A CULTURAL HISTORY OF FOOD
IN THE EARLY MODERN AGE

EDITED BY BEAT KÜMIN

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VOLUME 4

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A Cultural History of Food

General Editors: Fabio Parasecoli and Peter Scholliers

Volume 1

A Cultural History of Food in Antiquity
Edited by Paul Erdkamp

Volume 2

A Cultural History of Food in the Medieval Age
Edited by Massimo Montanari

Volume 3

A Cultural History of Food in the Renaissance
Edited by Ken Albala

Volume 4

A Cultural History of Food in the Early Modern Age
Edited by Beat Kümin

Volume 5

A Cultural History of Food in the Age of Empire
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Volume 6

A Cultural History of Food in the Modern Age
Edited by Amy Bentley

SERIES PREFACE

GENERAL EDITORS, FABIO PARASECOLI
AND PETER SCHOLLIERS

A Cultural History of Food presents an authoritative survey from ancient times to the present. This set of six volumes covers nearly 3,000 years of food and its physical, spiritual, social, and cultural dimensions. Volume editors and authors, representing different nationalities and cultural traditions, constitute the cutting edge in historical research on food and offer an overview of the field that reflects the state of the art of the discipline. While the volumes focus mostly on the West (Europe in its broadest sense and North America), they also draw in comparative material and each volume concludes with a brief final chapter on contemporaneous developments in food ideas and practices outside the West. These works will contribute to the expansion of the food history research in Asia, Africa, Oceania, and South America, which is already growing at an increasingly fast pace.

The six volumes, which follow the traditional approach to examining the past in Western cultures, divide the history of food as follows:

Volume 1: A Cultural History of Food in Antiquity (800 BCE–500 CE)
Volume 2: A Cultural History of Food in the Medieval Age (500–1300)
Volume 3: A Cultural History of Food in the Renaissance (1300–1600)
Volume 4: A Cultural History of Food in the Early Modern Age (1600–1800)
Volume 5: A Cultural History of Food in the Age of Empire (1800–1900)
Volume 6: A Cultural History of Food in the Modern Age (1920–2000)

This periodization does not necessarily reflect the realities and the historical dynamics of non-Western regions, but the relevance of cultural and material exchanges among different civilizations in each period is emphasized.

Each volume discusses the same themes in its chapters:

1. *Food Production*. These chapters examine agriculture, husbandry, fishing, hunting, and foraging at any given period, considering the environmental impact of technological and social innovations, and the adaptation to the climate and environment changes.

2. *Food Systems*. These chapters explore the whole range of the transportation, distribution, marketing, advertising, and retailing of food, emphasizing trade, commerce, and the international routes that have crisscrossed the world since antiquity.

3. *Food Security, Safety, and Crises*. We cannot have a complete picture of the history of food without discussing how societies dealt with moments of crisis and disruption of food production and distribution, such as wars, famines, shortages, and epidemics. These essays reflect on the cultural, institutional, economic, and social ways of coping with such crises.

4. *Food and Politics*. These chapters focus on the political aspects of public food consumption: food aspects of public ceremonies and feasts, the impact on public life, regulations, controls, and taxation over food and alcohol production, exchange, and consumption.

5. *Eating Out*. The communal and public aspects of eating constitute the main focus of these essays. Authors consider hospitality for guests, at home and in public spaces (banquets and celebrations), and discuss public places to eat and drink in urban and rural environments, including street food, marketplaces, and fairs.

6. *Professional Cooking, Kitchens, and Service Work*. These chapters look at the various roles involved in food preparation outside the family nucleus: slaves, cooks, servants, waiters, *maitre d'hotel* etc., investigating also the most relevant cooking techniques, technologies, and tools for each period, giving special consideration to innovations.

7. *Family and Domesticity*. The acquisition, shopping and storage, preparation, consumption, and disposal of food in a domestic setting

are among the most important aspects of food culture. These chapters analyze family habits in different periods of time, paying particular attention to gender roles and the material culture of the domestic kitchen.

8. *Body and Soul.* These chapters examine fundamental material aspects such as nutritional patterns, food constituents, and food-related diseases. Furthermore, spiritual and cultural aspects of thinking about and consuming food are highlighted, including religion, philosophy, as well as health and diet theories.

9. *Food Representations.* These essays analyze cultural and discursive reflections about food, which not only contributed to the way people conceive of food, but also to the social and geographical diffusion of techniques and behavior.

