

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.