

Carol Trewin: *Gourmet Cornwall*: Alison Hodge, Penzance, 2005: ISBN 0906720397: £14.95.

The vital question about Cornish food which has vexed gourmets like Tom Jaine since medieval times is the very real dilemma: which end of your piping hot pasty do you start eating first? Is there a right end? Is there an end in sight? There's definitely a right and wrong way to crimp. Crimping has caused wars in the blue-rinse brigade. The crimping wars. On top or down the side? And then there is the vexed question of 'with or without?' In pasty shops you are often greeted with this seemingly erudite question. Not 'mornen', 'nice day' or 'dagged your sheep lately?' No, it is simply, 'with or without?' The foreigner is perplexed. Luckily I was born within sight of Cornwall, overlooking the Hamoaze and from birth knew the underlying logic, a password which would have defied MI5 (or even the CIA who seem to own Devonport dockyard now). Haliburton and Chips? Food history in Kernow is ripe for an update and here it is.

'With or without?' simply refers to that much underrated vegetable the humble swede, or turnip as it is sometimes known. Know your Cornish roots. And herein lies the beginning of a long path of subtleties which underpins one of Britain's best-kept secrets: Cornish cuisine. Mackerel filletting by numbers, pot black, inkwell, crab or lobster quadrille. The intrepid former editor of BBC's 'Farming Today', Carol Trewin, has spent many years researching this fundamental question, and has tasted pasties from one end of the county to the other. From Land's End yea even unto to Saltash which incidentally was well known for salting fish and for Tamar oysters, according to Daniel Defoe. Cornwall is a fishy business from end to end. And the answer to pasties is a resounding YES. You can start at either end, with or without. And in the old days that may have referred to squabs. Young cormorants, a little oily, squab pie. Hoggans to you, me handsome.

But the history of pasties is only one out of fifteen chapters in a new and remarkable book called *Gourmet Cornwall*. A hundred years ago, nay twenty years ago, you would not have put the two words together in the same sentence, let alone on a book cover. How things have changed. Since the great exodus of Cornish mining men in the nineteenth century whose wives and secret pasty recipes were smuggled into remote parts of Australia, New Zealand, Canada, Mexico and South America – pasties which had such successful casements that they could be dropped down a mineshaft and nor suffer structural damage. (Such integrity is still a byeword among ex-miners and their ex-wives.) Since then Cornish cuisine has kept itself afloat and remarkably intact despite the onslaught

and wrecking practices of supermarkets and ready-meals. Recent colonization by such illustrious present-day settlers as Stein and Smit has made a major impact on our perception of Cornwall, its food and its environment. These wizards have raised the concept of 'fish and chips' and a 'china clay pit' to a fine-art form of international status. But it has taken a Cornish girl called Trewin to unearth the real and enduring stories behind the farming and fishing, the small bakeries and ice-cream makers, the fruits of the Tamar Valley, the history of Cornish early potatoes, Cornish beef and lamb, stargazey pie, conger, saffron, oysters, smoked mackerel and pilchards. Did you know that there are over 60 Cornish cheeses right now? Cornish Blue, Gevrik, St Keverne Square, Finns, Helligan, Menallick to name but a few.

Carol Trewin has, with photographer Adam Woolfitt, produced a work of art laced with recipes and family stories. Thankfully Cornwall is now well and truly on the gourmet map, crimped you might say. 'Pass us another lobster Trelawney.' Saffron bun to you. I'll pilchard your idea. Yarg, yarg, yarg. Crab and splits. The tide of clotted cream has turned. Camels and Wine, Colloggett and Cornish Gilliflower. Syllabub from Stein, Strawberry gazpacho from Mousehole. Hove to in the Blue Anchor, Helston, drinking Spingo. Greetings my little daffodil. Cornish Blonde orders Lizard Point, A tribute to Old Bustard. What ales thee Speckled Parrot? Beer Talk or just cidered up my Manaccan Primrose? Captain Broad here.

Farmers and growers should be proud of what these young chefs and food producers are doing with your produce. Use *Gourmet Cornwall* as a guidebook and an inspiration. Ideal present for the wife on St Piran's day or when you visit the Hobby 'Oss or attend the Furry Dance. There is obviously room for a whole range of books highlighting the history of food and agriculture in the South West. Which end do you start? With or without? Food for thought. Don't crimp your style. Local Food? That's shallot. Proper Cornish of course.

*Gourmet Cornwall* is highly recommended and well researched. A good blend of food history and cutting-edge cheffing. Seriously good photography. Many outstanding food producers are featured here. An invaluable guide to the dedicated trencherman/woman.

JAMES CROWDEN