

The corporate life of the cathedral at Durham was dominated by the requirement that any canon with an income above £40 per annum was bound to keep residence for twenty-one consecutive days in the year and during that time entertain liberally at his table. Thus was preserved the old monastic way of hospitality and open house, and the cook worked hard to supply all these dinners. Thacker's repertoire is sometimes old-fashioned, sometimes new-fangled and French; his book is liberally illustrated with plans of tarts and pies; his recipes are full of otherwise hard-to-find details such as the proper way to roast on a spit and how best to decorate a peacock pie. An important book, therefore; another contribution to eighteenth-century studies, but this time from the provinces; a job worth doing and done well.

Josephine Bacon: *Exotic Fruits and Vegetables A–Z*. UPSO, 2004: ISBN 1843750384: 236 pp., paperback, £11.99. Copies available from the publishers at 5 Stirling Road, Castleham Business Park, St Leonards on Sea TN38 9NW, or via websites at www.josephinebacon.co.uk or www.americanization.com.

From acerola to yard-long bean this handy manual takes the reader through short identifying descriptions (with very attractive drawings by the Lao artist Soun Vannithone) to paradigm recipes. It's just the necessary when exploring the shops and markets of north and south London, or faced with an utter novelty imported by an enterprising supermarket buyer. An essential for the reference shelf in the kitchen.