

## BOOK REVIEWS

Jane Steward: *Medlars – Growing & Cooking*. Prospect Books, April 2023: 200 pp., paperback, £10.00.

An intriguing fruit that most people know but do nothing about. Jane Steward is the founder of the only medlar-focussed business in Great Britain, Eastgate Larder Ltd, possessing an orchard of 115 trees in Norfolk, which is also the Plant Heritage National Collection. So she should know it all. This is a most excellent, clearly written, instructive, helpful and interesting volume. Sometimes an encyclopaedia article is all you desire, or a good dictionary definition, but a small monograph that covers all the points, and has a few anecdotes, instructions, recipes and pictures to boot, is often so comforting to have as a back-up, or as a springboard to further thoughts. This really does the business. I only regret that our own efforts to grow a medlar in our orchard were blighted.

Marc Meltonville: *The Tavern Cook: Eighteenth Century Dining through the Recipes of Richard Briggs*. Prospect Books, March 2023: 256 pp., paperback, £15.00.

Marc Meltonville has long been a name to conjure with after many years working at the Royal Palaces, in particular Hampton Court, and his creative role in re-enactment in the kitchen. It is brilliant that he has been persuaded to produce this entertaining and informative book about one of the early London tavern cooks, Richard Briggs. As all of us who have been musing about the early history of restaurants will well know, it all started (in fact, if not in theory) in London with the taverns and chop houses. Just read Boswell's London journal. No need for that fancy French theorizing. Richard Briggs wrote *The English Art of Cookery* in 1788. He was cook at the White Hart, Holborn, the Temple Coffee House and 'other taverns in London'. Meltonville has topped and tailed a long central section which reprints many of the recipes in this book alongside a running commentary. The method brings perspective, on the one hand, and enlivens what might otherwise be a straight facsimile reprint – which is not necessarily to everyone's taste nowadays (and is probably available anyway on the Internet). As a semi-independent commentator, I should also congratulate Prospect Books on a generous and sensible pricing policy.

Bryce Evans: *Feeding the People in Wartime Britain*. Bloomsbury Academic, 2022: 194 pp., hardback, £85.00.

This is part of a series, Food in Modern History, edited by Peter Scholliers and Amy Bentley. Bryce Evans, who has already contributed the volume *Food*