

a nutshell or three. The redoubtable Tam, her husband, and Di have driven their equally redoubtable barge the *Friesland* round the canals of northern France for years and years and this book distills the culinary essence of their journeys, expressed as a single season's *trajet* from Cambrai to Auxonne, north of Chalon on the Saône. As readers will know from outings in these pages, Di Murrell writes in a relaxed and pleasing manner and her cookery is in much the same style. Her encounters with producers and shops are always instructive, as too her exchanges with lock-keepers, and they translate into recipes that often retain the tang of locality while rarely straining towards the far horizons of crazed elaboration – her kitchen is on a barge, not in a château. This is a companionable book, which is high recommendation. The illustrations by Kathleen Caddick add a nice froth to the coffee. I must say that reading this makes one think that there are worse ways to spend one's time than chugging along to the next portion of *foie gras*. And for impecunious bargees, the Murrells seem to drink an astonishing amount of very high-class Champagne. Maybe their cargo is of a higher value than one first assumes.

Letitia Clark: *Bitter Honey. Recipes and stories from the island of Sardinia*: Hardie Grant Books, 2020: 255 pp., hardback, £26.00.

Despite the mountain of books on Italian food and cuisine published in recent decades, one region of the country has been largely neglected. If lucky it's the last in a series of chapters in books on Italian regional cuisines (*The Food of Italy*, by the late, great Waverley Root and Claudia Roden's book of the same title are among the few to do it justice). *Bitter Honey* helps redress this imbalance. *Bitter Honey* is not, as its author cheerfully admits, a history of Sardinian food and cuisine but rather the story of a personal encounter, a love affair – indeed, two love affairs, that with Sardinia and its food enduring. Nor is it a conventional cookbook. Recipes are interspersed with anecdotes, quotations, explanations and descriptions, and almost every page is enhanced with Matt Russell's sun-drenched and evocative images. The bitter honey of the title is a speciality of the island, derived from the blossoms of the strawberry tree (*Arbutus*) and used to drizzle over Sardinia's signature dessert, *Seadas*, small deep-fried pastries filled with fresh pecorino. Disillusioned by cooking in a professional kitchen, Letitia Clark was introduced to Sardinia and its food during a brief visit for one of its colourful festivals, and soon returned to make the island her home. Again and again, she stresses the essential simplicity of Sardinian food with its reliance on relatively few basic ingredients – meat and game, wheat, cheese and vegetables – and its maxim of minimum stress, maximum pleasure. Her recipes, either typical of Sardinia or associated with her experiences there, are proof: bread, butter and anchovies; roasted pecorino, walnuts and honey; pasta and potatoes in broth; baked chicken with citrus, fennel, white wine and olives; suffocated cauliflower. *Ciambellone* (Yoghurt Cake) is not only simple but also

the ultimate foolproof recipe. Above all, *Bitter Honey* is a cheerful book about enjoying food rather than perfecting it – and a timely reminder that limited larders are no impediment to the pleasures of eating well.

BARBARA SANTICH

Gigi Baraldi: *Food Wise: A Whole Systems Guide to Sustainable and Delicious Food Choices*: North Atlantic Books, 2020: 242 pp., paperback, £14.67.

The premise of *Food Wise* is simple: in choosing what we eat we should stop, think, and then act. Our ability to make such choices must be based upon knowledge, experience, good judgement and an understanding of our food systems – where it comes from, how it is grown, who grows and supplies it. Baraldi wants us to question the vested interests of those who make, manage, market and advertise food products. The result of such questioning and our response will be to make ourselves healthier and food systems more environmentally sustainable. Her mission is to encourage us all to choose what we eat using her FoodWISE maxims: ‘W’ – ‘Whole’: we should try to eat only whole food – the less processed the better. ‘I’ – ‘Informed’: we should make it our business to know where our food comes from; how it is produced; the distance it has to travel, etc. ‘S’ – ‘Sustainability’: supporting a system of production that maintains and, ultimately, enhances food producing resources. ‘E’ – ‘Experience’: upon which one bases one’s thinking. All laudable, and the way in which she sets them out in this primer is principally aimed, one suspects, at her own youthful students; her aim – to encourage them to stop and consciously consider the food that they are eating. The book has a relaxed, easy-to-read style and is, I think, purposely meant to feel ‘non-academic’. She comprehensively covers all the arguments for the position she takes, from those about who grows the food to environmental and social considerations of the means of production and how food is consumed. She then discusses the ways one might establish a new relationship with food both globally and on a personal level.

The points she makes about sustainability are well known and an accepted part of the environmentalist canon; nothing to argue with there. I found the way she invites her audience to interpret her FoodWISE philosophy rather more curious. She sets out her stall by way of gentle encouragement and accepts falls from grace with equanimity; she recognizes the fallibility of her readers although it does seem perverse, in a book advocating the eating of whole foods as the single most important contribution an individual can make to encourage sustainability and improve their own personal health, to suggest *not* that one should avoid the processed hotdog, its mass-produced bun, and factory-made relish altogether but, rather, to either ditch the bun and pour more relish on the dog, or just ‘slather’ the bun in butter and eat later! If nothing else the eater will be ‘Informed’ about the contents of their toxic meal. There is no doubt that,