

Steven Poole: *You Aren't What You Eat*. Aurum Press Limited, 2012: 200 pp., paperback, £7.99.

A little firecracker of a book which keeps exploding from start to finish. Highly recommended. There is a little doubt that the foodist world is ripe for ridicule on the one hand, and engagement on the other. There's nothing wrong with liking what you eat, and indeed occasionally thinking about it, but there's plenty wrong with the various hyperbolic statements that accompany these actions. Steven Poole calls us to order. It's interesting to reflect whether there is something sinister in our current preoccupation with food. Although there might be, there probably isn't. You've got to think about something and we lost a lot of thinking matter when we threw God out the window. But there is no need to erect food as another God: God forbid.

Katarzyna J. Cwiertka: *Cuisine, Colonialism and Cold War: Food in Twentieth Century Korea*. London, Reaktion, 2013: 236 pp., illus., hardback, £25.00.

We know the author from her previous book (also Reaktion) on the modern history of Japanese cookery. She is methodical, has an eye for the larger picture, and writes clearly. Her work on Korea is quite similar when expressed as a brief. The twentieth century history of Korea is turbulent, including plenty of wars and invasions, masses of foreign influence, and oodles of change. She lays this out so that even those unfamiliar with the country can understand them. She is very good on the influence of industrial processes on food, and enlightening on things such as the history of soy sauce and other flavourings. Korea of course exerted its reciprocal influence on the invaders (Japan) as well as beginning to export its culinary products and achievements to the wider world: hello *kimchi*. Recommended.

Fiona Bird: *The Forager's Kitchen*. CICO, 2013, 192 pp., hardback, £16.99.

Fi Bird is an energetic agitator for the better nourishment of our children, either by means of education, or better cooking. Her publisher's notes on her state she is 'a graduate of St. Andrews university, mother of six, and a past finalist of the BBC television series Master Chef ... Fiona divides her time between the stunning Scottish glens of rural Angus and the Outer Hebridean island of South Uist, where her husband is the island doctor.' You would think she didn't have time to write books, but no, she has composed this excellent book on wild foods and what to do with them, and

it's really instructive. Who would know that you could make a chocolate pot flavoured with sprigs of Douglas fir? Who knows what to do with all those seaweeds? Who knows you can make fritters of sweet cicely flowers (or even seeds), just as you do elderflowers? Thoroughly recommended.

Judith M. Spicksley: *The Business and Household Accounts of Joyce Jeffreys Spinster of Hereford 1638–1648*: Records of Society and Economic History New Series 41, British Academy, 2012, 414 pp., hardback, £85.50.

This is my book of the month. Joyce Jeffreys was quite well off. A comfortable spinster until the Civil War interrupted her way of life. Equipped with some inheritance, enough to make a goodly capital, she lent her money out charging 8% all the while. This income, plus revenue from farms she had in her direct control, was sufficient to enable her to build a house in a Hereford suburb and clothe and feed herself and her household in the manner to which she was accustomed. The accounts detail her income, particularly from financial dealings, and cover many of her outgoings, although of course leaving many gaps, for instance relating to daily expenditure on food and big building costs. With accounts, it seems to me, you just have to take what they give and not regret the omissions. And I can't tell you how much these yield in fascinating detail, from money spent on thrushes to sing in her parlour, to donations to the man who keeps dogs out of church. I could go on and on and on. The edition is careful and instructive, even if the book is a trifle dear. Bravo!

Andrew Coe: *Chop Suey: A Cultural History of Chinese Food in the United States*: Oxford University Press, 2009, 303 pp., hardback, £15.19.

Chinese food has a long history in America dating back to the first contacts at the turn of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and getting into gear with the arrival of Chinese emigrants in the second half of the nineteenth century in California. It's full of wonderful descriptions of early meals and early restaurants and goes on from the gold rush west to analyse the spread of Chinese restaurants through the whole of the Union. He takes the story to the present day although the last fifty years are despatched in as many pages, the bulk of the narrative tracing those early contacts. The conclusions are a mite depressing, his closing sentence reading: 'Like their ancestors fifty and a hundred years ago, most Americans still expect Chinese food