

for example, La Famiglia, close to where the Davidsons used to live in Chelsea (which is where I last took Jane to lunch). But now of course Italian cooking has moved on and Sutherland is quite interesting in discussing points of comparison between the English interpretation (River Café) and the Italian. What is sometimes difficult to unscramble is the significance of the food in contrast to the impact of the Apicella interiors on British Italian restauration. A restaurant that makes a speciality of a variation on Chicken Kiev is hardly *echt*-Italian even if other aspects of their cooking were. But the design, well that was something else.

Bridget Henisch: *The Medieval Cook*: The Boydell Press, 2009, 251 pp., hardback, £25.00.

I am guilty yet again of inefficiency and have failed to alert you to this valuable book that was published by Boydell two years ago. Bridget Henisch is an attentive and sensitive reader of medieval sources and can tease a cogent narrative from the most disparate of indications, be they written or illuminated. It sometimes makes us common or garden browsers blush with shame. She expresses the aim of the book succinctly at the outset, 'the aim of this study is to consider medieval cooks in the context of time and circumstance, to show how they were presented in the art and commentary of the period, how they functioned, and how they coped with the limitations and expectations which faced them in different social settings.' So in six chapters, she looks not only at grand cooks, but cottage cooks; at simple cooking and the most elaborate feasts; at street food and food purveyors; at home cooks and courtly cooks. The closing chapter is on the cook in art. There are plenty of really enjoyable illustrations. I particularly liked the misericord of a kitchen quarrel from Bristol cathedral: it reminded me of home. In general, as with her earlier works, Mrs Henisch concentrates on narrative sources rather more than dry financial or legal records. This is not meant in any way as a criticism, merely a reflection on its entertainment value because it is not easy to get worked up over a pipe roll. Well recommended.