

(pp.220–221). That may be so, but this reviewer wishes that it had been possible for Martin to confront the subjectivities of the present as he has acknowledged and explored those of the past. If perceptions of violence, disorder, and drunkenness were variable in premodern Europe (pp.222–223), is this not true now?

Indeed, Michel Foucault—our most influential critic of institutions, categorizations, and systems of power and knowledge in the West—would probably not be surprised that, as Martin demonstrates in chapter 2 and chapter 3, premodern moralists' complaints seem to rise as consumption was declining. As Foucault taught us, making the subjective appear objective—for example, constructing a “normal” opposed to crime, sickness, and deviation—is a hallmark of modern institutions, permitting their closest discipline, supervision, and power over persons. Premodern condemnations and attempts at regulation were minor compared to the legislative, bureaucratic, social, cultural, and health apparatus that today govern alcohol. As its consumption has comparatively fallen in the modern West, its management and the rhetoric of fear surrounding it have risen. Could that inverse equation, inexorably tied to the massive expansion of the state between 1700 and 2012, help reinterpret modern conceptualizations of alcohol, drunkenness, crime, and violence, and thereby help solve the puzzle of Martin's conclusions? Perhaps *Alcohol, Violence, and Disorder* does show us a historical continuity: alcohol's dangers are conveniently seized upon, its pleasures and benefits conveniently obscured, in efforts to expand authority by appeals to order and to public good.

—Christine Caldwell Ames, University of South Carolina

Let the Meatballs Rest: And Other Stories About Food and Culture

Massimo Montanari

Translated by Beth Archer Brombert

New York: Columbia University Press, 2012

iii + 178 pp. \$26.50 (cloth)

In an Italian meal, the *antipasti* are often under-appreciated and quickly forgotten. Arriving before the pasta dish, they are supposed to open up the stomach, as Italians believe that *l'appetito viene mangiando* (appetite comes while eating). A typical *antipasto* is a plate or wooden cutting board with slices of local sausage, hard cheeses with honey or jam, some *bruschette*, and pickled vegetables in olive oil. The small portions and variety indeed make one eager to get to the main dish, but the diner who stops, slows down, and savors them is

rewarded. Massimo Montanari's new book, *Let the Meatballs Rest: And Other Stories About Food and Culture*, can be thought of as a delicious mix of *antipasti* that will leave the reader with an appetite for more of the author's books.

Montanari, a professor of medieval history and the unofficial dean of Italian gastronomic history, is the author or editor of more than twenty books, six happily available in English. This newest volume was ably translated by Beth Archer Brombert, also the translator of Montanari's last gem, *Cheese, Pears, and History in a Proverb* (reviewed in *Gastronomica*, Summer 2012). *Let The Meatballs Rest* is a collection of articles and short essays written for Italian newspapers and magazines over the years, and is organized into thematic chapters. Despite Montanari's medieval background, the article-*antipasti* run the chronological gamut from the fall of the Roman Empire to yesterday.

It is difficult to choose favorites from this collection—I found particularly interesting the author's juxtaposition of meats and soups. The former can be divided by rank, with the honored guest or ranking diner getting the best cut. A soup, on the other hand, is not divided but democratically shared, with each person receiving his or her portion that is identical to any other. It is something that is obvious, but whose culinary semiotics we often do not stop to ponder. In another piece (“The taste of canned foods”), Montanari describes the strange history of industrial preserves. The original selling point was that finally, even commoners—until then forced to eat foods that were salted, smoked, dried, or otherwise preserved—could enjoy foods “fresh.” Another essay (“Eating on the highway”) takes a look at how the creation of the Italian highway network was critical for the invention of the romantic sentiments so often attached to “traditional foods” today. Highway eating turned what had once been a sign of poverty (having to eat food only from one's immediate surroundings) into a positive value. Montanari points out that the “taste of geography” is a child of modernity, not a traditional value (one thinks here of the Michelin touring guides and their influence on the idea of *terroir*).

