

## QUEEN'S PEPPER MIX FROM DENMARK

As we remain glued these winter months to the latest criminal television drama from Scandinavia, it seems fitting that a friend should send us from her foray into Tiger Stores (a firm started in Copenhagen in 1995 and now extending to 400 branches across Europe), a packet of Dronningens Peberblanding, or Queen's Pepper Mix, a combination of black and white peppercorns, coriander, allspice and mustard seeds. It is an intriguing blend of heat, sharpness and spice. It is excellent in stews or as a seasoning to something grilled.

## CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

Thanks to the final sentence of Blake Perkins's piece on Meg Dods, below, I am now aware of Cambridge University Press's facsimile reprint of her (or rather Mrs Johnstone's) *Cook and Housewife's Manual* (the second edition of 1827). This costs £34.99 paperback and is part of CUP's 'Cambridge Library Collection' of facsimiles ranging over the political, social and economic history of Britain and Ireland in the nineteenth century. They have also produced Alexis Soyer's *British Housewife* (£29.99); his *Gastronomic Regenerator* (£44.99); his *Culinary Campaign* (£35.00); his *Memoirs* by Volant and Warren (£24.99); Helen Morris's life of Soyer, *Portrait of a Chef* (£20.99); Escoffier's *Guide to Modern Cookery* (£49.99); Ude's *French Cook* (£34.99); and Mrs Rundell's *Domestic Economy* (£44.99). The Collection as a whole numbers 5,000 volumes across a range of disciplines. None of the titles I have investigated carries any supporting material, just the facsimile. CUP seems to be hiding its light under a bushel: the Ude book is not listed on Amazon.com save from another reprint publisher and Amazon.co.uk only offers it at £67.99 from a third party. Mrs Rundell, it might be added, is available for £12, with a nice foreword from Janet Morgan, from Persephone Books.

## COLIN PLATT

As so often, it is only when reading an obituary that you realize what you have missed. The historian and archaeologist Colin Platt, who died in July last year, proved to have spent the years after his retirement in a village not far distant from us, but the notice reminded me that I had never read one of his many books. I was impressed by his *Medieval England: A social history and archaeology from the Conquest to 1600 AD* (Routledge, first published 1978) which seeks to enrol two historical disciplines to a single purpose. I was very struck by some words in his preface to a new edition that appeared in 1994 and thought how apposite they were for food historians who also suffer from a certain separation of doing and thinking: those who seek to explain from artefacts, recipes and cooking, and those who rely on written and tangential, perhaps more intellectual, sources. Platt wrote, 'But all this [archaeological] activity has

yet to result in a fresh evaluation of history's place in archaeology and vice versa. In the meantime, historians too have moved fast. In just one area of mutual interest – the late-medieval parish and its church – there have been important recent contributions ... but there is little evidence that archaeologists have read them. The indifference is mutual and shows few signs of growing less. Among today's social historians, Christopher Dyer, David Palliser and Derek Keene are the rare exceptions in a long list of others ... who have shown not the smallest interest in archaeology. ... Yet – to revert to parish history – it is surely as absurd to study the fabric and furnishings of our late-medieval churches without reference to their social context, as to attempt to measure the intensity of contemporary religious feeling while remaining ignorant of the monuments it engendered.'

## GASTROPUBS

This year the Eagle, on Farringdon Road in London, once next to the offices of the *Guardian*, celebrates its twenty-fifth anniversary. It is often thought of as the first gastropub, a concept that comes in for a lot of abuse from some parties, and praise from many others. Of course, it was not the first pub to serve good food: that had been going on for centuries in one form or another. But there was a big shift in pub ownership during the 'eighties which meant that a different sort of person was getting involved in running pubs. Pubs, you might say, were going through the same sort of upheaval that the retail trade (specifically furniture and hardware) went through during the 'fifties: embourgeoisification in a word, but a different sort of bourgeoisie to the cravat-wearing, moustachioed middle class of the postwar years. I was amused to unearth a couple of paragraphs I wrote in the introduction to the 1990 *Good Food Guide* (published 1989) that seem relevant. It was headed, 'The possibilities of the pub,' and went on: 'There is, of course, one catering resource in existence that, suitably managed, could convert us to fun-loving, socially minded eaters out: the pub. As alcohol ceased to be consumed as part of the normal round of eating, so the pub – originally the tavern rather than the inn – was left as a one-armed provider, and one that pandered to a vice, in the eyes of many. It took many years for publicans to wake up to the possibilities of serving food. It has taken them still longer to realize the potential of *good* food. While our sister publication *The Good Pub Guide* this year lists some three thousand pubs where customers need not be afraid to eat, that still accounts for only one pub in 20. What happens in the other 19? There is little point in waxing too eloquent against their spongiform sandwiches, slimy sausages and woven shepherd's pies, served merrily and with clear conscience. They, like so many cafés, fast-food outlets, motorway service stations and chain hotels, are devoted to poor food because: a) they think their customers like it; and b)

