

Shaun Hill: *Salt is Essential, and Other Things I Have Learned from 50 Years at the Stove*: Kyle Books, 2017: 192 pp., hardback, £25.00.

A year or two for this to penetrate south Devon, but a book from the chef Shaun Hill is always welcome, in any kitchen. Recipes there are, but more entertaining are the thoughts dropped off the end of a long spoon of deep thoughts that whirr around chef's head as he knocks out another mouclade or Wiener schnitzel. The commentary is almost more rewarding than the instructions, but these are sound, generally feasible, and appetizing. His restaurant, of course, is the best way to experience the style.

Rowley Leigh: *A Long and Messy Business*: Unbound, 2018: 414 pp., hardback, £25.00.

Rowley Leigh's career has taken in working for the Roux brothers (including as chef at Le Poulbot), a great stint at Kensington Place restaurant, then a time of independence at Le Café Anglais in Whiteley's shopping space on Queensway. Along the way he has had an instructive and readable column in the *Financial Times*. He is one of that generation of intelligent British chefs who have made it a pleasure to eat out over the last 40 years. This is an Unbound book, the classy way to self-publish, underwritten by some 500 subscribers. The production is good, the photography by Andy Sewell eloquent, the one drawback being its astonishing weight – my arthritic wrists were barely able to support it: a candidate for that very bourgeois thing, a kitchen lectern. Certainly the recipes, arranged by calendar or season, supported by commentary and contemplations from his *FT* columns, are worth some time in the kitchen on that lectern. Their range is wide – from lobster to mackerel, lots of pasta, all the vegetables you can think of – and the techniques are within most of our capacities. He is as happy telling us how to roast potatoes as he is talking of langoustines and truffles. Excellent stuff.

Barbara Santich: *Wild Asparagus, Wild Strawberries. Two years in France*: Wakefield Press, 2018: 282 pp., paperback, £20.00.

The subtitle gives the game away. In 1978/80, John and Barbara Santich, together with their eighteen-month-old twins, left Australia for France. John had completed his geological PhD and might, if lucky, land a job with some university of other; Barbara was exploring the possibilities of writing about food and seeking to assuage her affection for and curiosity about the country that was their goal. They had plans to move around, to test several waters, although the intention was to remain on the southern side of the -d'oil/-d'oc divide. And so, in a series of short chapters – often punctuated by simple French recipes such as she sent back to the readers of the *Epicurean* and *Australian Gourmet* (the first she wrote under a pseudonym so she might ride two horses in the same race) – she gives a close and often matter-of-fact account of how the