

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

to be cheap, filling, familiar, and bland.' Parallels are not hard to find with British and French experience. Move beyond the Chinatowns of the biggest of our cities and that's pretty much what English and French customers expect too.

Morton Satin: *Death in the Pot: the Impact of Food Poisoning on History*: Prometheus Books, 2007, 258 pp., hardback, £24.95.

Here's a knock-about for you to enjoy. Twenty ways to die (maybe even more) from eating your cooked breakfast. Revising as I am Alan Davidson's deathless *Companion*, I am mindful of his unwillingness to stress the downsides of ingestion and whereas I see a potential outrage at every turn, he would concentrate on the pleasing flavour. So my tentative revisions are full of botulism and clostridium and a book like Morton Satin's is grist to my depressive mill. It's also good fun and interesting. My favourite is the French archaeologist who investigated the coprolites of the royal latrines at Marly and reported on the very high level of parasite infestation among Louis XIV's court.

Jeanne Pierre Poulain: *Dictionnaire des cultures alimentaires*: Presses Universitaires de France, 2012, 1465 pp., paperback, £33.35.

This book is too big and too learned for me to review. However, I counsel its purchase if you want an up-to-date summary of opinions and approaches among anthropologists, sociologists, modern historians, and ethnographers (actually not many ethnographers). Mindful, yet again, of the *Oxford Companion* I am intrigued by the contrast between these two encyclopaedic works. In the French there are no articles on foodstuffs (or very few); in the English, there are not too many articles on gastronomy and related topics. The French, for example, have eleven closely printed pages on *Gourmandise* and then another six pages on gastronomy. These would not go down well with Alan Davidson. The French do have lots of country entries, some exceptionally long, with some strange omissions. They have Russia, but they don't seem to have the United States. What they do have, in spades, are lots of articles about every aspect of food culture that you can think of, and the length of these articles sometimes appears to reflect the enthusiasm of the authors more than the importance of the subject. Given that many of them are sociologists, it is quite hard to understand (it would be bad enough in English). But here is real food for thought.