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in very hot olive oil, are ousted by a northern Cantabrian hotel recipe, *tortilletas*, in which the original liquid batter, baby shrimp in shell and frying in very hot olive oil just disappear. A second example falls a few pages earlier: *menestra*, the Navarrese market-garden dish of spring or winter vegetables, sublime at its best when cooked in olive oil, with a little liquid added if needed – simple and highly nutritional – becomes a Madrid panaché of individually blanched vegetables in a lightly flour-thickened sauce of vegetable stock decoratively finished with roasted red peppers and mint. The originals of both dishes, built around techniques for cooking in olive oil, simply go unmentioned. Cultural snippets covering the origin of tapas and the ingredients of Spanish sauces are often similarly anecdotal.

Does such rewriting of a food culture matter? Last year's Spanish twitter storm set off by Jamie Oliver's version of paella with chorizo – worth a browse for its wit, culinary points, strength of feeling and variety of voices – suggests it can do when viewed from the food culture in which a transplanted dish was born and is still alive and well. London restaurant critics may argue that such ideas about authenticity are overly protective, bogus, even nationalist and they may be right when talking about an ephemeral menu, even a tweet, but it is unnerving if not downright misinformation when rewritten versions of dishes are put in print without any reference to the original and sold as 'The True Food of Spain', especially so soon after Claudia Roden's book *The Food of Spain* showed that traditional, modern and avant-garde versions of Spanish dishes can all be held together and enjoyed with respect and understanding.

Ironically, the narrowing of knowledge that accompanies this whittling down of a repertoire to what suits tastes elsewhere is at least as unhelpful to avant-garde as more old-fashioned cooks. For if food matters, so, too, does food memory and its extraordinary potential for enriching tomorrow's dishes and menus.

Vicky Hayward

Wendy Wall: *Recipes for Thought: Knowledge and Taste in the Early Modern English Kitchen*, University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016: xii–312pp., hardback, £60.00.

This book uses early modern recipe books, printed and manuscript, in order to examine how the texts engaged with the intellectual and cultural preoccupations of the time. The sub-title is misleading: there is not much about the kitchen, unless we take the widest possible meaning of the term, to include the stillroom. This is not an examination of culinary history: as Wall says, her interest is not in the history of 'diet *[sic]*', but in the nature of the recipes themselves. She suggests that the interface of reading, writing and cooking produced a form of domestic activity which was not confined to practical work, but extended to an engagement with such questions as the construction

of knowledge and the scientific method, and more metaphysical speculations about permanency and mortality, abstraction and matter. This places Wall's book in line with the current wave of works about cooks' involvement in the philosophical debates of the day, such as Sean Takats' *The Expert Cook in Enlightenment France* (2011). It must be said at once, however, that Wall's book is rather better: her analyses demonstrate the interest of these household texts when subjected to close scrutiny.

Wall begins with the historical framework. The early sections (preface, introduction, and the first chapter on 'Taste Acts') offer a slightly new angle on already well-rehearsed histories of the printed works, charting recipe books' shift from the closet to the kitchen, and redefining their readership from the well-to-do in the earliest period to the servant in the later eighteenth century. There are interesting, albeit brief, developments about the dynamic nature of early modern reading practices (30–31), and about the ethos of the recipe books, such as their representations of cookery as art or household management (35–44), although these debates were perhaps not quite as 'heated' as Wall suggests. It is regrettable that these sections of the book are riddled with mistakes which demonstrate her ignorance of the basic bibliography. Her claim that 'England got in the game of recipe publication early and with great intensity' (xii) is nonsense. In Germany and Italy, recipe books were published earlier and in far greater numbers than in England – in the period up to 1599, the figures for all editions are 58 for Germany, 65 for Italy, and 24 for England. France is dismissed with the mention of a non-existent '1560 Grand Cuisiniere *[sic]*' (6). Nor were English books the first to be aimed explicitly at all levels of society and at women, as Wall asserts (6): that happened first in Germany. Wall claims repeatedly that in England, recipe books 'flooded the market' (7, 24, 67) between 1573 and 1630. For this period, *ESTC* lists a total of 16,617 publications, with 210 editions of medical and 46 of culinary works. Even if one corrects *ESTC*'s omissions in the culinary list, the total is still only 57. Well under half a percent is not 'flooding the market'. Wall failed to consult Henry Notaker's authoritative bibliography, *Printed Cookbooks in Europe, 1470–1700* (2010), absent from her bibliography. Nor has she used *ESTC*. Hannah Glasse's bestseller is said to have gone through 'over 20' editions between 1747 and 1847 (48). Over 40 would be nearer the mark, nor was Glasse 'eventually […] outed' as the author, since she inserted her own trade card and signature into the 1751 edition.

