

the lives, the foods, and the recipes of early settlers: pioneer communities established around the fur trade, Yankees and New Yorkers who migrated west looking for greater opportunities, and Old World immigrants. This first edition also included a comprehensive review of the foodways of Native Americans residing in Wisconsin and, amazingly, also touched on the topic of food availability as far back as prehistoric times.

Terese Allen's most compelling addition to the second edition is a chapter entitled "Fresh Age." It delineates several dramatic changes in Wisconsin's food culture that have occurred since the latter part of the twentieth century, examining in detail the continuing evolution of the flavor of Wisconsin. Among these changes are the rapid growth of organic farming, the proliferation of farmer's markets, and the concern for sustainable agriculture. In the last several decades Wisconsin has moved to the forefront of the local and sustainable food movement. The state has the country's largest producer-only farmer's market (in Dane County), at which all vendors must be the producers of the products they sell. Other changes to emerge within the fast-growing food revolution are food sophistication, which has fueled the rise of distinctive, artisanal foods and beverages, the Slow Food Movement, and new foodways contributed by the state's relatively recent immigrant populations.

About three dozen recipes augment the collection contained in the first edition. While Allen limited the number of additional recipes because numerous other recipe sources are available either online, in blogs, or in cookbooks and magazines, her adroit selections include preparations that would allow meal choices for people who want to eat more sustainably, classic recipes she felt ought to be in the book, and recipes representative of the new ethnicities in the state.

Besides superbly chronicling the recent changes in Wisconsin's foodways, Allen has strengthened the text's culinary history throughout and at the same time revamped the book's format. Some of the original as well as new text is presented in sidebars, and subheadings have been added, which provide both a fresh look and a much more readable book. This incredible compilation ought to be in every home, library, and classroom in the state, and in the hands of culinary historians and other foodies everywhere.

What would Harva Hachten think about the new edition? I'm betting she'd be proud as punch.

—Joan Peterson, PhD, Madison, WI

Pot Roast, Politics, and Ants in the Pantry: Missouri's Cookbook Heritage

Carol Fisher and John Fisher

Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 2008

234 pp. Illustrations. \$19.95 (paper)

Open my top kitchen cupboard and you'd be wise to take a step or two back—that is, if you want to avoid the cookbooks bound to tumble forth. It's not the actual number of books that makes my collection overwhelming; it's the fact that my cataloguing system is so sorely lacking. Despite the dog-eared pages and myriad slips of paper designed to draw attention to my favorite recipes, I often struggle to find exactly what I want.

Turning the pages of *Pot Roast, Politics, and Ants in the Pantry* was too often like throwing open the doors of my disordered cabinet without having a place to take cover. This well-researched review of more than 190 cookbooks, most of them published in Missouri between 1820 and the present, serves up a wealth of culinary esoterica about the Show-Me State—details that any cookbook lover, from any state, should appreciate. However, the book's larger history lessons about changing Missouri foodways, and the factors motivating these changes, are frequently lost among too much clutter.

To the Fishers' credit, the book starts off strong. The husband-and-wife team from Kennett, Missouri, clearly share a deep respect for documenting and preserving local culinary tradition, particularly as it extends into unfamiliar territory. The Fishers might easily have devoted a chapter to *The Joy of Cooking*, originally self-published by Irma Rombauer in St. Louis in 1931 and widely regarded as Missouri's most famous cookbook, but they instead dedicate early chapters to several of Missouri's unsung—yet equally fascinating—culinary heroes. Readers will enjoy meeting frontier cook Julia Clark, wife of William Clark of the Lewis and Clark Expedition; Susanna W. Dodds, author of *Health in the Household: or Hygienic Cookery* (1883), one of the state's first books to advocate strict dietary control as a path toward healthy living; and Thomas Bullock, a standout in 1917 as an African American cookbook author. Similarly, while other historians have focused on isolated high-profile food events or venues, such as the 1904 World's Fair and the Souard Market in St. Louis,¹ the Fishers attempt a broad, and arguably more balanced, approach to illuminating the state's culinary landscape. They leave few rocks unturned, crediting changes in Missourians' food habits to everything and everyone from the early French explorers to the expansion of railroads in the late nineteenth century

to the subsequent influx of Germans, Italians, and other immigrants. Most importantly, though, they remind readers of something that even Missourians forget: the state was a significant industrial force in the early twentieth century.

