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a long succession of food scares – from pesticides and chemical additives to animal fat and cholesterol – has left individuals being 'forced to navigate alone through the stormy sea of food fears' (p. 229), and if their compass is nutritional rationale rather than tradition and custom, the result is more likely to be individualized diets.

Since most diets, even a self-selected pre-summer diet, are exclusionary, the prospects for the continuance of traditional commensality are not rosy. Estelle Masson suggests that digital sharing – Instagram and the like – could replace physical sharing, though I fail to understand the equivalence. Her other suggestion is far more attractive, though I fear it verges on the utopic: that by establishing new criteria for selection of foods, namely freshness, quality and seasonality, and by revaluing meal preparation, individuals could regain control of their food and maintain the sociability of eating together.

As is usually the fate of any edited collection of conference papers, *Selective Eating* is somewhat uneven in quality, but the book provides great service in offering such a comprehensive overview of a contemporary phenomenon.

Barbara Santich

Mary-Anne Boermans: *Deja Food. Second helpings of classic British dishes*: Square Peg, 2017: 352 pp., hardback, £20.00.

Readers of *PPC* will be familiar with Mrs Boermans's enthralling forensic analyses of British dishes, and need only refer to earlier pages in this issue for yet another instalment. They may also be aware of her arrival on the scene via *The Great British Bake Off* and her previous book *Great British Bakes*. What we have in this new title is a wide selection of historic recipes re-worked and re-presented for the modern cook. Each dish sports a short introduction, sometimes concentrating on the source, others on the author's own views of the matter in hand. There are a few twentieth-century recipes but in the main the sources date from the seventeenth to the nineteenth centuries, although the odd medieval one does appear. The publisher, and the author too, will have been aware of a delicate balance to be struck between the needs of the cook on the Clapham omnibus and interests of people like us, readers of *PPC*. My comments relate to this latter group. The connection between recipe and source is not always as clear as it could be, and the list of sources stops short of mentioning whether the original book is still available to the modern reader as a facsimile or online version (a selfish point, I know, as several are Prospect Books titles, but it might be helpful for the tyro historical cook). The recipes are not printed in their original form but only as Ms Boermans's versions. There's no doubt that it is encouraging to see that a practising cook has managed a workable and attractive product (often usefully photographed too) but it might also be quite helpful to see from what she developed her interpretation. The nub of the matter, however, is that here are gathered a few score of really good

recipes, offering a great range of old English flavour combinations. There are some real winners, both for the grand occasion and the family supper (I have earmarked duck braised with turnips and green peas, red cabbage braised with sausage meat, and potted cheese for immediate consumption). Had the recipes been more economically laid out, we could have had more historical discussion, which I must admit I hungered for. But the author's desire to place these dishes before a new and, I hope, receptive audience is to be applauded. (The lack of accents on *Deja* is as the publisher intended.)

Francesca Orestano and Michael Vickers, eds.: *Not Just Porridge: English Literati at Table*: Archaeopress Publishing, Oxford, 2017: 180 pp., paperback, £20.00.

This is a collection of essays by Italian scholars of English that were the excellent outcome of a series of gatherings, hosted by the Department of Foreign Languages of the University of Milan, in the 'attic cells of a former convent'. The tone and language are refreshingly free of scholar-speak, indeed some of the pieces read like a sixth-former's essay, with narrative and laying-out of the facts to the fore. The literary figures discussed include Samuel Johnson, Jane Austen, Mrs Beeton, Dickens, Henry James, Arnold Bennett, Joyce, Virginia Woolf, A.A. Milne, Roald Dahl and Helen Fielding. There are occasional lapses in understanding of British habits (the account of Dr Johnson seems to muddle luncheon and dinner; I was not clear whether the author of 'Tea (and lots of honey) in the Hundred Acre Wood' was describing the right sort of malt extract favoured by Tigger), but the summaries of what their respective subjects think or do about food are of interest. One might question how much influence *The Origin of the Species* really exerted on the structure of Mrs Beeton's handbook; but be very amused by the account of Henry James's adoption of Fletcherism, the crazy theory put forward by Horace Fletcher that everything should be chewed innumerable times until the goodness was extracted and the fibrous material spat out. James was a slow eater.

Allan Jenkins: *Plot 29*: Fourth Estate, 2017: 252 pp., hardback, £14.99.

This memoir by the editor of the *Observer Food Monthly* has deservedly received rave notices. Although sometimes presumed a food book, perhaps because of the author's position, it is not that at all. It began life as a journal of a year on a north London allotment: its therapeutic value, the progression from seed to fruition, the cameraderie, the routine and the beauty. Biological diversity would be provided by accounts of periods spent on a London rooftop terrace (all in pots) and beside the North Sea on a plot of woodland in Danish Jutland. But what might have been a pleasing contemplation of the joys of gardening is subverted, but at the same time enhanced, by the progressive intrusion of the author's memories of a fractured childhood and an account of his present-day