many of their customers do like it. The notion that each side could be weaned from its prejudice does not occur. Yet as social habits change, and the licensing laws unbend, so the capacity for pubs to expand into full provisioning is growing. Before the licensed trade relaxes, however, thinking itself well on the way to successfully fulfilling a new role, it should consider some aggravating shortcomings. For one, surroundings. Why is 'pub' so often synonymous with counterfeit nostalgia, a refusal to have tables of a normal height, dreadful music, gaming machines and an urge to enclose the drinker/customer in some lurid womb of the brewer's imagination? For a second, standards. Good wine, good beer, fresh orange juice, fresh food and decent coffee are still rare finds. Third, company. Many pubs still do not allow, want, or would be suitable for the presence of children. Habits of mind and constraints of law need to be loosened and proper thought given to the reabsorption of pubs into our social fabric. All reports sent to the *Guide* on pubs showing the way with good food are most welcome.'

## MINOT (CÔTE-D'OR)

An issue or few ago I urged upon you a book by Yvonne Verdier, *Façons de dire, façons de faire, la laveuse, la cuisinière, la couturière* (Gallimard, 1979) and it was only my ignorance that meant I failed to appreciate this was part of a much larger collective ethnological investigation of the village of Minot in Burgundy by researchers from the CNRS (Centre nationale de la Recherche scientifique). I learned my lesson from another book about the village, by Françoise Zonabend, called *The enduring memory. Time and history in a French village* (translated by Anthony Forster, Manchester UP, 1980 – I think Verdier has not yet been translated). I have also now discovered that the various articles written by the four researchers have been gathered into a single volume by Les Editions de la Maison de la science de l'homme in 1990 (€32). Zonabend's book is full of thrills; particularly good on old peasant houses, old working routines, childhood and upbringing, and courtship rituals. Yvonne Verdier died young in a car crash. Her hometown was Melle in Poitou, where Ségolène Royal was once a municipal councillor, and close to the home of Andrew Dalby, esteemed contributor to *PPC*.

## PATRICK LEIGH FERMOR

I picked up by accident the book of correspondence between Patrick Leigh Fermor and Deborah, Duchess of Devonshire (née Mitford), called *In Tearing Haste* (ed. Charlotte Mosley, John Murray, 2008). It is more entertaining than one might expect; the two correspondents are impressive people. Leigh Fermor's flights of fancy are infectious (though I note his bottomless pit of anecdotage may have depended on constant note-taking and filing away for

future deployment); the Duchess copes with life magnificently and reveals herself as so much more interesting than you first presume. At any rate, PLF reports in 1959 on a visit to Capri and his failure to visit a 'dining cellar with the walls painted to simulate falling plaster were the curly-haired waiters repair the nylon cobwebs daily with a special solution and give a final whisk round with the dust-gun before opening time.' It is the prototype of all those 'Continental' restaurants and bistros in Chelsea and Pimlico: —

He served me some *ravioli*  
Under a cardboard ham,  
The shirt on his back was from Capri  
The hairs on his chest were sham  
And the apron across his codpiece  
Was the colour of strawberry jam.

'In Sloane St they call me Tonino  
In Sydenham they call me Ted'  
The hair that curled on his bosom  
Was died blu-black from red:  
— Nest for a holy medal,  
(*Nest for a diner's head!*)

## THE ART OF PLAGIARISM

We have all read of the difficulties experienced by teachers at every level in detecting plagiarism on the part of their students. Luckily, they can now rely on automated word-search systems to make their task easier, but I can report here on a breathless piece of lifting that was discovered by serendipity and good memory by Nicholas, son of Patience Gray. It is the work of a blogger-cum-chef, one Chris Squire of London, Ontario. As well as cooking in Canada, he organizes trips and cooking courses in Tuscany. His blog seems dormant currently, perhaps because he ran out of inspiration. A little blog entry from 2013 runs thus: 'The news these days is that weeds are in. Along with other elements of the Mediterranean diet such as olive oil; food writers, nutritionists and others are examining both the nutritional and culinary aspects to a diet that includes what many of us have always taken a weed wacker to.

