

These people are so smart and creative and their philosophy seems to be to live openly, passionately without any restrictions – to eat with the Bloomsbury Group must have been a treat indeed and when you read this book, you almost feel like you have.

ALICE RICHARDSON

Mina Holland: *The Edible Atlas*: Canongate, 2014: 357 pp., hardback, £18.99. In this book Mina Holland takes you on a magic carpet ride around the world's kitchens. It is beautifully written, clearly and pleasingly laid out and is an excellent tool for anyone wishing to travel without leaving the comfort of their kitchen.

Each continent begins with a diagram or table of some sort. In Europe there is a map of the different grape regions and their characteristics and a table showing the main ingredients for each country; in the Middle East there is a map showing the spice route and the sugar journey; in Asia there is a page illustrated with spice jars, with each one containing the essential spices for each country; in Africa there is a map of different chillies and in the Americas there is a map of the merging cuisines. These are all very simple, organized and pleasing. There is also an essential kit list at the beginning (which includes a kitchen radio) and a larder list for each country. The design of the book is very neat and well thought out and the cover unfolds and becomes a map of the world, which is a nice touch.

Each country begins with a quote about the place and then the author writes of her experiences in that country or with that food. She recalls being in a Brazilian restaurant in London, when a plate of veiny hearts were brought out that she felt too squeamish to eat, showing that you don't necessarily need to travel far to have memorable culinary experiences. This book is like an armchair traveller's guide to the world of food, beginning with Apple Tarte Normande and Salmon Beurre Blanc, through Catalonia with tortillas and fish stews and onto Portuguese salt cod broth and almond cake. Some countries are broken down into regions if they have a huge amount to offer. France and Italy for example are longer sections than Germany or Scandinavia. Asia is a lovely fragrant section with descriptions of the tea rituals in India, ripening red bananas and jackfruit, Chinese soy beans and rice and the fizzy fermented flavour of Korean kimchi.

Some really interesting countries such as Morocco and Japan were a little sparse which was a bit disappointing. The only three recipes under Morocco were preserved lemons, chicken couscous and pumpkin tagine, which I didn't feel did it justice.

The book ends its journey in the Americas, with bland, comforting food such as corn on the cob and buttermilk and cornbread from Louisiana and the

spice and excitement of Mexico and black bean stew from Brazil. This book should leave you feeling inspired and experimental but, at the very least, it is a very pleasant book to read.

Alice Richardson

Ursula Heinzlmann: *Beyond Bratwurst. A History of Food in Germany*. Reaktion Books, 2014: 384 pp., hardback, £25.00.

Fabio Parasecoli: *Al Dente. A History of Food in Italy*. Reaktion Books, 2014: 332 pp., hardback, £25.00.

Reaktion Books continues to expand its presence in the world of food studies with a new series, 'Foods & Nations'. Its first two titles relate to Germany and Italy, both are worth the purchase and your close attention. Nicely produced, with Reaktion's usual attention to the melding of words and image, they will each provide a thought-provoking launchpad for the curious.

Arnt Gulbrandsen has kindly contributed this comment on Ursula Heinzlmann's book: 'Judging by this book, the series will be well-produced, with good paper and printing, fine editing and a decent index. Speaking as a expatriate in Germany, I didn't think it possible for a German to write English as well as Ms. Heinzlmann does in this book. The book itself is a rather thorough look at German food throughout history, from the neolithic to the modern. The changes are surprisingly small: these days there's enough food and that was not always the case, but areas where the neolithics ate rye is also where bakers still have good rye bread today, the places where the Romans planted vineyards is where you can be served fine local wine and the right kind of food to go with it, and the beer, meat and cheese that Germans like now are also what Tacitus mentioned 2000 years ago. Between the neolithics and the artisanal organic bakers, you'll learn that the Nazis were absolutely crazy in the kitchen too, that there are many regional sausages, how *biertgärten* came to be, and how a cookbook pizza looked in East Germany.'

The great quality of the German book is the humane education of its author which allows wide terms of reference and plenty of allusive comment. She is also very revealing about the spread of German food beyond its borders, particularly in the United States. The whole subject is one that has been rarely addressed and the book's importance is therefore redoubled.

Fabio Parasecoli, who is the Co-ordinator of the Food Studies Program at The New School in New York has done a good job on Italy too. Perhaps because of the complexity of Italian history (although the ins and outs of the German polity were probably just as labyrinthine), he has elected to weld the gustatory to the political narrative. This makes it rather useful for the epicure who knows nothing of Italian history, and it puts a nice slant for the political historian on his daily bread and butter. It might be said that this is a book