

## Praise for Maguelonne Toussaint-Samat and *A History of Food*

‘For those of us virtually weaned on this monumental landmark when it was first published, the expanded, updated edition of *A History of Food* couldn’t be a more welcomed and exciting surprise. While the hefty volume is an indispensable source of valuable facts and information for anyone interested in the worldwide development of numerous foods and the intriguing evolution of man’s dietary habits over the centuries, the book also happens to be, quite simply, a wonderful and inspiring read – to be dipped into like a bowl of fresh wild strawberries.’  
*James Villas, author of The Glory of Southern Cooking and Between Bites: Memoirs of a Hungry Hedonist*

‘This amazing and most entertaining book presents anything you might want to know about the cultural history of food forever and everywhere. It’s a great place to find the symbolic meaning of food myths, legends, and revels, not to mention the dietetics of cherries and other nutritious foods. It should be a welcome addition to the library of every food studies scholar.’  
*Marion Nestle, author of What to Eat*

‘Indispensable, and an endlessly fascinating book. The view is staggering. Not a book to digest at one or several sittings. Savor it instead, one small slice at a time, accompanied by a very fine wine.’ *New York Times*

‘Quirky, encyclopaedia, and hugely entertaining. A delight.’ *Sunday Telegraph*

‘This book is not only impressive for the knowledge it provides, it is unique in its integration of historical anecdotes and factual data. It is a marvellous reference to a great many topics.’ *Raymond Blanc*

‘It’s the best book when you are looking for very clear but interesting stories. Everything is cross-referenced to an extraordinary degree, which is great because the information given is so complex and interweaving.’ *The Independent*

‘*A History of Food* is a monumental work, a prodigious feat of careful scholarship, patient research and attention to detail. Full of astonishing but insufficiently known facts.’ *Times Higher Education Supplement*

‘[This is] one of the most important works on the subject to date and is a comprehensive reference. Maguelonne Toussaint-Samat is an accomplished writer, journalist and historian. Every serious culinary library should include this book. I unreservedly recommend its 801 pages to you.’ *Association Mondiale de la Gastronomie*

‘The book makes one want to go into the kitchen, to cook and to eat. It is beautifully produced and the price is excellent.’ *Oxford Magazine*

‘Gorgeous and unusually thought-provoking. I loved it.’ *The Age*

‘This is a remarkable book, full of information culled from serious research.’ *Nature*

‘An important contribution to the history of food.’ *The Journal of European Economic History*

‘Anyone interest in food, its origins, and how skilled craftsmen and tradesmen held the key to the long evolution of the present day status of food, would enjoy this book.’ *ATEA Journal*

‘The book belongs to every public and academic library, and on the book shelves of all people with curious minds. It rightfully received the History Prize of the *Société des gens de lettres de France*.’ *International Journal of World Peace*



# — A HISTORY OF FOOD —

*New Expanded Edition*

MAGUELONNE  
TOUSSAINT-SAMAT

*Translated by Anthea Bell*

 **WILEY-BLACKWELL**

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*Tibi pauca meae . . .*

The genius of love and the genius of hunger, those twin brothers, are the two moving forces behind all living things. All living things set themselves in motion to feed and to reproduce. Love and hunger share the same purpose. Life must never cease; life must be sustained and must create.

Turgenev, *Little poems in prose*, XXIII.

L'angoisse de la faim qui	The fear of hunger, ever
toujours hurle et gronde	roaring and growling,
Est le ressort puissant jouant	is the powerful spring quivering
au coeur du monde,	at the heart of the world,
Et celui qui dévore est l' élu	and he who eats is the
du destin.	chosen one of Fate.

Daniel Lesueur, *Poésies*, 'La lutte pour l'existence'.

'After thirty years of war and occupation, our dietary customs are the only tangible signs that we still exist as a people,' a Vietnamese has said.

The family meal, provided by the father and prepared by the mother, remains the essential bond, a bond in which the child sees the realization of those images of mother and father without which human beings have no internal stability, and a society ceases to build a civilization. The proud and ancient history of those craft industries which created our cheeses, wines and charcuterie must not be forgotten in the name of a sometimes dubious and vacillating science . . .

J. Trémolière, *Encyclopaedia Universalis*, vol. I.



# CONTENTS

Foreword to the New Expanded Edition by Betty Fussell	xiii
Preface	xv
List of Illustrations	xvi
Acknowledgements	xix
Introduction	1

## PART I: COLLECTING GATHERING HUNTING

<i>From Fire to the Pot</i>	9
1 COLLECTING HONEY	14
Honey in the Golden Age	14
A Taste of Honey	16
<i>Honey in Legend</i>	18
Honey in Nature and History	21
<i>Honey-Cakes, Spice-Bread, Gingerbread</i>	28
Mead and Sacramental Intoxication	30
2 THE HISTORY OF GATHERING	35
The Ancient Pulses	35
<i>The Symbolism of Beans</i>	40
The Etymology (and Entomology) of Haricot Beans	41
<i>The Holy War of Cassoulet</i>	45
Soya: the Most Widely Eaten Plant in the World	46
<i>Soya: Nutritional Facts and Figures</i>	50
Mushrooms and Fungi	50
Roots	57
Table of Vegetable Nutrition	65

