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Then there's the medieval Catalan recipe for aubergines, *Albergínies a la morisca*, which is unusual in its use of coriander. The fact that all seven of the cooked eggplant recipes in *Scents and Flavors* use coriander, fresh leaves and seeds, supports an Arab derivation. Several other recipes in this thirteenth-century collection could also serve as the source of or inspiration for subsequent European dishes, such as the recipe for *Al-dinnaf*, nougat in all but name.

These few examples serve to demonstrate the significance of *Scents and Flavors* to European culinary historians, though this is almost secondary to its value as a depiction of a different face of Islamic culture, a society that developed and cultivated a discerning art of eating based on the appreciation of sensual pleasure.

Barbara Santich

Vicky Hayward: *New Art of Cookery, a Spanish friar's kitchen notebook by Juan Altamiras*, Rowman & Littlefield, 2017: 294pp., hardback, £24.95
Vicky Hayward: *Nuevo Arte de la Cocina Española de Juan Altamiras*, traducción de Cristina Macía, Ariel, 2017: 494pp., hardback, £32.35

This book is a thundering good read. Start at the beginning with Vicky Hayward's Introduction then let yourself be carried on by her vivid narrative, in spite of the irksome obstacles in our way due to the publisher's incompetent typography and sloppy editing. Juan Altamiras was just a pen-name on a title page until Hayward brought him to life, and now, after years of research and wandering along bramble infested footpaths, talking to cooks and friars, archivists and historians, shop-keepers and market people, and then getting to work in her own kitchen, she introduces us to a quirky and warm-hearted individual and his inspired cooking. His text is almost untranslatable, with its vernacular and obsolete expressions, deploying familiar culinary terms along with procedures we no longer use, interspersed with sometimes baffling little jokes. It takes the skills of an investigative journalist, the insights of a novelist and the intuitions of a good cook to unravel the narrative and explain the gastronomy. Hayward does this by following Altamiras's text as he published it. First the title of the recipe, and her version of this title, followed by a straight translation of the text of the recipe, then her comments on the background or contents, and finally her version of the recipe, often with input from chefs and home cooks. Thus the story of Altamiras unfolds, as landscapes, place names, ingredients, and cooking methods in the recipes yield up clues, eventually revealing the author as Raimondo Gómez, a Franciscan friar in La Almunia, in the south-west of Aragon. To say more would spoil it for the reader, who can look forward to enjoying two versions of the work, the English translation reviewed here, and the Spanish language edition, which gives us access to Altamiras's text as he wrote it, along with Hayward's commentary, and is having a huge success in Spain at the moment. It is well

worth while getting copies of both versions, even for those of us with only basic menu Spanish.

Hayward's diligent research and chance encounters, with her fluent Spanish and warm smile, enrolled a huge congregation of friends and collaborators, explaining and enhancing the recipes and their background. I remember discussing with Vicky some years ago the challenges of finding a voice for the personality behind the recipes, how colloquial or quirky dare one be in a translation, and how a word by word, phrase by phrase version is not always an accurate rendering. We thought of the translations of Scappi and Platina and Martino by distinguished academics, and wept gently at the lack of down-to-earth kitchen knowledge and experience. Spit roasting over a fire, rather than before or in front of it; confusing bacon, cured back fat, dripping and lard; or muddling technical terms, slicing, dicing or chopping.

How to bring to life a totally unknown cook? Wiser heads than mine suggested that Vicky go straight to primary sources, and also talk to Franciscan friars. The result is a brilliant breakthrough in understanding the background to Altamiras's cooking and his approach to food. He was a hands-on but also literate cook, providing a comforting and sustaining diet for his mendicant order of Franciscan friars, who needed health and strength rather than self-denial as they worked in the outside world, travelling, preaching and helping the poor. The awesome bibliography and footnotes reveal a fascinating range of sources and contacts, and it is virtually a crime against humanity that the publisher has hidden these away at the end of the book, without even the necessary cross-references for the reader to locate these notes, instead of at the foot of the page as nature intended. Many academic texts have a running heads saying 'between pages 104–112', or whatever, which is a clear indication; here you need about five thumbs to keep your place, locate the notes at the end of the book, find the chapter, and then the note, if you have remembered its number (set here in too small a size of superior numerals, which could and should have been dealt with) and then get back to your place in the text. And the Spanish edition is even worse, dumping the notes at the end of the book, without any clear link to each chapter. What is infuriating is the loss of not just the references to sources, but necessary information needed to explain and enhance assertions in the text. Bad editorial practice. For example, the passage about fancy 'cape-work' in cooking is a reference to the conventions of bull-fighting, and the long explanatory note, when you manage to catch up with it, is really interesting.

The distinction between the translation of the recipe, in narrative form, and the translator's comments and working version of it, is not sufficiently clear in the typography of the English text. For example the ingredients in the working version should have been presented in the accepted modern convention, as a list followed by the method, rather than following Altamiras's sometimes

rambling narrative form. This would not have taken up more space. (Go do the math!)

