz con pollo" (a sixteenth-century dish). These ways may have been adopted by Negro slaves (if Negroes spread it in Louisiana).

Jambalaya, under this name, may have been known in Louisiana already in the XVIIIc.

Since in Louisiana there is an Atchafalaya River Bay, it seems that jambalaya is a word used by the natives of Louisiana, ie; a word coined in their dialect. This may have been a Negro one, an American-Indian one, Mexican-Spanish, old French, etc. But the word seems autochthonous (and not Arabic).

Nor is the dish Arabic; in structure, it is not of the pilaf

type, (i.e. rice cooked in a broth), but of the paella type (i.e. rice cooked in water on a soffritto base). This difference was a novelty in Lebanon, and hence adopted (otherwise the jambalaya would have been indistinguishable from the local Lebanese ways of cooking rice, and not with recording! That these dishes have disappeared in Provence and the Middle East shows they were fads and not indigenous.

In order to understand how the theory of a French, or Arab-French, origin might have developed, imagine the following scenario:

#### THE ARABIC LOOP: (SCENE BEIRUT)

Step 1: American Protestant priests establish a mission in Beirut in the early nineteenth century. (This became later the American University of Beirut). Some of these missionaries may have been Southern. Dishes like the jambalaya may have been served to students in the commons or Sunday School etc, etc. The jambalaya was liked and adopted by their Lebanese students.

Step 2: France had a school in Beirut too. A Provençal visiting professor is invited for dinner by a former Lebanese student of the American school. Jambalaya is served, and liked by the French professor and his wife. The recipe is copied. (Since the “jambalaya” sounds Arabic and it was served in an Arabic setting, the dish is understood to be Arabic by the professor).

Step 3: The professor in his return to Provence serves the jambalaya, the Arabic dish he learned in Lebanon, to friends, including Gabriel Mistral. The jambalaya becomes a Provençal dish, and Gabriel Mistral writes about it, thinking, of course, that it is Arabic.

## REPORT FROM NEW ZEALAND

I'm very grateful to Dr. Helen Leach for sending this report of a conference on cookery books held last year. I have edited it to fit the space that remains to us.

'Cookbooks and Culinary Traditions'. Report on the 2nd New Zealand Food History Symposium, held at the University of Otago, Thursday November 29 – Saturday December 1, 2007

On the Thursday evening, Helen Leach gave a public lecture (as part of the Hocken Collections centennial programme) on 'Culinary Treasures of the Hocken Collections'. As well as describing five manuscript cookbooks, dating from about 1740 to 1860, she also spoke about the Edmonds' series, and their transition over the first thirty years of publication from advertizing booklet to cookbook-in-its-own-right.

We had 40 enrolments for the symposium, including two international participants, Nathalie Cooke from Montreal and Deanna Pucciarelli from Davis, California. The one and a half days of paper sessions incorporated thirteen presentations and two panel discussions.

The first panel discussion, led by Barbara Keen, examined some issues of 'kitchen fieldwork' drawing on the practical experience of Mary Browne, Alexa Johnston, Joan Bishop and Barbara herself, in modifying old recipes for contemporary use. This emphasis on practical research and nutrition seemed well in tune with our Home Science surroundings. The symposium refreshments also provided edible examples. Ably co-ordinated by Mary Browne, other local New Zealand Guild of Food-Writers members Barbara Keen, Joan Bishop, Janet Mitchell and Helen Leach added their contributions to Mary's for tasting over morning and afternoon teas. Of course the actual recipes and their origins were circulated in the registration pack.

The second panel looked at managing cookbook collections for the future. There was considerable emphasis from the lead discussant, Duncan Galletly, on suitable storage (complete with pictures of his study and bookshelves). Jane Teal passed on the useful information that archivists approve the use of oven bags as suitable for storing fragile cookbooks (as long as we don't seal them – or put them in the oven).

The presentations were lively and informative. Because of the Marsden project's emphasis on cookbooks, speakers drew heavily on this medium of cookery communication. They covered key figures in cookery writing, including Lois Daish, who was in the audience as Michael Symons compared her with Aunt Daisy. Michael painlessly outlined Aunt Daisy's highly rationalized 'modern' approach to cookery, and invited us to consider Lois Daish's post-modern relationship with the ingredients we turn into food. Joanna Cobley introduced the now largely forgotten Nan Kent-Johnston of Christchurch and later Hawkes Bay, who combined broadcasting with the writing of three cookbooks from c.1937–1950. Dave Veart reported on his on-going study of family manuscript cookery books that covered the move from Scotland to New Zealand in the late 1880s, and their adjustment to local conditions such as an abundant supply of fresh fruit. André Taber looked at the migration of the 19th-century church harvest festival to New Zealand. It had its origins in England in 1843 and had reached New Zealand by 1870. Of less certain origin is the dish Colonial Goose. Bill Bryce reported on contemporary opinions of its composition (most think it is shoulder of mutton stuffed), its occurrence in Australia, and the possibility that it is a much older dish called Northumbrian Duck, renamed. In his talk Bill also shared his passion for old recipe books, declaring Mildred Trent's *The Up-to-Date Cook Book* to be his own particular tactile Tardis!

Two graduate students gave well timed and illustrated presentations on indigenous foods. Sophia Beaton, a member of the Marsden team, explained why Maori cookery is still culturally distinct, even though it is not well represented in cookbooks until after the Maori Renaissance of the 1970s. Hazel Fowler reported the results of her Food Science dissertation on the commercial use of indigenous foods. Janet Mitchell summarized her studies of New Zealand cookbooks as vehicles for nutrition advice; Raelene Inglis described the extension services of the Home Science School. As the member of the Marsden team documenting the influence of new technology on our cookery, Jane Teal described the impact of the microwave following its introduction in the late 1970s. Alison Holst listened closely as Jane tracked the spread of Alison's Lazy Lasagne and its microwave version from her cookbooks through to community fund-raising books. Another speaker, Nathalie Cooke, used Davis Gelatine's multinational publications to introduce us to the genre of the 'cookbooklet', previously dismissed as ephemera, but now recognized as highly prescriptive and influential cookery literature.

Duncan Galletly stunned us with his findings on fish dishes in New Zealand cookbooks. The view that it took New Zealanders a long time to learn the properties of our local species was convincingly rejected. Duncan's presentation illustrated the value of recipe books as sensitive sources of data – he had used 375 cookbooks for his analysis.

On the Saturday afternoon, most of the participants adjourned to the Otago Settlers' Museum where a display of selected stoves from the Fisher and Paykel collection had been arranged. Jane Teal had prepared the accompanying text panels, and she spoke about both imported and locally-manufactured models.