## CONTENTS

3	HUNTING	66
	The Great Days and the Decline of Game	66
	<i>Nutritional Facts and Figures about Game</i>	79

### PART II: STOCK-BREEDING ARABLE FARMING: MEAT, MILK, CEREALS

	<i>The Evidence of Occupied Sites</i>	83
4	THE HISTORY OF MEAT	85
	The Birth of Stock-breeding and Society	85
	Table of Areas of Origin of the First Domestic Animals	88
	Meat-Eating: Likes and Dislikes	89
	<i>The Horse, the Spirit of Corn</i>	95
	Fat Oxen and Prosperous Butchers	95
5	THE HISTORY OF DAIRY PRODUCE	103
	Cheese and Curds	103
	Yoghurt: Fermented Milk	108
	Butter: the Cream of the Milk	109
	<i>The Symbolism of Butter</i>	113
6	THE HISTORY OF CEREALS	114
	Cereals as Civilizers	114
	<i>The Symbolism of Wheat</i>	117
	Table of the Long March of Cereals	118
	Imperialist Cereals	119
	<i>The Myth of Demeter</i>	126
	Everyday Cereals	127
	<i>Harvest Festivals</i>	133
	Strategic Cereals	134
	Rice in the East	139
	<i>The Symbolism of Rice</i>	149
	Maize in the West	149
	<i>Why Maize is Called 'I Have No More Gumbo'</i>	159
	<i>Why Corn-Cobs are Thin and Small</i>	160
	<i>Zuni Legend of Maize Flour</i>	160
	From Porridge to Beer	161
	<i>The Technique of Brewing Beer</i>	167
	The History of Pasta	170
	The History of Grain Spirits	176

### PART III: THE THREE SACRAMENTAL FOODS: OIL, BREAD, WINE

	<i>The Fundamental Trinity</i>	183
7	THE HISTORY OF OIL	185
	Olive Oil	185
	The Dietary History of Olive Oil	187



## CONTENTS

<i>Olive Oil in Legend and Symbolism</i>	191
Making Olive Oil	193
Other Oils	196
<i>Margarine</i>	199
 8 THE HISTORY OF BREAD AND CAKES	 201
The Bread on the Board	201
<i>The Symbolism of Bread and Cakes</i>	207
<i>Four Stages in the Development of Bread-Making</i>	209
The Taste of Bread	210
<i>The Technique of Bread-Making</i>	214
Our Daily Bread	215
Special Cakes for Sundays	218
 9 THE HISTORY OF WINE	 223
From the Vine to Wine	223
<i>Dessert Grapes</i>	230
<i>The Technique of Wine-Making</i>	231
<i>The Symbolism of Wine</i>	233
<i>The Legend of Dionysus</i>	235
The Proper Use of Wine	236
<i>Cooking with Wine</i>	249
Wine and God	251
A Wine of Revolution	258
PART IV: THE ECONOMY OF THE MARKETS	
<i>The Centre of the City</i>	265
 10 THE HISTORY OF FISH	 268
The Fish of the Ancient World	268
<i>A Who's Who of Sea Fish</i>	272
<i>The Salmonidae: a family of aristocrats</i>	273
<i>Fishing in Legend</i>	277
Extravagance and Economy in Eating Fish	277
<i>The Symbolism of Fish</i>	281
<i>Uses for Less Profitable Fish</i>	284
The Providential Nature of Salt Fish	287
<i>Drying, Salting and Smoking Fish; an Age-Old Procedure</i>	293
Table of the Nutritional values of Fish	294
Aquaculture and Pisciculture: Fish Farming	294
Blue Europe, or the Common Fish Market	298
<i>From Fishing to Our Plates</i>	301
Table of the Economic and Social Potential of a Common Fishing Zone	302
 11 THE HISTORY OF POULTRY	 305
Facts about Poultry	305
Choosing Poultry	312

## CONTENTS

<i>The Symbolism of Poultry</i>	319
Eggs: their Uses and Customs	322

### PART V: LUXURY FOODS

<i>The Revels of the Gauls</i>	333
12 TREASURES FROM THE SEA	338
The History of Garum	338
The History of Caviare	339
<i>A Who's Who of caviare</i>	345
<i>How to Keep Caviare Happy</i>	347
The History of Shellfish and Crustaceans	348
<i>Facts about Crustaceans</i>	356
The History of Shellfish-Farming	359
<i>The Biology of the Oyster</i>	366
<i>The Biology of the Mussel</i>	368
13 THE TREASURE OF THE FORESTS	369
The History of Pork and Charcuterie	369
<i>About Ham</i>	378
<i>Sausages</i>	381
<i>The Symbolism of the Pig</i>	384
The History of Foie Gras	385
<i>Facts about Foie Gras</i>	392
<i>The Symbolism of Liver</i>	393
The History of Truffles	394

