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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

on both aims. Surprises among the foods range from palm hearts to squirrel; juxtapositions of old and new include wheat and bitter oranges near fully-formed pimientos; and Christian must-haves like suckling pig sit alongside old-fashioned peacocks and duck, once a Muslim speciality. Among the bounty is an alms purse full of coins, selected poor foods — acorns, garlic, chestnuts and carobs, probably rarely eaten by anyone who worked in the sacristy, but no rye or barley -— and, at the apex of it all, humble platefuls of bread and small fish.

Estévez is enthused as he writes from Andalusian sources ranging from Galenic philosopher Avenzoar to fourteenth-century doctor Juan de Aviñon, and from twentieth-century food writer Manuel Ferrand to historian Gregorio García-Barquero López, a specialist in city food supply. He walks on rock, avoiding generalist Spanish food history that is not city-specific. Refreshingly, he also avoids the art historical *imaginario*, distinguishing the messages in context here. Sweet pastries reveal religious alliances and set symbolic arrangements; sharpened knives beside plucked raw poultry emphasize the sacrifice of life. Some plates suggest recipes – say, a *pepitoria* of poultry feet, necks and offal – or the chain of being, as, for example, in birds pecking fruit off a tree. When Estévez finally turns to interpretative theories, he avoids hasty conclusions, suggesting the sculptures emerged from dynamics of conflict and consensus.

Absent from the bounty, for example, are maize associated with non-Christian New World diets, and, more surprisingly, olives and olive oil fundamental to Andalusian diet even before the Romans settled here. These were avoided, Estévez suggests, for their intrinsic links to the food cultures of the Moriscos and expelled Jews, and yet the key cultural shaker behind the commissioning of the sculptures was Baltasar del Río, himself a cleric of *converso* Jewish origin. Never fully accepted in his home city, Seville, where his father had been burned at the stake, he enjoyed the papacy's support, which helped him to create the humanist group of thinkers, many *conversos*, who met regularly at a *cofradía*, or brotherhood, to talk and plan the purchase, storage and provision of food for the hungry. Estévez believes the arch honoured this work. He closes, then, by endorsing and expanding on an earlier historian's idea that the sculptures celebrate food alms, but by this time our journey round Seville's food culture economy, its wealth and poverty and complexities, means they are far more to us than Renaissance aesthetics.

What we lack in this richly detailed picture of a city's food culture and its art, in this case a valve at the point of cultural conflict, is an account of the famines galvanizing the humanists to work within the food economy. But that is, perhaps, is another history for a future readership.

Vicky Hayward