I've seen two aspects of this recently. The first was a look at a current menu from one of New York's trendy chefs, Jean-Georges Vongerichten. He has burdock, hyssop, borragé and other wild greens on his menu and plans to add more. Weeds are the new flavouring and even according to the Mediterranean diet theorists, the new panacea.

'The other experience was much more vivid and immediate. I was in Tuscany last week shortly after the grape harvest. Just outside of Lucca *I had a*

*profitable weed lesson from a young girl named Eugenia who had an extensive weed vocabulary culled from her father's vineyard. As she showed me each plant that she was picking she said: 'This is for cooking or this is for salad (her plant categories).'*

*'The Tuscan vineyard weeds, and there are many of them, divide into two kinds, those that are boiled, radici, which includes wild leeks and wild garlic, corn poppy, comfrey, borage, rampion, sweet violet, campion and alexanders plus numerous others and the salad kind which include the flowers of borage, rocket, campion leaves and wild radish. Burnet is another salad plant as well as wild fennel, plantain and various wild lettuces. All of these vineland [recte vineyard] plants are painstakingly washed and culled for fading leaves before being incorporated into delicious mixed salad, dressed with olive oil and wine vinegar.'*

*'Where I only saw a small vineyard with fading leaves, others saw a diversity of tasty and health giving foods providing ample evidence of depth and complexity.'*

All the words lifted out of *Honey from a Weed* (pp. 190-191) are printed here in italic. It just seems so strange that one would appropriate Eugenia as well as the writing.

## THE INTERNATIONAL ANTHONY BURGESS FOUNDATION

I had not been aware of this body, with premises in Manchester and a website <<http://www.anthonymburgess.org>> before being contacted by Will Carr, its deputy director, with news of a forthcoming (now, alas, all in the past) public dinner entitled, 'The Devil's Supper: Anthony Burgess, autobiography and food' (it happened on 11 March). The Foundation was inaugurated in 2003 and contains a library and archive of Burgess's work as well as a public performance space. We have a piece by Will Carr about Burgess and food later in this issue. The meal itself was being cooked by the Manchester chef Mary-Ellen McTague and was devised in cooperation with the (now online) journal *Feast*. This is another new publication to me. The first three issues were printed, but can be viewed online as PDFs. Their subjects (each issue has a subject) were indulgence, waste and digestion. The subject of the first online issue is cutlery. The approach is intellectual, artistic and creative. This snippet from Paul Geary's 'Technologies of Eating: Constructing Experience' will give you a flavour of the tone: 'The technologies of eating are not merely pragmatic. Or, rather, the pragmatism of those technologies is ideologically and culturally constructed. When we consider a utensil solely in terms of its pragmatism, we are in the realm of the ready-to-hand, where ideology is at its most successful because *we do not question*, even implicitly, the role of the tool, how and why it should be used. The technologies of eating not only allow us to consume, but they also frame our experience of eating both in terms of how we eat and how

we understand the experience. It is not that the framing of the food is merely layered onto and around it, but that the frame itself enters into the experience and provides the coordinates for our understanding. The technologies of eating – cutlery, crockery, utensils – are so often “silent” in that they fade away from our attention and become a “means to an end”. The founder of *Feast* was Laura Mansfield, an independent curator and writer based in Manchester; she has been joined by Elisa Oliver, senior lecturer in Critical Studies for Fine Art at Leeds Beckett University and in Contemporary Art History at Manchester University. The website is <<http://feastjournal.co.uk>>

## OXFORD SYMPOSIUM 2016

The subject this year is *Offal: Rejected and Reclaimed Foods*. The dates are 8–10 July 2016. The place is St Catherine’s College, Oxford. The prices for the full monty range from £250 for students to £400 for others. Day rates (i.e. no sleeping over) are £110 for students and £215 for others, including lunch but not dinner. The programme is extensive, and that’s before all the papers have been chosen. Plenary speakers include a panel chaired by Claudia Roden, with Merry White and Jacob Kenedy, and addresses by Tristram Stuart, Paul Rozin and Ben Wugarft. Meals are being cooked by Fergus Henderson, Jacob Kenedy and Michael O’Meara.