### PART VI: THE ERA OF THE MERCHANTS

<i>Making a Good Profit</i>	403
14 AN ESSENTIAL FOOD	414
The History of Salt	414
<i>The Symbolism of Salt</i>	429
<i>The Technique of Winning Salt</i>	430
15 SPICE AT ANY PRICE	433
About Spices	433
The Secrets of Spices	437
<i>Cinnamon</i>	439
<i>Pepper</i>	441
<i>Ginger</i>	446
<i>Turmeric and Cardamom</i>	450
<i>Cloves</i>	453
<i>The Great Trading Companies</i>	458
<i>Nutmeg and Mace</i>	461
<i>Chillies and Sweet Peppers</i>	464
Aromatics and the Imagination	467

## CONTENTS

<i>Saffron</i>	467
<i>Vanilla</i>	471
Everyday Condiments and Herbs	473
<i>Herbs</i>	478
The Proper Use of Spices, Aromatics and Condiments	481
<i>The Grocer's Trade</i>	488
PART VII: NEW NEEDS: SUGAR, CHOCOLATE, COFFEE, TEA	
<i>Gluttony and Greed for Gain</i>	493
16 THE LURE OF SUGAR	496
<i>Rum, A Sugar Spirit</i>	504
<i>The Legend of Sugar</i>	505
17 CONFECTIONERY AND PRESERVES	507
18 CHOCOLATE AND DIVINITY	515
<i>Definitions of Chocolate</i>	519
19 COFFEE AND POLITICS	521
<i>Coffee from the Islands</i>	530
<i>Coffee in Legend</i>	532
20 TEA AND PHILOSOPHY	535
<i>Tea in Legend</i>	543
<i>The Symbolism of Tea</i>	544
PART VIII: ORCHARDS AND KITCHEN GARDENS	
<i>Instructions for the Garden</i>	547
21 THE TRADITION OF FRUITS	558
<i>The Symbolism of the Apple</i>	558
<i>Grafting</i>	561
<i>Dessert Apples</i>	562
Table of Production of Apples in EC Countries, 1982-3	564
<i>Cider and Calvados</i>	567
<i>Pears</i>	572
<i>Plums</i>	575
<i>Peaches</i>	578
<i>The Peach in Legend</i>	581
<i>Apricots</i>	582
<i>The Dietetics of Apricots</i>	584
<i>Cherries</i>	584
<i>The Dietetics of Cherries</i>	585
<i>Strawberries</i>	586
<i>Melons</i>	590
<i>Oranges</i>	593
<i>Growing and Selling Oranges</i>	600

## CONTENTS

<i>A Who's Who of Oranges</i>	602
<i>Grapefruit</i>	602
<i>Figs</i>	603
<i>The Symbolism of Figs and The Fig Tree</i>	607
<i>Dates</i>	607
<i>Pineapples</i>	609
<i>Bananas</i>	610
<i>Avocados</i>	612
<b>22 THE EVOLUTION OF VEGETABLES</b>	620
<i>Cabbages</i>	622
<i>Cauliflowers</i>	625
<i>Salad</i>	626
<i>Chicory and Endive</i>	629
<i>Watercress</i>	630
<i>Asparagus</i>	631
<i>Growing Asparagus</i>	633
<i>Artichokes</i>	636
<i>Tomatoes</i>	637
<b>23 THE POTATO REVOLUTION</b>	641
<i>Sweet Chestnuts</i>	645
<i>Potatoes</i>	646
<i>Soufflé Potatoes</i>	653
<b>PART IX: SCIENCE AND CONSCIENCE IN THE DIET</b>	
<i>The Hows and Whys of Quality</i>	659
<b>24 PRESERVING BY HEAT</b>	662
<i>Canned Sardines</i>	668
<i>The Technique of Canning</i>	670
<i>Food Preservation</i>	671
<i>Pasteurized Milk</i>	673
<b>25 PRESERVING BY COLD</b>	675
<i>Quick-Freezing</i>	677
<b>26 THE REASSURANCE OF DIETETICS</b>	680
<i>Vitamins</i>	683
<i>Chronology of Dietary Progress</i>	684
<b>27 A REASSURING FUTURE</b>	690
<b>Notes</b>	706
<b>Select Bibliography of Recent English-Language Works</b>	723
<b>Bibliography to Original Edition</b>	729
<b>Index</b>	733

# FOREWORD TO THE NEW EXPANDED EDITION

Betty Fussell, author of *The Story of Corn*  
and *Raising Steaks*

When I first put on my bookshelf in 1987 Maguelonne Toussaint-Samat's epic and epoch-making world history of food, a hefty tome of 800 pages, it stood alone. In the 20 years since then, the study of food from every possible angle has taken off in both academic and popular culture, leaving in its wake everything from specialized monographs to triple-volumed encyclopedias – so many that they crowd my shelves and spill on to the floor. But Toussaint-Samat's work still stands alone, inviolate, a unique embodiment of the gastrobiography of humankind.

