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with food itself, then moves to considering the body, home, society, city and country, nature and time. She examines the current state of affairs and asks how they might be improved. She stresses too that *Sitopia* is not primarily about food *per se* but rather how thinking about our relationship to food can help us address our many modern dilemmas in a positive way.

Essentially, it seems to me, Carolyn Steel's argument is a simple one – happiness: the very essence of a good life – is about a return to the basic tenets of humanity: compassion, tolerance, generosity; with space in our lives for ritual and relationships; living in the present and within our means; being engaged with 'now'. She believes that it is by having a healthier relationship with food that all of those parameters by which we frame our lives can be reset.

The important step then, for humankind, is to decide which of the two dominant food philosophies it wants to support. On the one hand there is the position of the industrial agrarian who argues that, in order to feed the world, we need to further accelerate our mastery of nature, using more, rather than less fertilizers and pesticides, to continue genetically modifying plants and animals and increasing the efficiency of production in the industrial food-chain, and on the other, there is the organic food lobby. This group argues we must move away from what it sees as the catastrophic consequences of industrial agriculture to rediscovering ways of conjoining with the natural world, concentrating on building greater diversity, complexity and resilience into the eco-systems that feed us. Essentially, says Steel, we have to decide on where we, the human race, stands in relation to nature.

She contends that the true meaning of *Sitopia* (*sitos*: food; *topos*: place): a world shaped by food, is that it is through our understanding of food that we come to understand what it means to be human and how to co-exist with our fellow humans and non-humans in both time and place. Throughout millennia, food has shaped our bodies, our lifestyles, our politics and our landscapes. From decisions about what one is going to eat today to deliberations on the worldwide control of industrial food production, it is food that touches every part of our existence.

In these two books, Carolyn Steel sets out the nature of the problem as she sees it and urges a total re-evaluation of our relationship to food. She suggests that by learning, once again, to properly value food, it will also act as the pointer to more fulfilling and sustainable ways of living. Do this, she believes, and happiness will follow.

Di Murrell

Barbara English and Kloskk Tyrer: *Foods, Feasts and Festivals: Beverley and the East Riding*: Beverley and District Civic Society, 2021: 76 pp., paperback, £10.00, available from Beverley Guildhall or to order from the Beverley Civic Society website (contact page).

Foods, Feasts and Festivals is an account of medieval and Tudor life in East Riding, Yorkshire. In the three sections, Barbara English and Kloskk Tyrer draw from a wealth of resources, examining household records, menus, and artefacts, illustrated by 83 coloured images. The book largely focuses on the Percys, earls of Northumberland, and their households at their castles at Leconfield and Wressle. The first section, 'Foods', describes the astonishing quantities and varieties of food consumed by the two great houses. Using the Northumberland Household Book, English and Tyrer not only detail the food eaten but also consider where it came from, how much was needed and who got to eat what. (The social distinctions within the menus are fascinating.) The 'Feasts' section is perhaps the most alien, and therefore intriguing, to the modern reader, with one occasion including '104 peacocks, and [...] 12 porpoises' (p. 29). The final section, 'Festivals', moves to Beverley and describes the events celebrated throughout the Christian year. The lavish processions and pageants put on by the guilds are cleverly explored through prop lists and account books. Throughout this section, and indeed the book as a whole, it is the images that bring the text to life and provide the reader with a vivid insight into the foods and rituals described.

Matilda Mills

Juan Clemente Rodríguez Estévez: *El Universal convite: Arte y alimentación en la Sevilla del Renacimiento*: Ediciones Cátedra, Madrid, 2021: 528 pp., paperback, 25.50 euros.

Art historian Rodríguez Estévez's hefty book exploring a Renaissance archway lined with food sculptures may sound arcane. Dating from the 1530s, the archway, at the entrance to Seville cathedral's sacristy, is carved with 68 framed sculpted plates of food. Their existence has long been known, but they have never been studied in depth. Estévez makes up for this in an art catalogue designed as a good read revealing the sixteenth-century city's remarkable food culture and economy. Seville then was a metropolis and a river port so when it came to sourcing food for its 50,000-strong population, it had a remarkable radius of reach.

Dozens of short-distance delivery routes, for example the road from the city's grazing pastures, converged with ocean connections to New World Spanish colonies. Foodstuffs and wines, once through the city gates, journeyed along defined foot and cart itineraries to granaries, warehouses, market-places and varied points of sale like taverns. As Estévez explains, this highly regulated system was strictly hierarchized, like the city's water supply, but at the same time humanist thinkers, secular and religious, worked to palliate social divides. Sometimes they succeeded, sometimes not.

At the start of the book the author declares his priorities: to write on the sculptures as a source of information, and to explore their realism. He delivers