So calm down and carry on, back to the recipes, which are wonderful. Altamiras was cooking in a down-to-earth everyday way, his use of local ingredients both traditional and innovative. Aristocratic French cuisine was predominant in courtly households in eighteenth-century Spain, but hardly appropriate for friars and the rest of us, so Altamiras's frugal but tasty cooking was neither elitist, nor *cocina pobre*, but modest food for those of modest means. He was clever enough to take what he wanted from the conventions of French cookery, names of dishes, procedures and sometimes ingredients , and shake them by the scruff of the neck to get his own versions. Altamiras would have been delighted with the way young chefs are doing this today with recipes of his fed to them by Hayward. These seem to be 'now' as well as 'then' and their imaginative use of very few ingredients and seasonings is refreshing and not a bit quaint or pseudo-historical.

There are over a dozen recipes for salt cod, *abadejo*, which he calls *da poco sostantia*, meaning a lowly or insignificant ingredient, which he used a lot, being cheap and plentiful, coming up with imaginative recipes to ring the changes. Try the one where soaked and softened salt cod is simmered a short time in a mixture of olive oil, garlic, tomato, orange and parsley, seasoned with saffron and crushed black peppercorns. It is simple and superb. Now we are in the thick of marmalade time and Seville oranges abound, try this recipe with some thin slices of bitter orange, peel, pith and all.

Partridges stuffed with salted sardines or anchovies and pot-roasted with tomatoes, seasoned with black pepper and parsley, are delicious. His lamb stews are never ordinary, for example, started off with chopped onion sweated in diced ham fat, braised slowly then simmered with a little water, and finished with masses of chopped parsley, mint and dark green lettuce leaves, and served with a sprinkling of spices and some lime or bitter orange juice.

Rabbit cooked with peppercorns, garlic and parsley, then finished with capers, bay leaves and lime, flavoured with some cloves and cinnamon, is similar to a modern Catalan recipe.

Chickpeas simmered with salt cod and served with chopped cooked greens, the cooking liquid thickened with beaten eggs and ground hazelnuts, is another traditional dish.

Altamiras's fish recipes are inventive, with a subtle use of spices and flavourings.

When the church ordained that so many days in the year were meat free, and often dairy and fish free as well, for all of society, not just the religious orders, vegetables needed to be healthy as well as tasty. Altamiras enjoyed cooking them in ways that we now recognize as nutritionally well-balanced, with flavour bursts of umami, and lavish use of what for him were two cheap

and plentiful local ingredients – rich fruity olive oil and saffron. Pulses, green vegetables, roots (including potatoes), gourds, onions and garlic, herbs and seeds, and moderate amounts of spices, are all used imaginatively, and artichokes, cheap and versatile, have many recipes. Altamiras tends to use tomatoes with discrimination as flavouring; they must have had a sharp, sweet, fruity tang, an alternative to lemon or bitter orange juice.

'Cook's instincts may reveal untold stories' says Hayward as she pulls together threads from Altamiras's culinary past, with its roots in medieval and Arab cuisine, and our own future, with its gastrophysics and oral referrals, to spin a yarn, in every sense of the phrase, that we can only put down to escape into the kitchen, and enjoy this careful, funny, delicious cooking.

Gillian Riley

Lizzie Collingham: *The Hungry Empire: How Britain's Quest for Food Shaped the Modern World*: Bodley Head, 2017: 400 pp., hardback, £25.00.

In *Hungry Empire*, Lizzie Collingham makes the case that 'Britain's quest for foodstuffs gave rise to the British Empire.' To that end, '[e]ach chapter opens with a particular meal and then explains the history that made it possible.' Collingham has told an interviewer she intends the conceit to attract readers. 'I try to tell them about real people in particular situations and how the food demonstrates why they were there and what they were doing and how these stories come together.'

To her immense credit, Collingham is a fluid writer who avoids the overwritten and needlessly obscure jargon that plagues much academic history. Unfortunately, however, there is a debit side to her methodology, and the premise underlying *Hungry Empire*, that the search for food fuelled the imperial project, cannot withstand scrutiny.

'Food,' as Collingham herself observes, 'was only one among the many commodities – textiles, dyestuffs, tin, rubber and timber – that flowed into Britain.' Britain imported food for the same reason it imported other commodities, to maximize the profit from its unrivalled manufacturing sector, but Collingham nowhere alludes to the doctrine of comparative advantage, an aspect of trade, not empire, that drove its economic strategy.

Conflating empire not only with trade and especially free trade, but also with capitalism (variously 'brutal' or 'rapacious'), commercial agriculture and the industrial revolution, Collingham conjures a unitary engine of exploitation, oppression, misery and death, in the home islands and throughout not only all the imperial possessions but everywhere another nation or culture encounters the British abroad.

Even something as broadly beneficial as repeal of the Corn Laws was, in conjunction with the availability of cheap sugar, but a means of exerting social control: 'The repeal of the Corn Laws and the supply of foreign wheat