While all organisms hunger, she writes, only man thinks about it. In looking at the evolution of man's diet, from eating leaves to cooking meats and seeds by means of cave fires and eventually industrial furnaces, the author gives us less a narrative than a cinematic montage. She juxtaposes long shots with close-ups, cutting back and forth across timelines with a mixture of legend and myth, natural science, folklore, social and political history, poetry and economics – projecting in the process a singular mind, which is passionately opinionated, idiosyncratic, and humane.

Always her focus is on the singularity of foods and their peculiar relationships to men hungering for both sustenance and pleasure. Her categories are her own: 'The dietetics of apricots', 'The symbolism of liver', 'The lure of sugar', 'How to keep caviare happy'. No byway is too obscure, too distant in time or space, for minute investigation. During our 'long march of cereals' from Jericho in 10,000 BC to Australia in AD 1800, we learn of the importance of 'bee glue' in the history of honey, the origins of barrel making for wine and beer in ancient Gaul, the Neolithic mining of salt in Austria, tea fraud in Transylvania, freeze-dried potatoes in the highlands of Peru, an orange named by the Bey of Tunis after his Maltese mistress, a monk's smuggling of eggs in his underwear to save the life of Caterina Sforza in prison.

'I am a man,' the Roman playwright Terence once said, 'and nothing human is foreign to me.' Toussaint-Samat applies his dictum to food. 'Diet is a social signal', she writes, and nothing in man's food history is foreign to her. She dives deep into the ways in which diet shaped the explorations of discovery in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the spice wars of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the

## FOREWORD TO THE NEW EXPANDED EDITION

pig wars between Serbia and Austria-Hungary in the nineteenth century, the fish wars in the twentieth century, the industrialized food wars in the twenty-first. Dipping into her volume at random, it's impossible not to keep turning the pages because you can't imagine what man will think up next. For once we move beyond the narrow reductive lens of diet as nutrition only, the sum of a food's biochemical parts, to look at the symbolic values our foods have accumulated over the millennia of man's journey on earth. Roasting a goose at Christmas echoes ancient Celtic ritual feasts of the midwinter solstice, when a sacrificial bird was eaten to ensure the return of spring. In a lowly beanfield, she hears footsteps of those ancient Egyptians and Greeks who saw the field as sacred ground because beans bore the souls of the dead. She recognizes that satisfying man's hunger for food is not a matter of nutrition alone, but of satisfying his appetite for meaning, for values, for quality in the way he lives his life each day. For mankind, sustenance is not just for the body he shares with other created organisms, but for the mind, heart and imagination that is his alone, the things that make and keep him human.

March 2008

## PREFACE

Turgenev invoked the genius of hunger.

From time immemorial, the human race has explored the world in search of food. Hunger has been the force behind its onward march. Hunger is still the source of mankind's energies, good or bad, the reason for its advance, the origin of its conflicts, the justification of its conscience and the currency of its labours.

Empires have done battle for food, civilizations have been built around it, crimes committed, laws made and knowledge exchanged.

The rest is only literature.

The practice of hunting and gathering, the consumption of salt and cereals, the discovery of stock-breeding and wine, the use of spices, salt, sugar, potatoes, proteins, have all been stages along the way, each in turn shaking the known world to its foundations.

### Preface to the New Expanded Edition

The new millennium gives me a chance to look at the latest scientific and technological discoveries to have opened up the current chapter in the story of the food we eat, a chapter that is still going on. Today, therefore, I set out to provide my readers with information about these new developments in a revised and expanded edition of the *History of Food*.

M.T.-S.

# LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

## Colour plates

- 1 Preparation of tortillas, Mexico
- 2 Bringing home the catch from the Bosphorus, Turkey
- 3 The olive branch, Greece
- 4 A shop window, Florence, Italy
- 5 Drying fish, South Korea
- 6 Dried fish, Bangkok, Thailand
- 7 Drying salted ham, Estremadura, Spain
- 8 Canning sardines, Brittany, France
- 9 Woman at bread oven, Morocco
- 10 Market stall selling spices, Istanbul, Turkey
- 11 Market stall, Istanbul, Turkey
- 12 Salines at Teguidda N'Tecem, Niger, Africa
- 13 Oil shop, Turkey
- 14 Jean-Baptiste Oudry, *Still Life: Hare, Duck, Bread, Cheese and Wine*,  
Musée du Louvre, Paris, France
- 15 Cheese shop, France
- 16 Market stall selling bread, France

## Black-and-white illustrations

- 11 Neolithic sandstone mill and grinder
- 13 An open-air kitchen
- 16 Collecting honey
- 22 Sixteenth-century engraving on apiculture
- 24 Engraving on bees from Diderot's *Encyclopédie*



## LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

62	Red August onion
68	Mochica stirrup pot depicting a hunt
77	Royal stag hunt
88	Milking: detail from an Egyptian sarcophagus
99	Butcher's shop in the Middle Ages
122	Egyptian wheat
142	Terraced paddy fields in Java
152	Mochica stirrup pot with maize decoration
156	American Indian community of the sixteenth century
168	African women brewing beer
186	Olives
188	Picking olives in Tunisia
195	Making olive oil
197	The groundnut
207	Eucharistic wafer stamp
212	The baker's cart
227	The story of Noah
229	The messengers sent by Moses
248	Casks being hauled along the Rhône
252	Monks making wine at Saint-Germain-des-Prés
269	Mali fishermen on the Niger river
282	The fishwife
292	Dolphins preying on sardines
310	Cook-shop proprietor's costume
325	The egg seller
345	Making caviare in Russia
354	The oyster luncheon
388	Woman in the Périgord cramming a goose
417	Salt market at Mopti in Mali
442	Black pepper
445	Harvesting pepper in fifteenth-century India
455	Clove
463	Nutmeg
489	A Parisian grocer
500	Taking sugar cane to the mill, Colombia
501	Sugar mills in the West Indies
510	Nougat
524	A history of coffee (1)
533	A history of coffee (2)
538	Packing tea
548	'Pomona, or the fair gardener': enamelled faïence dish
554	The kitchen garden of the palace of Versailles
556	Plan of the kitchen garden at Versailles
594	Woman selling oranges
604	Cultivated fig
621	The greengrocer's shop

## LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

634 Asparagus

643 Chestnuts

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Rendering to Caesar the things which are Caesar's, I owe grateful thanks to my friends at the Séminaire Flandrin for their contributions and the information they provided from their own researches: Jeanne Cobbi with her expert knowledge of the pre-Renaissance gastronomy of Moorish Spain; Elisabeth Deshayes, who can conjure up the cookery of the seventeenth century; Mary and Philip Hyman, living archives of the culinary literature of the past; Bruno Laurioux, that great expert on spices, who so generously gave me access to the body of his work; Françoise Sabban, the most delightful of distinguished Sinologists, without whom Chinese dietary traditions would have been – not Greek, but Chinese to me. Nor of course must I forget Odile Redon of the CNRS, who as *maître assistant* at Paris VIII was my kind and skilful mentor in matters of medieval Italian cookery. Nor the patience and tolerance of Christiane Klappish, my director of studies at the EHESS, who was always an example to me.

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M.T.-S.

# INTRODUCTION

Some 60 million years ago, at the beginning of the Tertiary period, a rather unimpressive tree-dwelling creature realized that it could feed itself more conveniently by using the ends of its front limbs to pick up anything that seemed edible and convey the food to its mouth. Thereafter this creature differed from other animals, which still plunged their muzzles into their food. It even ventured to take advantage of daylight to gather food more easily, instead of preferring the cover of darkness in its old way.

The subtlety of a mentally coordinated manipulation had come between the food to be eaten and the reflex of the open mouth. The animal, now able to adjust its gestures to the rhythm of its appetite, became aware of a chain of sensations: the stimulus of hunger, the excitement of gathering food, the satisfaction of appetite.

Eating, at first a purely visceral pleasure, became an intellectual process when the eyes, which had been laterally placed, moved towards the base of the forehead. Over the last few million years the forehead itself had been getting bigger, in line with the increased size of the skull. The brain, improving as it gained volume, was able to control vision in a larger, panoramic area, now seen in relief and in depth. Physically, the animal entered another dimension, and mentally too it stood erect. Its new possibilities of vision, together with the prehensile skill of its specialized hands, encouraged it to explore its environment more thoroughly in search of food.

The creature's memory had registered a large potential choice, but certain items turned out to taste better than others and give more pleasure. The pleasure was enjoyed and remembered. The creature wanted to experience it again. That unforgettable sensation stimulated curiosity and courage, impelled the creature to make further experiments, and eventually developed its intelligence, which itself was constantly being fed with new information.

The delightful sensation of satisfying hunger gave the biped such pleasure that after several million more years or generations it was moved to express it in a cry. Not just any cry: a special one. Not a mere grunt either, but an articulated sound, a smacking of the satisfied lips and tongue, accompanied by a sigh. Pre-dating the

## INTRODUCTION

concept of language, it came to mean a number of things in every idiom of the world: 'eat/drink'; 'the maternal breast'; 'mother'; 'survival'; 'life'; 'good'. The phoneme *mem* or *mam* was the first human discourse; the first word. Babies still utter it. Its message must of course be deciphered, having become weakened and modified as it echoed down the centuries. The phoneme *mem*, *ma*, becoming the root *bo* with its variations of pronunciation as *ouo*, *wo*, *pho*, *po*, *ba*, *pa*, *bi*, etc., implies not only the act of swallowing, eating or drinking, the sound of which is imitated by the smacking of the lips, but also the potential meanings of *food*, *plant*, and their corollary, *life*.

