PPC 125 (2023) 106-107
https://doi.org/10.1558/ppc.27740
Petits Propos Culinaires (print) ISSN 0142-7857
Petits Propos Culinaires (online) ISSN 3029-0651

it became the official food of Mormon Utah. He trots us through its historical highlights from the first written record in the 1300s to the present day. All fascinating stuff but you know, by the pace he sets, that he really wants to move us on to the more exhilarating specifics involved in the preparation of dishes using gelatine.

On the way, though not much discussed in the book, one is forced to consider the role that texture plays in one's enjoyment of food. As a generality, we, in the west, tend to be repelled by the feel of certain foods in the mouth. We like soft and crisp and firm and are less keen on slippery, chewy or glutinous. Many are repelled at the thought of oysters, whelks, or tripe, though in themselves they have little flavour; it is the texture that nauseates. I feel gelatinous foods fall into this category (think, jellied eels) and may, at least, partly explain their lack of popularity. Ken Albala bravely raises his guide's flag above his head and asks us to follow him in his reappraisal of all things jellied.

On then to the dishes he prepared in the course of writing the book: looking at the photographs, I think, surely Morticia Addams must be his alter ego. This has to be the sort of food she would have regularly concocted in the family mansion. Page after page of very weird stuff, the preparation of each described in lovingly, loathly detail: of 'Classic Meatloaf', he instructs, 'you have to scrape off the congealed fat when cold.' For his 'Tower of Meat' – 'start the aspic by boiling the feet', and his Jell-O Egg concoction will usefully double as mute for a trombone! I wondered if Ken found his subject during the pandemic lockdown; I imagine him shut away on his own, taking in regular Amazon deliveries of calves' feet, isinglass and powdered deer horn; a mad professor cackling with delight over each jellified concoction. Oh, for another lockdown and time for my own stirring of pots and gleeful squawking as I replicate his Jello Sausage; Bayou Bunny Bordelaise or the Screwdriver Creamsicle. I definitely think we all should keep a copy of this book by us – just in case! This is truly the stuff of madness but makes for a delightful read. Your title throws down the gauntlet! Could there really be a gelatine revival? Taking his own masterly efforts as the point of departure, I think this may be less about a comeback but, rather, a transmogrification into a new and somewhat bizarre art form.

Di Murrell

Toby Barnard et al.: *Great Irish Households: Inventories from the Long Eighteenth Century*: John Adamson, Cambridge, 2022: 436 pp., hardback, £75.00.
A sumptuous volume from this small Cambridge house that specializes in the fine and decorative arts. It might be thought a companion to the same publisher's 2006 *Noble Households: Eighteenth-Century Inventories of Great English Households*, edited by Tessa Murdoch, who is also the consultant

editor on this more recent collaborative volume. The roll-call of contributors is impressive: Toby Barnard wrote the foreword, Leslie Fitzpatrick from Chicago the preface, transcriptions of and introductions to the individual sets of inventories come from Jessica Cunningham and Rebecca Campion, Edmund Joyce and Alec Cobbe, and the publisher himself offers excellent appendices identifying books in various libraries described in the inventories as well as the exhaustive index. Readers of *PPC* may understandably be most interested in the kitchens and sculleries and their contents, not to mention the endless notes of dining accoutrements and china. The range of properties is impressive – from the ducal and vice-regal Dublin Castle, Kilkenny Castle or Carton House, Co. Kildare, to Captain Balfour's town house in Dublin in 1741/2, and the banker and property developer Luke Gardiner's house on Henrietta Street in Dublin in 1772. There is so much information that recitation here would be exhausting, but for sheer extravagance, exuberance and breath-catching detail, the domestic and service sections of the Carton House inventory from 1818 take some beating, and the same might be said about the lists from a very different sort of household, Newbridge House, Co. Dublin, the home of the Cobbe family, dating here from 1821. In the Newbridge library are listed two cookery books, one unidentifiable, the other possibly Mrs Rundell's, but it is surprising that no other cookery books appear in the several library lists of other properties, not even in the housekeeper's rooms. I was very impressed by the cellar list of the Countess of Ormonde, the bottles all destroyed by the rebels in 1798 at Castlecomer, Co. Kilkenny; just as I swooned at the astonishing collection of moulds, patty pans and turnip scoops at Hillsborough Castle, Co. Down in 1777. In the kitchen at Morristown Lattin, Co.. Kildare in 1773 (the home of the Lattin family) there are listed '3 Copper Toss pans' which I take to be the English for sauté pan. At Mount Stewart, Co. Down, the home of Lord Castlereagh, 2nd Marquess of Londonderry, in 1821, there are listed '2 Copper Sottee pans'. I feel that we should have retained the description 'toss pan', it's somehow more evocative. Such minutiae are legion in this book: it repays close study.

Emma Kay: *Fodder and Drincan: Anglo-Saxon Culinary History*: Prospect Books, 2022: 224 pp., paperback, £20.00.

We have long relied on Ann Hagen's pioneering works on the Anglo-Saxon kitchen so a fresh approach such as Emma Kay's is most welcome. The difficulty writing about Anglo-Saxon food is the variety and disparity of the source material. There is no master text, simply myriad small allusions, potential inferences, possible conclusions which have to be drawn together to make a coherent narrative. Not easy, and bound perhaps to be reflected by a text that may sometimes seem jumpy, and is itself a host of disparate observations. But Emma Kay has read widely and has been highly observant in her reading