Historical accuracy sometimes goes by the board. Periods are collapsed when convenient: Charles *[sic]* Lamb and Charles Carter, whose books are dated 1710 and 1730 respectively, are enlisted into the ranks of the Restoration cooks whose texts display nostalgia for 'pre-civil war noble hospitality' (38). Such inaccuracies continue in following chapters: the *Forme of Cury* is certainly not the 'earliest extant manuscript recipe book in England' (79); the promotion

of frugality in recipe books does not really begin 'after midcentury [1650]' (68), but rather later. Seventeenth-century French classicism is said to have rejected not only the baroque, but also, with remarkable prescience, rococo (98). There are other examples of carelessness, in dates and edition numbers (51, 54), and in descriptions of contents: Robert May's recipes go much further than the 'standard puddings and boiled meats' (75) Wall attributes to him. It is odd that a book based on close readings of the texts should so often lapse into these errors. For a literary scholar, Wall can be curiously inaccurate in her use of language. Original texts are sometimes mistreated: a frontispiece caption is misquoted and misinterpreted (49); Voltaire is quoted in a poor translation from 1901 – and the translation is not by Smollett, as Wall states in her bibliography – which distorts what he wrote: Voltaire says nothing about 'high seasoning and curious dishes' (58). Later, lines from *All's Well* are given differently on facing pages (242–243). In her own prose, Wall has occasional bizarre lapses: stillrooms were never the 'provenance' of women (248); 'a phenomena' (257) suggests haste in compiling the notes, an impression which is confirmed when one finds that some notes do little to illuminate the point being made (198, n. 73, 226 n. 41). These inaccuracies are sufficiently numerous to be a source of annoyance for the reader.

The next chapters are more substantial. 'Pleasure' takes the term 'conceit', applied in poetry and the arts as well as in recipe books (to designate both the recipe and the dish) as a starting-point to argue for the intellectual as well as the practical content of recipes. The comments on food and the transformation of ingredients concentrate almost exclusively on the foods of the banquet course, with their interplay between nature and artifice, show and substance. Wall makes much of May's 'Triumphs and Trophies in Cookery' to underline the transformational nature of cookery, seeing the food-as-spectacle as itself becoming a form of narrative as the spectators discuss and relive the spectacle. She presents the more modest culinary artifice of marchpane and sugar-work imitations of nature as authorizing women to take on the attributes of the professional cook, and by reference to Jonson's Poet and Cook in his *Neptune's Triumph*, the housewife thus becomes 'a home philosopher and poet' (82). This is a sign of the author's tendency to inflate the significance of interesting parallels. Each individual observation is well-made, but one feels a little uneasy about the scope of the conclusions. Similarly, the anachronistic use of the term 'void' to refer to the early-Stuart banquet, in order to emphasize the insubstantiality of sugar-work which would be broken and eaten, seems to take word-association too far. But Wall raises numerous questions about the social, moral and even political implications of the domestic practice of confectionery. She also very rightly points out the pleasure of the edible conceits, not only at the table, but also on the pages of the cookbooks, where the reader might be alone in fully appreciating the wit of the transformation, and she emphasizes

the intimate connection between reading and cooking in the early modern period.

Chapter 3, on 'Literacies', examines the connections between learning to write recipes, and making the recipes to produce food, although again, that food is almost entirely banqueting stuff. Wall is critical of restrictive definitions of literacy – and in its standard definition, research since David Cressy's early work has shown that literacy is a spectrum with innumerable variables. Here, Wall makes a forceful case for the involvement of women owners, rather than scribes, as the writers of manuscript recipe collections, and for the function of the text as instruction for educated penmanship as well as cookery. She also emphasizes the shared tools and hand-skills involved in writing, making fanciful shapes in confectionery, and carving, and from here goes on to discuss at length the interplay between letters in confectionery (as shapes and inscriptions on marchpane) and letters in the more conventional form of printed text. She extends the notion of literacy to include women's needlework, following Susan Frye's *Pens and Needles* (2010), as well as confectionery. Whether all 'tactile handiwork' (117) in the home should be included as a form of literacy is more debatable; equally, literacy was certainly amongst the desirable attributes of the ideal housewife, but did that make literacy a form of housework? Wall's conclusion that domestic recipe writing and making subverted the regulatory nature of prescriptive manuals, is rather contradicted by her earlier demonstration of the playful nature of many of the confectionery recipes in printed books, which hardly offer an image of dull subservience to the text.

The chapter on 'Temporalities' is perhaps the least convincing. One reason is the inflated language which characterizes this chapter more than others. Hyperbole is all too evident: ideas or things "saturate" discourse or mentalities or even the world (172, 174, 179, 191, 198). Early seventeenth-century preserving did indeed seek to overcome the perishability of fruit, but this is expressed as 'preserves attenuated […] the problem of existing as beings in time' (170). Housewives did indeed need to know when to pick their herbs for remedies, in order to extract the maximum benefit from the plants, but this becomes 'humans were compelled to identify substances within their appropriate temporal location as the basis for a transformative knowledge' (171–2). Cooks were certainly expected to help keep their households healthy, with food as well as remedies, but were they 'conceptualized as preservers combating a cosmic time bomb' (189)? Where Wall deploys literary texts, her technique of extending the meaning of terms such as 'seasoning' becomes strained at times, as she strives to connect literary and domestic texts. The most convincing link is the vocabulary of alchemy, deployed as metaphor in poetry, and more directly in recipe books. But while playgoers, for instance, must have appreciated the food-based metaphors which are so frequently found in the theatre, how far did

