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On Right Pleasure and Good Health: A Critical Edition and Translation of *De honesta voluptate et valetudine*, edited and translated by Mary Ella Milham and *Libellus de arte coquinaria: An Early Northern Cookery Book*, edited and translated by Rudolph Grewe and Constance B. Heiatt

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margarine, and cheeses. I don't think *acuyo* leaves are "sassafras-scented" (p.145); to me they smell much like their botanical cousin in the *Piper* genus, black pepper. It would be a pleasure to sort out such questions with Dalby. I'd ask him, too, where he got his information that Columbus saw the tapping of mastic in the Aegean island of Chios (p.150). It is quite reasonable to speculate that Columbus, as a young Genoese sailor, visited that island, then under the control of Genoa and profiting from the mastic produced there—but tell me, please, where is the hard evidence? I'd also love to argue about whether saffron has always been an expensive spice (p.138). It's the labor-intensive nature of saffron cultivation, harvesting, and processing that makes it cost so much, but sometimes, in some places, labor is cheap. Dalby says in his preface that he expects a few challenges, particularly to his "several assertions of 'the first time' a certain spice is recorded in use in various parts of the world" (p.7). *Dangerous Tastes* will surely stimulate a dialogue—whole conversations, in fact—about spices.

After all his painstaking, comprehensive research, Andrew Dalby remains engaged with his subject, excited by the taste and smell of spices, and fascinated by "the people, their ingenuity and their intelligence" (p.158), who are ultimately responsible for the spice trade. In *Dangerous Tastes* he has enriched the story of spices to the benefit of all with an interest in trade, perfume, medicine, or food.

—Alice Arndt, Author, *Seasoning Savvy*

On Right Pleasure and Good Health: A Critical Edition and Translation of De honesta voluptate et valetudine
Edited and translated by Mary Ella Milham

Tempe, Arizona: Medieval and Renaissance
Texts and Studies (vol. 168), 1998
ix + 511 pp. \$35.00 (cloth)

Libellus de arte coquinaria: An Early Northern Cookbook

Edited and translated by Rudolf Grewe
and Constance B. Hieatt
Tempe, Arizona: Medieval and Renaissance
Texts and Studies (vol. 222), 2001
x + 158 pp. \$22.00 (cloth)

When Platina's *De honesta voluptate* was first printed around 1470, it was a runaway success. Several editions immediately followed, and the book was soon translated into Italian. An expanded version appeared in French, and

then it was translated into German. Why the world would have to wait another five hundred years for an English translation is not entirely clear. A facsimile of the original with a rough translation by Elizabeth Andrews was, for some strange reason, published by the Mallinkrodt Chemical Works in 1967. But not until Milham's critical edition of 1998 has there been a reliable version—or rather, two versions, one scholarly and heavily annotated, the other a cheap paperback without the Latin original or critical apparatus (The University of North Carolina at Asheville/Pegasus Press, 1999), a practice that should be more widely imitated. Milham, who has been working on Platina for decades, was the ideal scholar for the task. Her superb introduction unravels a fascinating web of intrigue surrounding the papal court and Platina's meteoric rise, fall, and reinstatement under Pope Sixtus IV.

De honesta voluptate itself is really two books: a Renaissance health manual describing the virtues and lore of individual ingredients, and a late medieval cookbook written by Martino of Como, chef to Cardinal Ludovico Trevisan. The two sections sit together uncomfortably today. Food historians pay attention almost exclusively to the recipes now, but in the late fifteenth century health and cookery were thought to be inextricably intertwined. One could not live well without careful attention to medical rules, nor could one eat well without decent recipes. Platina, an Epicurean in the original sense of that word, was trying to offer his readers a way to truly maximize pleasure by keeping health and aesthetic concerns in careful balance—something we at least pay lip service to today but rarely achieve. Whether Platina's project was successful or not is a matter for debate, but modern readers will find a wealth of engrossing details in his volume, such as why the lentil is "digested with difficulty, generates black bile and creates scaly skin disease, causes flatulence and a stuffed feeling, harms the brain and chest, dulls the eyes, and represses passion" (p.314). We are also taught how to cook a magnificent eel pie that includes almond milk, rosewater, raisins, sugar, and spices. That Platina himself had trouble reconciling the medical with the gastronomic here is evidenced by his added comments: "When it is finally cooked, serve it to your enemies, for it has nothing good in it" (pp.373–75).

