

Rich Tea Biscuit and the more exotic Tamarind Tart based on an eighteenth-century recipe by Charles Carter. Ysewijn also takes the reader on a foray over the border to Scotland recreating often overlooked recipes like yum-yums and the Aberdeen buttery rowie (described as having ‘the richness of a croissant with the bonus extra heartiness through the addition of lard’). Ysewijn clearly loves the culinary history of Britain. Like her first book *Pride and Pudding*, the provenance behind each recipe has been meticulously researched but is succinctly summarized in the introductions accompanied by an infectious enthusiasm which cannot help but kindle a desire to turn your hand at some of our nation’s traditional bakes. Yes, the photography is exquisite but in a homely, appealing way ensuring they look achievable rather than the puffed and preened pâtisserie that appears in some baking books. You may well ask whether there is room for another book on baking in the cookbook market. I would say wholeheartedly ‘yes’. *Oats in the North* takes a nuanced look at British baking and reminds us Brits of some of the everyday classics we take for granted. For that reason alone it deserves its place.

SAM BILTON

Elizabeth Romer: *Beppina and the Kitchens of Arezzo, Life and Culinary History in an Ancient Tuscan City*: Prospect Books, 2020: 286 pp., paperback, £17.99. The author’s gift for friendship along with her professional skills as archaeologist and illustrator, make this, and her earlier book *The Tuscan Year, Life and Food in an Italian Valley*, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1984, a thoroughly enjoyable read. Silvana Cerotti in her remote Tuscan valley, and Beppina, an upper-middle-class housewife in late nineteenth-century Arezzo, are presented in their surroundings, the Tuscan landscape, formed by the centuries-old agriculture that fed the cities; and the townscape formed by the complexities of daily life, local politics and religion, and the daily routines of buying and cooking food, lavish or sparse. Elizabeth Romer introduces us to personalities we enjoy meeting, the benign avuncular Pellegrino Artusi, author of *La Scienza in Cucina et l’Arte di Mangiar Bene*, the acerbic Pietro Aretino, whose thoughts about food and eating are hardly known, the brilliant Francesco Redi (already the hero of Elizabeth David’s *Harvest of the Cold Months*, with his scientific approach to ice-cream making), Francesco Gaudenzio’s *Il Panunto Toscano* is mentioned for his use of *battuto* and *sofritto*. Romer’s book has over a hundred recipes, some embedded in the text, where their background story is part of the narrative, like the *zuppa Tarlati*, a creamy chicken soup, with a fair amount of tourist anecdote attached, which she deals with crisply, while most of them are in a section at the back. Her informal narrative recipes, in the style of Artusi and Beppina, are a joy to work from, after the bossy car-repair manual style of some publishers. Traditional Tuscan dishes like *ribollita* and *panzanella* are described in the setting of rural and urban family life rather than trendy tourist

restaurants, and she acknowledges the generosity of friends in Arezzo and the surrounding countryside in sharing their cooking heritage.

Romer is not unaware of the effects of the blandishments of the international food industry, and its devastating effects on how we shop and cook, and on agriculture and the landscape, and the response from the Slow Food movement to all this. Her books tell of how Tuscan food used to be, and in some places still persists. Both can be dipped into, or devoured as a full-course meal, but whenever Beppina's rich offerings and their surrounding erudition might call for some respite, the clear practical cooking of Silvana is the ideal foil. The sumptuous broth of urban Arezzo absorbed in the sturdy crumb and crust of rustic bread. A very fine *zuppa* indeed.

GILLIAN RILEY

Peter Brears: *Carry on Curating*. Charles David Books, 2020: 270 pp., paperback, price unknown, to be sought via the author, 4 Woodbine Terrace, Leeds LS6 4AF.

Many readers will know and respect Peter Brears' contribution to the study of British food history, whether through its architectural and physical context, the make-up and execution of actual dishes, the study of its artefacts, or in the elucidation of the documentary, literary, historical and societal background. He is a man of astonishing energy, knocking out books, papers, consultancy reports, the odd banquet and pig roast as readily as we mortals contemplate a daily trip to the newsagent. These are his memoirs, recounting a Yorkshire childhood and education, stalwart service in museums at Alton, York and Leeds, and later literary and consultancy work (such as that described in his article on the *Great Britain*, above). Peter takes no prisoners, instead lining his foes against the wall and polishing each of them off with a swipe of his claymore. It is an invigorating read which had me grateful not to be an elected representative in York or Leeds, or a limp-wristed hands-off museum administrator with no desire to dirty my hands with actual curating. It is a call to arms for those who love folk museums, teaching by example, historical re-enactment and actually handling the objects in your charge. It's a great read and highly recommended. I must ask Peter for his recipe for a long and *active* life.

Anne Willan: *Women in the Kitchen: Twelve Essential Cookbook Writers Who Defined the Way We Eat, from 1661 to Today*. Scribner, 2020: 306 pp., hardback, £20.00.

Anne Willan, the cover note informs us, has written more than thirty books, and, as we all know, has trained countless students who have gone on to glittering careers or made their families happier and better fed. Throughout her career, she has paid attention to food history, not least in *The Cookbook*