## MEAL SHARING

First Uber, Couchsurfing and AirBnB, now the sharing economy has arrived at the table. There are a number of sites that claim to enable the traveller to locate either a pop-up dining experience or a seat at a native’s table (in return for a small fee). This may be a route to nirvana or some less satisfactory state of mind. But it could certainly be worth a try in some cities or countries. I attempted to find a dinner in Devon on several of these sites but came up with but one – cooked on demand by a Chinese graduate student at Exeter university. Sites to explore: <<https://www.meetsies.com>>; <<http://www.eatwith.com>>; <<https://www.cookapp.com/en>>; <<https://www.mealsharing.com>>

## SYMPOSIUM OF AUSTRALIAN GASTRONOMY

The twenty-first symposium will take place at the William Angliss Institute and the University of Melbourne on 2–6 December 2016, its theme is *Utopian Appetites*. It celebrates, among other things, the five-hundredth anniversary of Thomas More’s *Utopia*: ‘With its fundamental tenets of desire, order, justice and hope, utopia represents a framework to think about gastronomy as both an imaginary ideal and a realizable goal for the future. The utopian theme encourages us to envisage the gastronomic project of eating well, bridging

disciplinary boundaries, encompassing different spaces, cultures and times.’ So write the organizers. Among the speakers will be Darra Goldstein, Robert Appelbaum and Barbara Santich. The cost is AU\$550 (AU\$400 for students) inclusive of everything except accommodation. People to write to are Kelly Donati (William Angliss Institute) – <kellyd@angliss.edu.au> or Jacqueline Dutton (University of Melbourne) – <jld@unimelb.edu.au>. They are the people also to whom any proposals ‘from academics and independent scholars, artists and activists, cooks and chefs, journalists and writers, food producers and artisans in the form of panel discussions, presentations, literary reflections, manifestos, performances and interactive experiments relating to utopia and gastronomy,’ should be sent. ‘Please send enquiries and proposals of 500 words or less along with a 100 word biography.’

## DUBLIN GASTRONOMY SYMPOSIUM

The irrepressible Máirtín Mac Con Iomaire has sent more information about this biennial event, to be held Tuesday, 31 May–Wednesday, 1 June at the Dublin Institute of Technology, Cathal Brugha Street. The topic is Food and Revolution. The keynote address is to be given by the peerless Rachel Laudan. There are lots of sideshows; you will not go undernourished. The website to investigate is <<http://arrow.dit.ie/dgs>>. The price for attendance, including meals but not accommodation, is €200.

## †AILEEN HALL

Perhaps it was the much-regretted death of my friend and former colleague Aileen Hall in December that provoked me to look up the *Good Food Guide* introduction I quoted above on the subject of pubs and food. Aileen was chief inspector at the *Guide* in the 'seventies and 'eighties, before she turned to writing about wine. She was a marvellous companion at table, with a sharp wit and a fund of anecdote. Her enthusiasm was as infectious as were her prejudice and quite frequent irritation (a friend wrote to me after her death, 'Anger in Aileen was strangely appealing'). Aileen was by birth a Scot and her nicely Edinburgh accent was inflected by something Canadian after she spent the best part of ten years in Ontario as a teacher, parliamentary candidate and, latterly, as executive director of the Planned Parenthood of Toronto at the moment that Canada finally dispensed with its somewhat Victorian laws regarding contraception. She was a great campaigner for proper cooking, for proper treatment of single (and lady) diners by restaurants and their staffs, for banning smoking from restaurants, for good bottles of wine and for general *joie de vivre* – something you didn't necessarily expect from a slightly school-teacherish exterior. When preparing her obituary I came across this apt opinion of hers from *The Good Food Guide Dinner Party Book* (1971) which she wrote

with Jeanne Strang: 'Not many women feel as easy in a restaurant as they do in their own kitchens, even if they are in male company. This is perhaps because they sense themselves in the presence of a rival. There is something essentially feminine about a good restaurant: it is womb-like, submissive, flattering and capricious. No wonder men sometimes fall for places which their wives – if they ever were taken along – would see through from the first mouthful. This is why some of the *Good Food Guide's* most valued correspondents are women, who often notice more, taste more, and possess more technical knowledge than their escorts do.' Bang on, I'd say.