In the common heritage of the Indo-European languages, from which Sanskrit, the languages of India, Greek, the Germanic, Romance, Celtic, Slavonic and Iranian languages and their derivatives all arose, the ultimate sense of the vocable 'botany' is therefore 'those plants one must eat to live'.

A paleontologist can tell us what our ancestors of the Quaternary era ate from studying the traces of wear left by abrasive food particles on their dental enamel. The canines and incisors are very small by comparison with the large molars and premolars – the sign of adaptation to much mastication of vegetable matter which had to be well crushed before it was swallowed – and the traces of wear and tear on the teeth also show that vegetable fibres were eaten. However, atavistic and collective human memory, which we might usefully consult more often, itself tells us with all the clarity of language that plants were indeed our first food, the basic element of humanity: a memory, perhaps, of the abundant foliage of the primeval tree.

According to Heidegger's definition, it was in order to 'say' such things (*sagen*) that the ability to 'speak' (*sprechen*) was invented. The telling of the story of food had begun, in tones of gluttony.

Gluttony is a mutation: an aberration of a need which it ends up by controlling completely. We have to be very hungry indeed for all our conditioning to be negated by the sheer will to survive. Even the more highly evolved animals can be fussy over their food, and greedy, particularly when they are domesticated and have been corrupted by human company.

Scientific deductions, and methodical investigation of the debris left by our distant ancestors on their camp sites, have enabled us to discover by stages what they ate in as much detail as if they had invited us to dinner.

In pursuit of an increasingly carnivorous diet (consisting, in the interests of survival, of high-calorie animal proteins) humanity increased and multiplied, emigrated, and spread all over the world. Increasingly, it developed skills in order to acquire more and more such food, using methods which would help it to evolve towards civilization: weapons, tools, industry, social organization. As its diet became more varied, its intellectual capacity increased.

As soon as the biped *Homo erectus*, now *Homo sapiens* by virtue of centuries of ingenuity exercised in search of his favourite foods, could use fire without fear he decided his food would be better cooked, especially as his intellectual growth meant that his digestive faculties had been modified and were now more restricted. His jaw, too, had lost some of its efficiency as his brain gained in power. Food was easier to digest cooked than raw. He also realized that his stocks of food could be better managed if he cooked them.

## INTRODUCTION

Organized civilization brought with it the idea of cookery: the intentional preparation of foods in the traditional manner of a particular social or ethnic group. Traditions derived both from local factors of climate, soil and fauna, and from religious taboos conveying ideas of cleanliness or of safeguarding the social structure.

As civilizations became more sophisticated all over the world, and commercial and cultural exchanges increased, the diet became ever more varied and complex. It has been said that civilization occurs when something we never missed before becomes a necessity. From now on food would be a social factor, sometimes even demonstrating social identity, as with the Lotophagi or lotus-eaters of Djerba in the tale of Odysseus. Tastes and culinary skills do in fact reflect a group mentality – ‘Tell me what you eat and I will tell you what you are.’ Despite progress, people with strict moral standards will tend to live on a sparse diet: examples are the famous black broth of Sparta, the frugal diet of even the richest Mormon communities in modern America, or the vigorous manner in which theologians tackled nutritional issues at the time of the Counter-Reformation.

While traditional recipes or festive rituals may relate to regional, national and religious characteristics, they also arise from a group’s general liking for certain basic foods or certain aromatics. There are regions famous for wheat, rye, maize, potatoes, pasta, rice, wine, beer, oil, butter, dairy produce, garlic, onions, pork – tastes which have conditioned the local economy.

Curiously, the frontiers of these preferences generally coincide with dialectal frontiers. These cultural data fascinate ethnologists, particularly as such preferences are naturally more marked where a region has remained isolated. But deliberate choice sometimes seems to be involved too, and the local speciality is valued as an heirloom. There are also dietary aversions: if certain ethnic groups suffering from famine are given milk to drink, it will make them seriously ill.

It took the exploration, colonization and pollution of half the planet by the other half for a kind of nutritional standardization to be gradually imposed; in general, evolution has been in the direction of Western customs. (In those new African republics which have come to despise their local starchy foods, the new and expensive fashion is for white bread made with imported flour.) Invaders or emigrants have always brought their dietary customs with them, as if sentimentally importing a little soil from their native land. Conquered peoples, once they lose their own identity along with their desire to resist the invaders, end up adopting these new dietary standards, just as they accept new religious norms. Dietary adaptation is imposed on the entire population, from top to bottom of the social scale, as it evolves towards reflecting the image of the conquerors.

