

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*

*Library Four Centuries of the Cooks, Writers, and Recipes That Made the Modern Cookbook* (2012) which at heart is a commentated catalogue of her and her late husband Mark Cherniavsky's own collection. In *Women in the Kitchen* she has identified a dozen women recipe writers and for each she has written a short biographical note before progressing to a handful of recipes from their works. These recipes she gives in their original and in her own tried and tested forms – useful when dealing with the seventeenth century, not so necessary with Alice Waters. The authors are for the most part American, although exceptions are made for the forerunners Hannah Woolley, Hannah Glasse and Maria Rundell. The biographies are short, but neither unhelpful nor unsympathetic, though sometimes quibbles might be raised (e.g. over Amelia Simmons, or Hannah Woolley's exact bibliography) that might have not arisen had more space been possible. But apart from the overall message (women do the hard work and write many of the best books), the true worth of this book lies in the recipes, which are admirable and admirably chosen.

Maryann Tebben: *Savoir-Faire. A History of Food in France*: Reaktion Books, London, 2020: 340 pp., hardback, £25.00.

This is a book that will please both Francophiles and Francophobes since its author is a bit of both. On the one hand, for Tebben, the French are expert in the field of gastronomy and have transformed the way we eat but, on the other, they are also experts in self-promotion giving the public the impression that they are much more important and influential than they actually are. As she puts it, 'The key to the dominance of French cuisine is not just the quality of the food, but the stories the French tell about it. And the French are excellent story tellers ... understanding the dominance of French cuisine in global food history requires a look beyond the facts, dates and statistics to include the tales invented, repeated, printed and published about those facts and dates.'

A case in point is the French use of the term *terroir*. She quotes Amy Trubek who calls the promotion of *terroir* in France 'a national project to preserve and promote France's much-vaunted agrarian past,' then Tebben adds, 'it certainly aligns with a belief in and nostalgia for the peasant farmer responsible for keeping France rooted to the soil. But *terroir* is also a marketing device for high-end wines, a protectionist measure aimed at defining France's borders and a means of excluding foods and influences deemed external to the French identity ... The present-day understanding of *terroir* used in the evaluation of French products vying for an *Appellation d'Origine Contrôlée* label goes a step further to include human expertise or *savoir-faire*, yet another French term encoding quality and talent. The French by their food tell the world the story of superiority, justifying a gastronomic legacy pre-ordained by natural resources, impossible to find anywhere else and accomplished with a long-standing tradition of French culinary genius, also naturally bred.'