

Darra Goldstein: *Beyond the North Wind. Russian Recipes and Lore*. Ten Speed Press, 2020: 308 pp., hardback, £25.00.

Darra Goldstein is a reliable guide to things Russian and this is a cookery book to treasure. It is not Moscow and mainstream but from the icy north – Murmansk, the Barents Sea, places like that. Almost every recipe provokes you to action, even if this means sprouting grain, cooking apple meringue for 6 hours, collecting 350 dandelion flowers for a syrup, or perfecting your rusty technique to turn out two dozen *pirozhki* (filled with sauerkraut and dried mushrooms in her version). This is the book to turn to for grain cookery, for interesting preserves and pickles, and for tasty things to do with beetroot. All these subjects are worth exploring. Darra's easy prose, and vast well of knowledge, help you painlessly along the track. The photographs (by Stefan Wettainen) inspire too. I have always been privately dismissive of this cookery, now, I'm converted.

Kirstine Richards: *The Seagull Hotel: 1945 Two Young Women Start a New Enterprise in Exmouth*. YouCaxton Publications, Oxford and Shrewsbury, 2016: 224pp., paperback, £10.00.

I had first learned of this book when my interest had been piqued by an article published in the *Spectator* in 1955 written by Raymond Postgate, the founder of the *Good Food Guide*. In it, he had listed a dozen provincial restaurants where, in his estimation, you could guarantee a 'definitely fine meal'. Many of his choices were the usual suspects, but I had never heard of the Seagull in Exmouth. A search for more information yielded details of this memoir. Postgate describes the restaurant thus: 'This, in Morton Street, is primarily an hotel, and restaurant-seekers must bear that in mind; unless they can order beforehand they must take the table d'hôte, and in the season children with parents come first. But Mrs. Richards's Danish and French food is outstanding. This year's successes: lobster Thermidor, scallops Périgourdines, and a properly made Wiener schnitzel. The wine list begins at a low price with a sound claret.' The account we have in the book under review was written some time after the event and published after the author's death by her two children. It tells the story of two women, the author, aged 33, and her German business partner, some six years younger. Kirstine Richards was of Anglo-Danish parentage who had, in her twenties, moved down from her native Edinburgh to the small Devon town of Honiton. There, she had run a successful café in the years before the War. Her partner-to-be, Gerdy, had joined the staff when she had been sent to safety in England by her worried parents in Bonn. Both women had then met and married two medical students who were holidaying in the district. Both women bore two children. Then both lost their spouses at the very end of the conflict: Kirstine's dying in Burma in 1945; Gerdy's in Hertford, where he had been tending the sick and wounded as a conscientious objector.