Diet, then, is a social signal. Since cannibalistic times, it has been associated with identification magic. The food of the strongest – like his religion, his spiritual food – is always regarded as the best. The strongest person is he who imposes his diet on others. ‘Going native’ in diet has usually been regarded as a lapse in a colonial – though sometimes as intellectual snobbery. On the other hand, the colonist always and unhesitatingly exports the exotic foodstuffs of the territories he has occupied. Some of these colonial products will become naturalized in the colonist’s home country, either benefiting to a varying degree from people’s curiosity or coming to satisfy real needs. They can then be exported to new colonies, where they become

## INTRODUCTION

so commonplace that their original home is eventually forgotten. Such has been the fate in modern times of the tomato, the turkey, the potato and the cassava. However, we should not forget that most of the traditional fruits of Western orchards, such as the apple, the peach, the grape and the apricot, not to mention the fowls in our poultry yards, have followed the paths of human migration since ancient times.

The slow assimilation or progressive commercialization of foreign foods did not have much influence on the evolution (or evolutions) of humanity until the end of the Middle Ages. It was as the Renaissance dawned that things changed. The modern period was to be one of large-scale imports and exports, not just of food but also, for reasons connected with food, of human flesh: live human flesh, at least if it survived the voyage. Not, of course, to be eaten – the exporters and importers were good Christians, after all – but human flesh on foot, with strong arms for manual labour.

At the time of the conquest of the American continent, the ordinary people of Europe as a whole were in greater need of basic soup, with or without bacon, than the luxury of a more varied diet. But the new lands on the other side of the world had to be intensively cultivated and show a profit which would pay for the expense of conquering them. The large-scale agricultural exploitation of the colonies meant that their produce could infiltrate European markets quite cheaply, creating out of nowhere appetites which soon became necessities. Gluttony, as I suggested above, is a mutation or aberration of a need and ends up by controlling it.

Just as tea was involved in the independence of the United States, slavery marks an episode in the saga of the history of food, which is only another way of looking at the history of mankind. That saga extends over thousands of years and is played out against the background of the entire planet. Its episodes are so interesting in themselves that one risks forgetting the scientific disciplines which have gone into reconstructing them. The study of food relates to the human sciences (ethnology, ethnography, sociology, medicine, history), to environmental analysis (geography, climatology, botany, agronomics), and to the economy, where nutritional requirements are both an initial and a final stage (as in the markets for sugar and potatoes). Once we enter the realms of gastronomy, it also has elements of philosophy and art – ‘the art and science of delicate eating’, according to a dictionary definition.

Gastronomy can become a kind of religion, although the more Rabelaisian ‘gastrolaters’, in their over-enthusiastic devotion to the cause of gastrology, may find themselves in the consulting room of their near-homonym the gastroenterologist, who specializes in curing the results of over-indulgence. But gastronomy has its own places of worship, at present given over to the rites of *nouvelle cuisine*, its pontiffs (such as Brillat-Savarin), its sacred scriptures (see the well-stocked cookery shelves of your local bookshop), choristers to sing its praises and merchants within its temple gates. In our own time new life-styles and technical advances (canning, freezing, freeze-drying), the standardization of exotic foods, and ecological fads have all contributed to a dietary revolution; there is no telling yet whether it will end in tablets taken twice a day, Chinese cuisine for all, black broth in the Spartan manner, or hydroponically grown cereals to be chewed 60 times before swallowing. All grist, one might say, to the internal mill.



## INTRODUCTION

As we become disillusioned with over-indulgence, our next major pleasure may be to fill the stomach scientifically. In an era of excess, there are some who pride themselves on adopting a new nutritional metaphysic: the fashionable diet. The conscientious consumption of diets as scientific as they are surprising gives psychological rather than physical satisfaction; people with access to too much good food eventually become obsessed with putting less and less on their plates.

We come, therefore, to a paradox: one part of the globe does not know what to do with its excess produce, but prices rise in proportion to surplus stocks, since so much has to be paid to a second part of the globe for the energy required to produce it. As for the remaining part of the globe, the Third World countries without either abundant harvests or oil, there is no saying yet whether its people will die of famine caused by drought, or because of bad luck, or through sheer incompetence. They urgently need help.

It would be sad if the history of food were to end with the word FAMINE.



—— PART I ——

*During the Paleolithic age, hunger  
was satisfied by the methods of*

COLLECTING GATHERING  
HUNTING



## From Fire to the Pot

‘There was a time’, says a myth of the Chilouk people, ‘when no one yet knew fire. People used to heat their food in the sun, and the men ate the upper part of the food, cooked in this way, while the women ate the underneath which was still uncooked.’ The myth is not male chauvinism, but a kind of allegory of the sexual symbolism of fire.

