

The Classical Cookbook. Revised Edition. By ANDREW DALBY AND SALLY GRAINGER. Los Angeles: J. Paul Getty Museum and London: British Museum Press, 2012. Pp. 176. Hardcover, \$24.95. ISBN 978-1-60606-110-7.

In 1996, the classics scholar/linguist/food historian Andrew Dalby and the former professional chef/food historian Sally Grainger produced something new to studies of the eating habits of the classical Greeks and Romans. The first edition of *The Classical Cookbook* gathered recipes from the entire ancient world and showed how they could be used in the modern kitchen. Hitherto, those curious to try their hand at ancient cookery were limited to translations and adaptations of Apicius' *De Re Coquinaria*.

The Dalby and Grainger book vastly broadened the scope to include Homeric and Macedonian Greece plus earlier Rome. The new edition re-designs the earlier one; while much of the information and the recipes remain the same, the warning in the first edition regarding bovine spongiform encephalopathy ("mad cow disease") has fortunately been reversed. Another new feature is specific information on G. Baldwin and Co., Ltd., where British readers may obtain herbs and spices no longer in common Western use, such as asafetida, lovage, and rue. (For those living elsewhere, Amazon.com and ethnic grocery stores are good sources of supplies.)

The introduction also includes instructions for creating the commonly used sauces *garum*, *liquamen*, and *passum*. Throughout, the authors readily admit that they are often relying on educated guesses and personal taste, since the ancient sources listed ingredients without quantities or guidelines as to which flavor should predominate.

The book consists of eight chapters arranged in a rough chronology, and evenly divided between Greek and Roman-style recipes. This is a helpful distinction not usually pointed out in adaptations of ancient recipes. In the cooking of classical Greece, "Honey, vinegar, dry and sweet wine, cumin, coriander, and many other herbs were subtly combined to create a simple culinary style that stresses the natural flavours of the fish or meat of the dish" (19). As they did with other aspects

of Greek culture, the Romans adapted this cuisine and contributed their own ideas, many of which involved the use of costly spices.

The first chapter following the introduction, “The Homecoming of Odysseus,” was inspired by feasts described by Homer. Here the authors must use some imagination, since Homer supplies no recipes and mentions very few foods by name. An exception is the mysterious *kykeon* prepared by Hecamede in Book 11 of the *Iliad* and by Circe in Book 10 of the *Odyssey*. Here it appears as a kind of porridge made of semolina, ricotta cheese, honey, and a little beaten egg.

Other recipes in the Greek chapters “The Banquet of Philoxenus,” “The Markets of the Mediterranean,” and “A Wedding Feast in Macedonia” contain an assortment of recipes based on sources such as Archestratus (whose writings on cooking predate Apicius’ by approximately 800 years) and on Oxyrhynchus papyri. These range from dishes familiar in Modern Greek cuisine (roast lamb) to the more unusual (salt meat—or ham—stew). Fish is prominently featured as well.

The Roman chapters begin with the simple fare of “Cato’s Farm” and then move on to “The Wealth of Empire.” Introducing the recipes in the latter chapter, the authors quote abundantly from the *Cena Trimalchionis*. They fortunately have a sense of humor about the distorted picture of Roman banquet foods depicted in Petronius’ satire. “Roman cuisine, thanks to this episode, will be forever associated with dormice glazed in honey and rolled in poppy seeds,” they comment (119). The ingredient lists in this chapter become longer, but the dishes are not obscenely extravagant. Teachers wondering how to re-create the banquet in the *Ecce Romani* textbook, which featured a dormice appetizer, may be disappointed.

The remaining chapters, “On Hadrian’s Wall” and “Supper at the Baths,” focus respectively on the lasting Roman influence on British culture (including food) and on some of the earliest “restaurants” in history. The dishes in the last chapter could just as easily have been placed in the earlier “Wealth of Empire”, as we can easily imagine them served at a Roman banquet as well as a more casual setting.

This is meant to be a usable cookbook, not a systematic scholarly exploration of ancient Greek and Roman eating customs. Readers who enjoy cooking should consider throwing their own *cenae* for similarly interested foodies, and gain a unique perspective on a highly approachable aspect of ancient life.

Townsend Harris High School, mcolakis@schools.nyc.gov