

James Whetlor: *Goat: Cooking and Eating*. Quadrille 2018: 208pp., hardback, £20.00.

The cover illustration of James Whetlor's *Goat* is wholly compelling, almost hypnotic in its intensity; the book is positively demanding to be held and its pages turned. I find myself staring into the eyes of the goat portrayed hoping vaguely that he is not the one who ended up in the steamed dumplings featured on page 110 or the kid *rendang* on page 60. I have spent time wondering whether he has been Photoshopped to perfection or simply groomed to the point that even the hairs of his little beard are totally symmetrical. I vow to one day get near enough to the real thing to check those features at close range. James's introduction is sadly all too short. One longs to know more about his day-to-day involvement with these clever animals; he clearly enjoys raising them and has a laudable mission to increase awareness about not just their fine eating properties but also the wider issues of waste in food production, exemplified here by the way that thousands of male goats are destroyed as a consequence of milk production. His plea to save them from this fate is eloquent and his argument to rear them instead for eating seems entirely logical. Obtaining kid meat is not yet easy and so it behoves both suppliers and consumers to create a demand in the marketplace. This is exactly what James is attempting to do with his book and anyone buying it with the intention of using it is contributing to that demand. His time with Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall at River Cottage has given him the confidence to turn his natural concerns about provenance, sustainability and animal welfare into his everyday way of life. Food politics aside, this is a book of well-researched recipes. Without doubt it is an advantage that this goat farmer is also a chef who has worked in some renowned London kitchens. He knows his stuff. I enjoyed making several of the recipes; they are simple, straight-forward and tasty. Do I have any criticisms, apart from not wanting to look Billy on the cover in the eye whilst finishing off the curried goat? Only one, its practicality: the overall size and shape plus the thickness of the pages makes this book difficult to use in a cooking situation. To keep the book open at a specific page one must weigh the pages down and I felt that if I tried to open it properly I would end up breaking the spine. Perhaps a paperback edition in slightly different format would solve this problem. Nevertheless recipes for cooking kid are not easily come by and for that reason it is worth adding it to your bookshelf. Returning to that cover yet again, on which one can read Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall's apposite quote, 'James knows an awful lot about goats' – I second that.

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