

JEAN-LOUIS FLANDRIN

July 4 1931 — August 8, 2001

A friendly man with an easy chuckle and twinkling eyes, Jean-Louis Flandrin won over everyone who met him. Though he protested that he was not a 'food historian', his approach to history of food opened new fields of investigation and will inspire scholars for years. Having written extensively on the history of the family and of sexuality, his work on food was the logical extension of an on-going interest in the history of everyday life and mentalities.

In his quest for knowledge about the history of taste, he decided to exploit a hitherto neglected source: cookbooks. As a member of the Annales school of history, he chose to analyse cookbooks in the most objective way possible, by studying the presence or absence of specific foods in recipes from different periods. This quantitative approach produced revealing results which quickly became the source of scholarly articles and eventually led to his collaboration with Massimo Montanari in editing the impressive *Histoire de l'Alimentation* (1996), a slightly abridged English translation of which has since been published under the title *Food: A culinary history*.

As a means of encouraging others to pursue similar studies, and in order to provide a forum where like-minded historians could meet, Flandrin created a seminar at the Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales in the late '70s entitled *Le désir et le goût* (Desire and Taste) which he directed until the end of May, 2001. At the time of his death, he was working on the preface to a reprint of the 1505 French translation of *De honesta voluptate et valetudine* by Bartolomeo Sacchi, known as Platina. Like Flandrin himself, Platina was intrigued by the relationship between dietetic principles and taste. Indeed, Flandrin signed his early articles on food 'Platine', in homage to this fifteenth-century humanist who inspired much of his work.

During his last years, Jean-Louis's courage and unquenchable *joie de vivre* in the face of terminal cancer were an inspiration to all who knew him: among his last wishes was to taste one of the older vintage wines from his personal cellar. Jean-Louis Flandrin will long be remembered not only for his innovative approach to history but for his qualities as a man and as a friend.

PHILIP AND MARY HYMAN