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banal: a certain anomie perhaps. The structure and design, and the language, is aphoristic, pretentious, irrelevant and self-regarding. There are discussions (though that's stretching its meaning) of Heidegger, Vaneigem, Freud, the Marx Brothers, Garbo and Katherine Mansfield, some of which may take you to considerations of home, homeliness (hotels, the lack of), women's functions, marriage, aphonia and elevators. If you read the collected reviews on Amazon.com you will come away wiping your brow at the ambition and brilliance of it all. For myself, I wished I had spent the afternoon chopping logs.

Charmaine O'Brien: *The Colonial Kitchen: Australia, 1788–1901*: Rowman & Littlefield, 2016: 197 pp., hardback, £49.95.

The title suggests a book in the vein of Helen Leach's *The New Zealand Kitchen in the Twentieth Century* that takes the kitchen as organizing principle in a study of cooking, eating and family and social life. While it discusses the evolution of the kitchen, O'Brien's work is essentially a history of cooking and eating in Australia in the nineteenth century. Yet another Australian culinary history, one might exclaim – but all the more welcome, since each retelling brings forth new arguments, new evidence, new analyses, new perspectives. It is often only by applying a diversity of lenses that culinary history can deal with cultural complexity, the social, demographic, geographic and economic differences in any population.

O'Brien admits that her book is 'a general history of food in colonial Australia' (p. 56), but at the same time she challenges both the stereotype of a 'meat and damper' diet, prevalent though this might have been, and today's popular view of nineteenth-century Australian eating – and, by extension, nineteenth-century English cooking – as unexciting, unvaried, inherently plain and boring. Her vivid portrait of life in the colonies shows otherwise, from the acceptance of indigenous ingredients (some, if not all) to the vast array of fresh fruit available. Nor was it lacking in refinement; Melbourne's sophisticated Café de Paris opened in 1858, cookery classes began in 1875, and *service à la russe* was adopted over the course of the century.

At the same time the book pays due attention to the kitchen, from the campfire cooking of the First Fleet arrivals to the indoor hearth and, by the end of the century, the closed range and gas cooker. It also surveys the cooks who used them, and their skills – or lack thereof, especially if they had the misfortune to be Irish. The beneficiaries of culinary education, however, were respectable middle-class women who might apply the lessons in their own homes but who could also use these skills to earn a living.

Refuting the egalitarian stereotype, the author emphasizes class divisions in colonial Australia, although wealth rather than birth was the determinant. Manners, however, as well as *savoir vivre*, were also markers, as O'Brien illustrates with the example of Marcus Clarke's fictional visit to Nasturtium Villa.

The book shows a definite slant towards town life, although it has to be admitted that the majority of the population was urban, and has a tendency to overstate the emulation of British society in the Australian colonies. While many Europeans were 'replicating familiar and valued customs ... to make an unfamiliar place into a home' (p. 126), others were advocating a way of life and, in particular, a way of eating more in sympathy with the environment and climate. As early as the 1850s, for example, a menu of cold fowl, champagne and strawberry ice was seen as a commonsense alternative for Christmas dinner.

One of the strengths of this book is its wide-ranging research, including an impressive proportion of primary resources as well as nineteenth-century fiction. Insightful observations and lively prose enhance its appeal. Yet the book on Australian kitchens, taking actual historic kitchens as a starting point, remains to be written.

Barbara Santich

Wendy Wall: *Recipes for Thought: Knowledge and Taste in the Early Modern English Kitchen*: University of Pennsylvania, 2015: 328 pp., hardback, £53.99.
David Gentilcore: *Food and Health in Early Modern Europe*: Bloomsbury Academic, 2016: 264 pp., paperback, £25.99.
I reviewed these two books for the *TLS* the other month and this was the first draft of my text, later divided into two discrete items on the 'In Brief' pages. A longer review of Wendy Wall's book is promised by Gilly Lehmann, perhaps for the next issue.

> Although the art of cookery was long disdained by scholars as smacking of the animal, its incidental intellectual credentials are impressive. The recipe, an early and significant model of technical communication, is a form persistent in literate societies since at least the second millennium BC; and the cookery schools of early modern Britain were positive pioneers of female and practical education: Edward Kidder's establishments in London, for example, boasting as many as 6,000 alumnae in the first quarter of the eighteenth century. It is thus fitting that Wendy Wall should investigate the early modern English printed cookery book and the surviving manuscript recipe collections of scores of English housewives to discover not what they tell us about cookery but as keys to unlock the mindset and intellect of their compilers. This she does by exploring the parallels between forms of recipe writing and the recording of scientific experiments by members of the newly formed Royal Society – a link between the wider intellectual world and the private household that she might have deepened by comparing recipe collecting to the investigation and reporting of artisanal expertise by such figures as Sir Hugh Plat and John Evelyn, who undertook both activities. She uses recipes, too, as exemplars of female literacy on several levels, in