10. *World Developments.* These brief chapters overview developments, dynamics, products, food-related behaviors, social structures, and concepts in cultural environments that often found themselves at the margins of Western modernity.

Rather than embracing the encyclopedic model, the authors apply a broad multidisciplinary framework to examine the production, distribution, and consumption of food, as grounded in the cultural experiences of the six historical periods. This structure allows readers to obtain a broad overview of a period by reading a volume, or to follow a theme through history by reading the relevant chapter in each volume.

Highly illustrated, the full six-volume set combines to present the most authoritative and comprehensive survey available on food through history.

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Introduction

BEAT KÜMIN

For the visit of a group of patricians in the mid-seventeenth century, the innkeeper of Jegenstorf (in the Swiss canton of Bern) received advance orders for a lavish banquet, involving the loan of luxury crockery and cutlery and even the hiring of additional cooks and *traiteurs*. The instructions specified three courses including: 1. Good soups with boiled and roast meat; 2. A range of fish-, chicken- and dove-pies; 3. Cakes and other baked dishes; olives; boiled and baked fish and crabs; boiled and roast poultry and doves; roast porkling; glazed roast pig; well-made sausages. Also salad and the like and finally confectionery appropriate for such "noble" company.[1]

During his journeys through the Bavarian countryside in the 1780s, travel writer Philipp Wilhelm Gercken found "nothing but Sauerkraut, cow's meat and pork or sausages. Who cannot face such fare, has to bring along some cold roast from the towns. Meat soups are available as early as 8 o'clock in the morning, they are not too bad…and good beer is always served. People with a healthy stomach find life here terrific."[2]

Visiting the village of Grindelwald in the Alps at about the same time, J.W.F. von Reinach was not impressed: "At last our host served the

meal...The meat was prepared in a fashion which made it bearable only in an emergency, the drink was even worse (with the white wine having a foul smell and the red hardly an improvement). The only alternative was—fortunately good—fountain water. Dessert turned out a little better: cheese and cherries, which helped to fill our stomach. We soon left this miserable table."[3]

These three snapshots provide some initial impressions of the range and variety of food provision between the Renaissance and the modern age. Many of the dishes sound familiar to modern consumers, but dining contexts and preferences were naturally very distinct. The fourth volume of the series *A Cultural History of Food* sets out to examine alimentary practices and meanings in the period from the late sixteenth to the late eighteenth centuries. As indicated by the book's title, the main emphasis is on food, albeit with consideration of closely related topics such as drink, material culture, and socio-economic conditions.

The chronological framework for this collection broadly corresponds to Europe's so-called "early modernity." While there is much debate about boundaries (at both ends), defining features, and long-term legacies, most scholars accept the term as a pragmatic label for the time between the Reformation and French Revolution.[4] Some, particularly in the Anglophone world, tend to detach the eighteenth-century Enlightenment as a distinct entity, pointing to the latter's innovatory emphasis on reason, critical reflection, and cultural innovation, but there are equally good reasons—such as the resilience of feudal relationships and princely powers—to embed the 1700s in the early modern tradition.

To situate and connect the following contributions, the introductory remarks are structured in three parts: (1) a general historical overview, (2) ways in which early modern developments interacted with the culture of food, and (3) the themes and emphases of this volume. The argument concludes with (4) an outline of research perspectives and preliminary conclusions.

EARLY MODERN EUROPE

As in any other historical period, the early modern centuries were characterized by a complex blend of continuities and transformations.[5] Legacies

from the Middle Ages included the hierarchical and patriarchal structure of European society. Lineage and birth right still determined lifestyles and personal opportunities to a large extent, although the traditional division into three estates (those who fought, prayed, and worked) became inadequate for a growing and ever more differentiated population. Women were subject to men, regardless of the fact that many made essential contributions to their families' livelihoods. Politically, the vast majority of Europeans lived in monarchical regimes granting a disproportionate share of influence to members of the nobility. Republics such as those of the Dutch, Swiss, and Venetians were exceptions and not immune to the oligarchic tendencies of the period. Religion played a towering role in all polities (including, until at least the late seventeenth century, international relations), with regular church attendance and adherence to Christian values expected from all subjects. Socio-economically, feudalism remained operational: peasants (who made up the vast majority of the population) owed various combinations of rents, dues, and services to their lords. Where serfdom had survived, as in Eastern Europe, nobles also exercised local jurisdiction and extensive control over their tenants' personal lives. At the same time, participation in urban, rural, and parochial communities provided the common people with some social and political powers of their own.[6]