Via a thorough review of Missouri-based manufacturers and their product cookbooks, the Fishers highlight many kitchen innovations of the era—including coal and gas ranges, thermostatic oven-control devices, and the electric can opener—that forever changed how all of America cooked.

Unfortunately, the momentum stalls after the first few chapters, in large part because the book departs from a sensible chronology. Chapters meander from those organized by time, such as “Cookbooks Come to Missouri” and “A Taste of Nineteenth-Century Publications,” to those focused on certain cookbook types, such as “A Serving of Ethnic Cookbooks,” to others harder to classify. For example, one chapter, “Missouri Cookbooks Record History,” if true to its title, could have encompassed the subject matter of the entire book. In the course of hopping, skipping, and jumping through time, I often found myself scratching my head and searching for answers to the questions I had hoped the book would address. How have cookbooks and recipe writing changed in Missouri over the decades? Are these trends any different from those observed elsewhere in the United States, and, if so, why? And, more specifically, how did Missouri’s position as the Gateway to the West alter its accessibility to new foods and the local approaches to cookbooks and recipes?

Shortcomings aside, *Pot Roast, Politics, and Ants in the Pantry* keeps its promise that readers will find “more than recipes for culinary creations” (p.1) in the pages of Missouri cookbooks. References to practical housekeeping, marital, and medicinal tips of the times, such as how to eradicate ants in the pantry or “How to Cook Husbands” (p.178), abound. These morsels keep the book fast-paced and fun, but they also allow a critical lesson to ring loud and clear: cookbooks needn’t be repositories of thirty-minute meals or vehicles for celebrity-chef self-promotion, as so many top-sellers are today. In fact, the cookbooks with the greatest staying power often serve the loftier purpose of enriching our daily lives. Whether or not the Fishers intended this course of instruction is immaterial. The lesson alone makes *Pot Roast, Politics, and Ants in the Pantry* worth reading.

—Julia M. Usher, St. Louis, MO

NOTE

1. See, for example, Pamela J. Vaccaro, *Beyond the Ice Cream Cone: The Whole Scoop on Food at the 1904 World’s Fair* (St. Louis: Enid Press, 2004); and Suzanne Corbett, *Pushcarts & Stalls: The Soulard Market History Cookbook* (St. Louis: Palmerston & Reed, 1999).

Potato: A History of the Propitious Esculent

John Reader

New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2009

336 pp. \$28.00 (cloth)

Propitious...demoralizing...valuable: all words John Reader uses to describe the unassuming potato. Such words could just as easily describe the author’s latest work, a concise volume spanning the global history of this much-loved foodstuff. Following up on themes first explored in Reader’s work on human ecology, *Man on Earth*, *Potato* takes the reader from man’s earliest appearance in the Americas through to the futuristic realm of space travel. This book epitomizes what anthropology can bring to the study of food, and vice versa. *Potato* will no doubt appeal to scholars, students, and the general public alike.

For a scholar of food history, or anyone wishing to delve deeper into the subjects Reader explores, the well-footnoted text and extensive bibliography are a pleasure. Reader’s writing is delightfully jargon-free, even when he treats intensely academic arguments within fields whose gazes have turned to the potato. His discussion of intellectual debates, from the peopling of the Americas to the transition to sedentary farming, is even-handed and thoughtful. It is also nice to see an author so openly acknowledge those scholars whose work he mined in writing such an ambitious book. Though much of *Potato* is based on this secondary research, Reader expertly weaves his own experiences and voice into the writing.

A highlight of the book is when Reader reveals the journey that he himself has taken in researching and writing *Potato*. Ethnographic snapshots are judiciously sprinkled throughout the chapters, helping to drive home themes brought out in the historical narrative. This technique effortlessly ties together the past and present of various places across the globe, from the Peruvian Andes to the West of Ireland and Papua New Guinea. Though the subject matter spans millenia, the reader is never overwhelmed by the ambition of the project. The volume stands at an unintimidating 336 pages, a good length for those exploring food history and anthropology for the first time.

This book touches on many themes and periods, straying from the potato plant itself to explore broader issues within global history and human development. One major, though slightly demoralizing, theme that Reader develops is the place of the potato in labor inequities over the centuries and across the globe. His overview of exploitation fueled by the potato’s nutritional bounty moves from the Spanish silver mines of Potosí to the Industrial Revolution of England.