What makes this work especially rich is precisely this juxtaposition of erudite classical and medical scholarship with courtly international medieval dishes. It gives us insight into what people of the past thought they should be eating and what they really wanted to eat. Intellectually, the book also lies exactly at the crossroads between medieval and early modern, much like the art and architecture of the day, a curious amalgam of new Renaissance theory with

older medieval techniques. It makes one think of the work of Paolo Ucello, master of mathematical single-point perspective, who depicted armor-clad knights in the midst of battle.

The only possible drawback of Milham's translation is that it is not designed for cooks at all. Whether *De honesta voluptate* was meant to be a working cookbook when originally published one can only speculate, but many readers today will certainly want to try out some of the recipes to get a sense of what they were like. Without thorough familiarity with medieval ingredients and techniques, this book will be of little practical use. There might, at the very least, have been an index to the English translation rather than just a Latin *Index Verborum*.

In the same series from Arizona is a much earlier cookbook, the *Libellus de arte coquinaria*, which actually offers four different manuscript versions of what is likely among the earliest medieval works devoted solely to cookery, dating before 1300. Its editors, Constance B. Hieatt and the late Rudolf Grewe, are much more sensitive than Milham to cooking methods, ingredients, and the relation of these texts to other medieval cookbooks. Part III goes into considerable detail in explaining exactly what these recipes would have been like. That said, one would not necessarily choose to cook from this book, either. It is primarily a textual study of the relation of these four manuscripts (two in Danish, one in Icelandic, and one in a low German that is almost readable to speakers of English) to an earlier, probably southern European original. The approximately thirty-five recipes themselves are interesting primarily because they offer a glimpse of elite medieval cuisine that is at once international (note the use of almond milk and spices) but also early enough to be lacking the requisite sugar or dried fruits that play such a prominent role in later medieval cookbooks like Martino's. It may seem odd that these early recipes should survive only in languages like Icelandic, but as the editors point out, these were copies made in all likelihood by physicians trained in southern Europe, who later brought them back to their noble employers in the North. At the least, the manuscripts attest to the claim that medieval cooking, like Gothic architecture, was truly international. The descendants of all the recipes here—various chicken pies, roasts, the “blancmanger” of chicken breast, almond milk, and sugar, the sauces like “cameline” mustard sauces and green sauce, an early kind of pesto—can be found in later medieval cookbooks as well.

Rather than being an introduction to medieval cooking, then, of which there are several great ones (Scully, *The Art of Cookery in the Middle Ages*; Santich, *The Original*

Mediterranean Cuisine; Hieatt et al., *Pleyn Delit*; Redon et al., *The Medieval Kitchen*), *Libellus de arte coquinaria* is a very specialized, scholarly study of a relatively unknown early medieval cookbook. It belongs on the shelf of anyone interested in medieval cuisine or of any linguist interested in cooking terms. For the average reader, though, it will provide only a small, savory tidbit.

—Ken Albala, University of the Pacific

Alcohol, Sex, and Gender in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe

A. Lynn Martin

Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave, 2001

x + 200 pp. \$59.95 (cloth)

The author, Reader in History at the University of Adelaide, Australia, and an expert on Jesuits in early modern France, has now turned his attention to quite a different topic: drinking behavior and attitudes toward drinking in Italy, France, and England ca. 1300–1700. Because anthropologists have discovered that drinking behavior and drunken comportment are socially mediated, Lynn Martin hopes to gain insights into some late medieval and early modern societies in Europe by studying these phenomena. At the same time, because alcoholic beverages in this part of the world

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Martin's source material has not been derived from archives, but from modern (i.e. mainly twentieth- and some nineteenth-century) editions of contemporary texts and a lot of rather recent secondary literature. Feminist historians have written about the subordination of women in patriarchal societies and have developed theories about women becoming more weak and tender by the use of alcohol, while men grow violent and aggressive from the same beverages. Other authors, however, have seen hardly any