Numerous dynamic forces, however, gave the early modern period a distinct profile. A cluster of transformations between 1450 and 1550 marked the emergence of a new era: the invention of print (and thus Europe's first instrument of mass communication), the beginnings of transatlantic expansion, the scientific revolution (including, most startlingly, the shift from a geo- to a heliocentric model of the universe), and the fragmentation of the Christian Church into rival confessions (Catholic, Lutheran, Reformed).[7] Politically, rulers embarked on the consolidation of their territories, aiming not only for the acquisition of new dominions, but also the greater penetration and subordination of existing possessions. This process of state formation involved increasing levels of legislation, administration, and taxation, culminating—in areas such as France, Brandenburg-Prussia, and Russia—into regimes of an absolutist nature, where previous checks on princely powers (by the Church, nobles, and representative assemblies) were eroded to a greater or lesser extent. This centralizing trend found

symbolic expression in the personality cult of monarchs and the rise of princely courts as nodal points of political life. Yet none of these regimes acquired total or even despotic powers, since they remained limited by natural or divine law, dependent on provincial brokers and threatened by popular resistance against excessive demands.[8]

Religious division, dynastic ambitions, and the struggle over colonial resources turned warfare into an almost permanent feature of early modern politics. Innovations in military tactics and weaponry (especially the growing reliance on gunpowder and artillery) boosted army sizes, creating an ensuing need for greater discipline, bureaucracy, and financial revenues. This so-called military revolution—whose exact parameters remain contested—allowed longer and more ambitious campaigns, albeit at enormous monetary and social cost. The Thirty Years' War (1618–1648) in particular devastated many parts of Central Europe, causing population losses of over fifty percent in some cases. While religion still mattered greatly in this conflict, the Seven Years' War (1756–1763) exemplified the increasingly global repercussions of European politics and the essential role of naval resources. By that point, both troop numbers and casualties could approach the one million mark—a far cry from the modest dimensions of late medieval encounters.[9]

Regional variety was a key feature of early modern experience. Overseas expansions benefitted, above all, areas and cities along the Atlantic seaboard, with Spain and Portugal at the forefront of trading activities in the sixteenth century, and the Dutch and British obtaining pre-eminence from the seventeenth century onward. North-western Europe was most heavily urbanized and differentiated, while agriculture—in numerous forms of arable husbandry and pastoral regimes—dominated most other areas of the continent. There were pockets of early industry (as in the mines of the Austrian Tyrol or the English Midlands), and manufacturing, too, could be increasingly co-ordinated, especially in the decentralized *putting out* system under which rural laborers produced textiles for marketing by urban merchants. After the harsh decades of the late 1500s, when population increases, climatic deterioration, and harvest failures caused serious hardship for the European poor, conditions mostly stabilized in the seventeenth century. Moderate levels of dispensable income allowed members of the middling sort to become consumers, purchasing goods in line with personal

tastes and changing fashions. This was most conspicuous in large cities such as London, Paris, Vienna, and Amsterdam, where colonial imports and new standards of (court-inspired) manners nurtured a civil society versed in the fine arts, critical reasoning, and polite sociability in salons and coffee houses, but even prosperous peasants invested in luxury items such as porcelain and plate with which to embellish their domestic environments.[10]

Culturally speaking, Europe moved from reliance on given authorities (especially scholastic theology and classical philosophy) towards individual education and observation—personified in astronomers such as Kepler, anatomists such as Vesalius, and physicists such as Newton. Personal merits and professional qualifications, most notably studies of law in one of the growing number of universities, provided new routes for social advancement, be it in the service of a prince or one of the established Churches. The Renaissance had fostered more critical attitudes to ancient texts and religious practices, the Confessional Age brought campaigns for greater social discipline (including clampdowns on traditional popular culture), and the Enlightenment set new priorities for human endeavors in all spheres of life—principally the pursuit of reason, social utility, and general happiness. There was no linear process of secularization in early modern Europe, but the devastation of religious wars and the experience of pragmatic coexistence promoted a grudging realization that Christian unity had been lost for good, and that there was little alternative to the acceptance of other faiths.[11] By around 1700, Europe was also in the midst of a communication revolution. The postal network, first developed for letters and diplomatic correspondence in the sixteenth century, had diversified into comprehensive transport services. Thanks to the introduction of regular and reliable stagecoach routes (and widespread investment in better public highways during the eighteenth century), long-distance mobility increased dramatically. The growth in pleasure trips—both mass pilgrimages in Catholic areas and early forms of tourism in the Alps—manifested itself in a flood of travel literature and practical guides.[12]