One of the best things in *Let the Meatballs Rest* is what is not in it. While writing for a wider audience, Montanari avoids the temptation to play up the themes that are so ever-present in popular food writing today: that there is such a thing as an “authentic” recipe for “traditional” food products, that the Mediterranean Diet is somehow peasants' fare from long ago, and that McDonald's is not part of Italy's (or the world's) food culture. In prose that is always erudite but eminently readable, Montanari gives his take on these issues, attempting to place them within a larger historical and

cultural context. The result is an entertaining mix of insights on food from Italy to the United States. Perusing some of the other titles of the pieces — “To die for a melon,” “How chocolate became sweet,” “Philosophizing gluttony” — one realizes that just like the morsels on a good plate of *antipasti*, each one is a bite-sized story that leaves the reader with the desire for more.

—Zachary Nowak, The Umbra Institute (Perugia, Italy)

Why Calories Count: From Science to Politics

Marion Nestle and Malden Nesheim

Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2012

303 pp. Tables, Photos, and Illustrations. \$29.95 (cloth)

If *Why Calories Count* eventually draws conclusions and dietary recommendations that now seem obvious and redundant, Marion Nestle and Malden Nesheim nonetheless approach the importance of calories in a thorough, well-thought analysis of what can be scientifically proven and what is just supposition. The book addresses several facets of calories: how scientists measure their use, why everyone needs them, how the body gauges the amount it needs and the results of any discrepancies in this amount (due to an excess or lack of calories), and finally the politics of how we know (or more often, don't know) the number of calories in the food we consume.

The book's conclusions to monitor your weight, eat less and better, move more, and beware of marketing pitfalls, which today are well-known to anyone who makes the effort to listen, are on the whole unremarkable. Nestle and Nesheim themselves admit that by now, “this is old news” (p.217). However, in the six preceding parts, Nestle and Nesheim make it clear that they never sought to write a diet book. Instead, they raise an interesting discussion on why some people appear to eat everything in sight and maintain a stable weight and why others struggle against obesity. In a socially constructed environment designed to make us eat more, it has become more difficult to listen to bodily signals. Obesity is a global problem, they write, with a sequence of baby steps as the best solution.

The discussion in Part 1 regarding how scientists measure the calories contained in foods and the calories expended by a human to maintain his basal metabolism, plus any additional spontaneous exercise, is informative to the genuinely interested. Through the development of the Atwater values for estimating the calories in protein, fat, and carbohydrate, and testing of human expenditure through the modern

calorimeter, we see how the USDA's recommended 2,000-calorie diet is produced as a “good enough” average of what the human body needs. “Good enough” prevails as a theme, emphasizing that almost every number is merely an estimate. While this is frustrating to anyone trying to track his calories, Nestle and Nesheim present estimates in a thoughtful manner, at times chuckle-worthy but never cavalier.

The book is valuable in its thoroughness and its approachability, as many find discussions of calories so confusing that they opt to not pay any attention, a trap that often leads to overconsumption. Its attention to the “secret calories” — most notably alcohol, to which several chapters are devoted; genetics — which mainly comes down to a tendency to “fidget” more than others (a beneficial tendency, regardless of what your mother once told you); and the ability of social environment to overcome body signals of fullness, are of particular note.

—Heather Hammel

Secrets of the Sommeliers

Rajat Parr and Jordan Mackay

Berkeley: Ten Speed Press, 2010

230 pp. \$32.50 (cloth)

Learning to become a sommelier, or simply understanding what it takes to be one, can be a subject as dry as a Muscadet.

This simile proves apt for *Secrets of the Sommeliers*, which attempts, and largely succeeds, to outline the basic issues budding wine servers face. Although the book emphasizes the enormous investment required to buy great wines and run a restaurant wine program, author Jordan Mackay does in fact bring in as mundane and as food-oriented a wine as Muscadet—and Chenin Blanc.

For those who would love to have a career in restaurant wine, the book goes a long way in detailing how much work is involved in reaching the top of this odd profession—and how unlikely it is to achieve success without extraordinarily detailed study, travel to culinary centers around the world, massive expenditures to participate in tastings, and a lot of volunteered hours interning at some of world's finest restaurants—that, and a huge amount of networking and probably good fortune.

As such, *Secrets of the Sommeliers*, which draws on the philosophy of Raj Parr of San Francisco restaurant sommelier fame, provides a detailed course in wine list selection, wine storage, dealing vinously with guests, and other minutiae of the business. In some ways, the book is also a glimpse at fine wine marketing and sommelier image-building, and so tends