Just as we do not know how, where or by whom fire was first domesticated, we cannot really tell anything about the way food was cooked in the most distant Paleolithic period. We can only base conjectures on the customs of existing primitive peoples. Bones and walnut or hazelnut shells have been found on excavated sites, but there is no means of knowing whether they are the remains of cooked meals, the debris of fires lit for heat, or even the remnants of incinerated raw waste matter. Professor Loon has studied the treatment of certain long bones cracked so that the marrow could be extracted, and believes they were sucked and gnawed raw. The Abbé Breuil and Dr Hulin are inclined to think the meat was roasted, from the evidence of Mousterian sites in Spain and the Dordogne. Similarly, we cannot be sure that the stones found around these hearths, some of them flat and some rounded, were really querns used for grinding grain. On the other hand, the discovery of organic ash in fossilized charcoal such as has been found at Hommersheim in Germany, together with the large number of cracked or broken bones in the immediate vicinity, does seem to constitute circumstantial evidence that these Aurignacian hearths were used for cooking food.

At any rate, the charred stones frequently found in the Dordogne appear to show that food was sometimes grilled. Again, the woolly mammoth tusks stuck, points down, on both sides of a Ukrainian hearth of the Upper Paleolithic period (the tenth millennium BC) clearly suggest roasting. The spit could have been green wood, as still used in Polynesia, or indeed in the West by Boy Scouts. Remains of a charred bird between two much reddened stones have been found in Ariège – a culinary method like the modern method of making waffles – the food in this case having been forgotten or burnt.

South American Indians still use hot stones for cooking. The ethnologist and pre-historian André Leroi-Gourhan succeeded in boiling water for two hours with hot stones, in an admittedly anachronistic rubber bucket. His aim was to support his theory that circular hollows around the fire on the Pincevent site may have held receptacles. The crucial question is: what were these receptacles made of? Wood hollowed out by fire, as in Amazonia? In fact, when we heat water for instant coffee with an electric mini-boiler in a hotel bedroom, we are using an age-old technique. The stilt-walking shepherds of the Landes area in France were still boiling sheep’s milk with stones at the end of the last century.

The skin into which the Amazonians throw hot stones when making mead can also be put over the fire, so long as it is thick enough not to burst into flames. M. L. Ryder published an article in the journal *Antiquity* in 1966 entitled ‘Can one cook in a skin?’ It was illustrated by an engraving of 1581 showing a group of Irish people cooking soup in a ‘pot’ consisting of a sheepskin attached to three

posts. Some texts suggest that Scottish soldiers were doing the same thing in 1327. M. L. Ryder tried the experiment (not in any very expert fashion).

However, suppose you had no sheepskin or other likely receptacle to hand, how could you cook a piece of meat except by roasting or grilling it? According to Herodotus, the Scythians had a method. 'If they have no cauldron, they cast all the flesh into the victim's stomach, adding water thereto, and make a fire beneath of the bones, which burn finely; the stomach easily holds the flesh when it is stripped from the bones; thus an ox serves to cook itself.'

The Indians of the northern United States and Canada were familiar with this method. The Mongols combine cooking in a skin and cooking with stones: they behead a goat and bone it neatly, extracting the inside parts through the neck. Then they cut the meat up small and put it back in the skin with white-hot stones. You wait two hours and then serve.

The Baloubas of Zaïre use the bark of trees for cooking *au plat*. Many tropical peoples, for instance the Malays, stuff hollow green bamboo canes with rice and cook them in the glowing embers.

If the first people to work clay did not instantly hit upon the idea of making fired pottery vessels, it must have been because they were getting on perfectly well without them. The people who lived in what is now Czechoslovakia some 27,000 years ago baked a number of items in the kiln discovered at the Dolné Vestonice site, but the fragments found are of ceramic votive objects: human or animal figurines. The first pottery vessels known to us were made by the Japanese in the thirteenth millennium, and it cannot be claimed that the art spread from them. When a need was felt, or chance took a hand, the idea could have occurred in a number of places. There is a theory which holds that, at a given time, ideas for certain inventions are in the air.

After the end of the last great Ice Age, about 12,000 years ago, climatic conditions favoured the spread of wild cereal plants. Mortars and mills hollowed out of the living rock at the entrances of inhabited caves have been found in Nubia and Egypt. But the communities who devoted themselves entirely to the practice of farming and depended on the cereals then cultivated did not take to pottery vessels until around the seventh millennium, when their culture was at its height. Vessels made of fired clay have been found at the Mureybet site in northern Syria. As in Czechoslovakia 12,000 years earlier, however, the oldest of the items excavated cannot have been for cooking; they are too small to be any use. They are modelled in the form of female figures, and seem to have been pots for make-up or sacred perfumes.

It may well be that the Neolithic people of Mureybet, who lived in curious round, hump-backed houses made of *unfired* bricks, derived the idea of the possibilities of pottery from the sunken hearths in which they cooked their food. These ovens were just holes dug in the earth. If the soil was not naturally clayey, the sides were coated with smooth clay to make them more stable. Heaps of pebbles can still be seen at the bottom of such ovens, mingled with cinders; they are of great interest to scholars. The ovens were used to heat stones upon which food was then placed to grill (they still bear traces of their use for that purpose). The clay on the sides of the holes was baked at the same time. Such ovens are still used in the region for baking