DEVELOPMENTS IN EARLY MODERN FOOD CULTURE

By the close of the Middle Ages, the European diet could already be seen as rather impressive, at least among the elites. Cultural leadership was provided

by the Renaissance courts and cities of the Italian peninsula, where celebrated cooks such as Bartolomeo Scappi (who worked for Rome's prelates and, in 1570, published a cookbook with over 1,000 recipes) acquired good reputations and where Humanists engaged in culinary debates.[13] Banquets had to be as opulent as possible, with a rich variety of dishes, large quantities of food, and extravagant use of spices—the latter obtained through the merchants' extensive trading networks with Asia. Further north and among the common people, of course, everyday fare was much more modest, cereal-based, and heavily dependent on location and season, but it is widely accepted that the golden age of European peasants and laborers (when low population levels following the Black Death resulted in relatively high wages and favorable terms of tenure) allowed even humble people to consume remarkable volumes of meat.[14] Excavations of late medieval inn locations, too, reveal that meals served on the premises featured a surprising range of victuals. At Villingen in South Germany, for example, archaeologists discovered a "wide range of animal bones" and beneath the drinking hall of Munich's town council, they found various types of fish (including Mediterranean seafood), nuts, as well as cherries, plums, peaches, apples, figs, and strawberries.[15]

Many of the general early modern trends outlined above affected European food culture very directly. According to Ken Albala's pioneering overview, change occurred, above all, in towns and among social elites, whose lifestyles were most likely to be affected by the growth of the market, colonial imports, and more refined dining cultures.[16] The latter included more civil table manners and an increasing preference for simpler, more elegant menus in the fashion of the French court, rather than the heavy and elaborate banquets which had characterized Renaissance tables of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.[17]

The single most striking development, of course, was the enrichment of diets and the introduction of new crops through the Columbian exchange (addressed in chapter 10).[18] Yet immediate large-scale adoptions—as documented for maize in Northern Italy—were the exception rather than the rule. After a great deal of initial skepticism, the take-off of potato cultivation only occurred in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Compared to the volume of petty, inner-continental trade, furthermore, the extent of overseas exchange with the New World remained relatively

modest well into the 1700s: "Indeed, overseas expansion was less spectacularly significant in reality than contemporary propagandists and some historians might lead us to expect."[19] European state building manifested itself at least as visibly, for instance by a growing volume of central "police" legislation on the production and marketing of victuals from the late Middle Ages, high indirect taxes levied on salt or alcohol in the age of absolutism, and official encouragement of higher-yield crops—especially potatoes—in the Age of Enlightenment.[20] The new print technology allowed a more extensive dissemination of cookery books and dietetic literature, with Platina's *De honesta voluptate* one of the most influential early publications (see Figure 0.1).[21] Religious change associated with the Reformation(s) led to the abolition of traditional fasting rules in Protestant areas of the continent, albeit in combination with intense campaigns against immoderate eating and drinking.[22] The growing purchasing power of the middling sort, in turn, boosted differentiation in agricultural production, exemplified by the rise of market gardening—cultivation of fruit and vegetables (alongside fashionable flowers such as tulips) for prosperous urban consumers—in the Dutch Republic and parts of France, as well as the rise of strong (brandy, gin) and hot beverages (tea, coffee, chocolate) over the course of the early modern centuries.[23]

Regional variation in climate, topography, socio-economic structures, and crops, emphasized throughout this volume, makes it difficult to speak of an *overall* European food culture. Travellers routinely commented on the differences in culinary regimes encountered on their journeys. With regard to the Swiss, Fynes Moryson remarked in 1617: "For foode, they abound with Hony, Butter, and Milke, and haue plenty of Venson found in the wilde *Alpes,* and especially of excellent sorts of fish, by reason of their frequent lakes," while eighteenth-century Bavarian countryfolk, according to Johann Pezzl, "enjoy meat only on Sun- and feast days; during the week, they live on dishes made with flour, vegetables and cooked fruit."[24] Social status was another obvious factor affecting the availability or choice of food and drink. At the lowest end of the scale, harvest and distribution problems could lead to deprivation, and reactions ranging from begging via humble petitions to frequent food riots (as in the case of the hard-pressed French peasantry of the Ancien Régime).[25] At the top of the hierarchy, quality wine imported from—depending on the political situation—France,