they carry over this experience into their apprehension of domestic acts? When Wall turns to recipe writing as a form of memorialization, she deploys an array of manuscripts containing inscriptions which record the owner of a recipe collection and her family, but such inscriptions are far from universal; a point that Wall does not consider sufficiently is that manuscript recipe collections tended to change their character as they passed from one hand to another. What may have started as an organized *aide-mémoire* for making dishes and remedies may then be abandoned as such, ending up as a commonplace book containing scraps of poetry, sermons, prayers, reminiscences and doodles as well as the original recipes. Not all recipe books had a commemorative function. How far preserving food and preserving family memories are linked is a moot point.

The fifth chapter, on 'Knowledge', is more substantial. Annotations in manuscript recipe collections provide considerable evidence of women's involvement in the practice as well as the theory of cooking and remedy making, although the frequently used phrase *probatum est* does not 'saturate' manuscript recipe writing (218). And just as literacy was a continuum, so the practical knowledge derived from making shaded into the more experimental knowledge which sought to establish systemic theories from observation. Domestic recipe testing and improving also tended towards creating an ideally reliable formula. Wall draws very convincing parallels between the empirical science of the Royal Society and the textual codes imposed on the scientific community, and the activities of creating and recording knowledge in the recipes. In doing this, she challenges established narratives of the separation of scientific and domestic experiment and indeed of the spaces, laboratory and kitchen, where these experiments took place; this argument suggests a far more important engagement of women in the construction of knowledge than has been allowed by modern commentators. The chapter concludes with a rebuttal of potential criticism by historians of science, as they apply modern divisions of household spaces to the early modern world.

The book's 'Coda' I find applies anachronistic modern views of recipe functions to the past. She takes comments by Adam Gopnik about recipes as vectors of desire and disillusion (253) to develop her final claims about recipes' cultural and social importance, beyond the realm of practical instruction, and into the area of fantasy. Interestingly, this section seems to me to be peculiarly American in its underlying premiss: with the unspoken aspirations implicit in the very nature of cookbooks, we have another example of the American dream of self-improvement expressed in the culinary sphere, a point cogently made by Claude Fischler in his study of attitudes towards food, *Manger* (2007). This is a book which is full of interesting nuggets, at its best when it brings out parallels between writing and making, and when it makes the case for examining recipe books as artefacts as well as for their contents. It is less good when it develops

its examples at tedious length (the confectionery conceits of the banquet course, for instance), and when it tries too hard to make connections which are at best tenuous.

Gilly Lehmann

Colman Andrews: *The British Table: A New Look at the Traditional Cooking of England, Scotland and Wales*: Abrams, 2016: 328 pp., hardback, £ 30.00.
Anyone who knows much of anything about British food does not need this book for the recipes. For that reason alone it deserves a wide readership, especially in the United States. Andrews covers most of the iconic dishes of British tradition and covers them well, while also throwing in a few surprises. 'Parmo,' 'the culinary pride of Middlesborough,' apparently has been prepared since 1958 when an American chef fried a thin chicken cutlet dusted with breadcrumbs, gave it a smear of béchamel ('known locally as 'besh'), topped it with Cheddar and toasted the assembly in an oven. It is made in Britain and so, barely, qualifies as British, but Andrews' claiming Spaghetti Bolognese even in bastard form for the national canon constitutes more than a stretch.

More traditional dishes that may surprise readers of *The British Table* include saucermeat, which goes back centuries but has not gained much purchase outside the northern isles. Shetland cooks season ground fat beef or lamb in the vigorous early modern British style with a characteristic combination of allspice, cinnamon, clove, ginger, mace, black and white pepper, and salt. Andrews admits to underspicing his version 'to come up with something not too aggressively flavored,' which undercuts the point of the preparation, but at least he has found the dish, something akin to potted meat that could keep a long time with the original dose of spice and salt.

Andrews includes good recipes for potted foods, of rabbit, shrimp and Stilton, in his exemplary chapter on whets (a seventeenth-century term for salty starters) and savouries, along with other traditional after dinner delights; angels on horseback, mushrooms on toast, Welsh rabbit of course which, however, he misspells.

The British Table represents a creature of this aspirational era in which excess is expected of most culinary publications. Considerably less than half the book's bulk consists of the standard 150 recipe format; full page colour photographs from the founders of fashionable Canal House proliferate, personal anecdotes abound. At over a kilo and three quarters in weight and 28 by 24 by 3 centimetres in size it would be difficult to envision this thing spattered with gravy and grease from kitchen use, its spine split by the scrutiny of a serious cook. That would be a shame.

Andrews has not written *The British Table* for a scholarly audience – his prose is too good for that and he does not delve deep in his historical narratives – but even so wields a certain scholarship with a deft touch. His sources in a