## †STEPHEN HAYWARD

I am very sorry to record the unexpected death of our friend and fellow-publisher Stephen Hayward, proprietor of Serif Books, in Spain in October. This February, there was a moving celebration of Stephen's life and career, masterminded by his sister Vicky and his friend Michèle Roberts. There were many speeches, memories, tall tales and the numbers attending were proof of his gregarious nature, wide interests and high achievements. Quite how it was that Prospect Books found itself swimming in Communist waters, with not only our trade distributors and one-time trade representatives but also our closest publishing colleague being sometime members or cogwheels of the CP, but we did. And happy we were (are) with our choice. I can do no better than reprint Michèle Roberts' obituary notice of Stephen, published in the *Bookseller*.

'Stephen Hayward, who has died unexpectedly, aged 61, while travelling in Andalusia, was the founder (in 1992) of independent publisher Serif, which he ran from his home in London's East End. He did practically everything himself, from commissioning and editing to tramping around the country persuading booksellers to stock his beautifully produced wares with their elegant, witty covers designed by Pentagram Berlin.

'He was the son of Gay (née Goulding), an orthoptist, and Victor, a Major-General. At Jesus College, Cambridge, he read law and social and political sciences. He then took a diploma in international relations at the John Hopkins Centre in Bologna. This inspired his lifelong interest in the Italian Communist Party and commitment to its Euro-Communist ideals. Stephen possessed a Partito Comunista Italiano flag, which he took on demonstrations; most recently to the vigil outside the French Embassy in London after the *Charlie Hebdo* massacre in Paris.

'Having worked as a porter at King's College, London, as a teacher of English as a second language and as a part-time journalist, he moved into publishing. He worked for the Publications & Distributions Co-operative, as a part-time assistant for Central Books and as part-time publicity and promotion



manager for Lawrence & Wishart (L&W). In 1983, he became an editor at L&W.

‘His strong belief in the power of ideas, and in collective radical struggle, led him to co-edit three major anthologies with his friend and literary collaborator Sarah LeFanu. *Colours of a New Day: Writing for South Africa* (1990), inspired by the 1988 Free Nelson Mandela concert, had a foreword by Mandela, written on his release from prison. Next came *God: An Anthology of Fiction* (1992) and then *Obsession* (1994), dedicated “To Luis Bunuel, obsessive freethinker.”

‘The Serif list, covering history, politics, culture and fiction, revealed Stephen’s interests, simultaneously eclectic and focused. His love of Ireland, for example, led him to republish both *The Aran Islands* and *Travels in Wicklow, West Kerry and Connemara* by J.M. Synge. His celebrated cookery list featured important republications, such as *Cooking in Ten Minutes* by Édouard de Pomiane and *The Alice B Toklas Cookbook*, and originally commissioned books such as *The Floral Baker* by Frances Bissell and *Roman Cookery: Ancient Recipes for Modern Kitchens* by Mark Grant. His World Food series covered Bengali, Moroccan, Jamaican and Parsi cuisines.

‘On the Serif website, Stephen wrote: “These are turbulent times for publishing ... Serif remains resolutely committed to the printed book as a beautiful object.”

‘Serif’s first e-books appeared in 2012. Stephen commented: “Good writing, properly edited, is the *raison d’être* of publishing, whether it appears on decent paper, properly bound within a stylish Pentagram cover, or on a light, portable screen.” Stephen’s high principles meant that Serif’s website has a link to Wordery, “an online bookseller,” he wrote, “[that] pays its taxes”.

Stephen spoke French, Spanish and Italian, and could crack jokes in all of them. Witty and erudite, a brilliant cook, he moved in overlapping circles of loving friends. He is survived by his mother and his sister, Vicky.’

## SOPHIE COE PRIZE 2016

I have been advised that the deadline for entries to this year’s prize is 1 May, 2016. ‘The prize is awarded annually in memory of food historian Sophie Coe. Entries can be essays or articles including new research, or with original insights, into an aspect of the history of food. Published pieces are eligible so long as they were published after 1 May 2015. Entries must be in English, with between 1,500 and 10,000 words. The judges look for serious, informative and groundbreaking work. For more information, go to <<http://sophiecoepize.wordpress.com>>. Just to remind you, the prize is £1,500 awarded to the winner.