It was bound to happen, and it will come as a surprise neither to Rebecca Spang nor to Amy Trubek. As of October 2000, Paris's Radio-Info informs us, the hallowed Guide Michelin is slated to be headed by an Englishman. This will surely cause Brillat-Savarin, who debunks the British as eaters and drinkers in his Physiologie du goût, to turn in his grave. It may cause several Parisian chefs of today—those who several years ago were prone to exclude in most civilized fashion customers with a foreign accent seeking reservations, especially uncouth Anglo-Saxons—to sink into a Vatel-like despondency.1 The love/hate relationship between English and French in the world of cookery and meals was much in evidence in the century that lies between Vatel and Brillat-Savarin. But there is worse (or better) yet. The latest issue of L'Officiel des Spectacles, a weekly guide to things Parisian, advertises a “Coffee Saint-Germain” serving barbecue ribs, burgers, eggs benedict and bagels.2 The sacrilege here is not so much the dishes that are served; globalization is now old hat, and new-age traiteurs (Pizza-Hut delivery boys on little red scooters) dart all over Paris.3 What the true believer has trouble believing is the restaurant’s name. It is not Café Saint-Germain, but Coffee Saint Germain, a veritable provocation for those educated in the ritual of cafés, from Procope to Deux Magots and Flore.4 Just as provocative is Coffee Saint Germain’s location, given as “au cœur de Saint-Germain des Prés,” the post-World War II heartland of café activity. The linguistic perversion could signal a twenty-first-century rendering of Enlightenment France’s anglophilia, or, more likely, indicate yet another manifestation of American intrusion. Turning from institution to art (and science), today's scene once again points to the timeliness of Spang’s and Trubek’s books. Both the June issue of Gourmet and the Summer 2000 issue of Harvard’s alumni quarterly contain articles featuring culinary historian Barbara Wheaton, whose ongoing survey of nineteenth-century French culinary history picks up where her landmark Savoring the Past (1983) ends.5 Food studies, a generic term highlighted by historian Steven Kaplan in a Chronicle of Higher Education article, encompasses all of the concomitants of food and meals and arguably conflates more disciplines and approaches than do most clusters of cultural studies. Spang’s and Trubek’s books are exempla of this exciting field in the process of reinventing itself. Is it pure coincidence, then, that both titles contain variants of “invent”? There are other overlaps as well in these two publications. Both authors focus on nineteenth-century France (though Trubek does so more than Spang, who also devotes much space to the second half of the preceding century); both cover the gestation of the restaurant (Trubek’s Chapter Two is titled “The Emergence of the Restaurant”); both approach their subject mainly, though far from exclusively, with the eye of the socio-historian; unsurprisingly, both have a number of identical bibliographic sources; both are published almost simultaneously by blue-ribbon university presses. And yet, these are two markedly different books in more ways than one.

When Barbara Wheaton’s Savoring the Past was translated into French and came out in Paris shortly thereafter, her title became L’Office et la Bouche, that is to say, The Pantry and the Mouth, thus delineating metaphorically two basic spatial configurations of a meal. Loosely speaking, Trubek directs us towards the pantry, in that behind-the-scenes space where the component parts of a meal come to

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**The Other French Revolution**

Explorations of Culinary and Prandial Inventiveness

**The Invention of the Restaurant:**
Paris and Modern Gastronomic Culture
Rebecca L. Spang
xii + 325 pp. Illustrations. $35.00 (cloth)

**Haute Cuisine:**
How the French Invented the Culinary Profession
Amy B. Trubek
xi + 178 pp. Illustrations. $24.95 (cloth)
life. Spang, on the other hand, focuses on the mouth, that is to say, on the eater and her/his surroundings. Too often the terms haute cuisine and gastronomy are taken to be interchangeable, their intrinsic meaning and relationship being tossed aside. We have Spang and Trubek to thank for raising our consciousness, placing us in historical context, and reminding us, from their very titles on, that the first of these terms deals with, quite literally, savoir faire, while the other deals with a newly-fashioned savoir manger.

Let us begin by entering the pantry. The back cover of Haute Cuisine is brightened by the color photo of a smiling Amy Trubek in the kitchen, arms resting on two gleaming copper pots. Trubek is a Cordon Bleu-trained professional chef who teaches at the New England Culinary Institute. Her love and mastery of cookery emanate throughout a scholarly and solidly documented book (the author, by the way, has a Ph.D. in Anthropology). Brillat-Savarin refers to himself in his famous work as “the professor.” Trubek could have done so as well. Haute Cuisine is admirably suited for teaching culinary history. It is uncluttered by critical jargon (though the term “public sphere” is overly present) and does not indulge in unnecessary detours or digressions. Above all, each chapter-section of endnotes is preceded by a student-friendly abstract of the relevant chapter’s main points. In addition, the book contains a short glossary of French culinary terms, a mini-sampler of “classic recipes of French haute cuisine,” notes, and a bibliography.

Trubek’s aim is two-fold: determining why and how the French tradition came to dominate the culinary world, and telling the story of professional cuisine. Predictably, these intertwine and feed on one another. The introduction and the first of seven chapters lay the historical and technical foundations of her study: just exactly what haute cuisine consists of (a fluctuating notion at best, linked to an assortment of status symbols), and what therein is quintessentially French (stocks, sauces, etc.). There is a brief—all too brief—recounting of what leads up to and explains the flowering of French cookery in the nineteenth century, although Lancelot de Casteau’s too-oft-forgotten Ouverture de Cuisine (1604) is noted as being the first cookery guide for what is later to become haute cuisine. The emphasis, rather, is on what follows, with numerous references to Escoffier, inter alia; and much space is given to late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century culinary exhibitions and societies. Chapter Two consists of Trubek’s reading of the restaurant’s emergence. For purposes of comparison, I shall dwell on this chapter while discussing Spang’s book. In Chapters Three and Four, titled “The British” and “Cultural Nationalism,” Trubek deals with the outreach of the French culinary world beyond its borders, pointing the way to today’s paradoxical co-existence of homogenizing globalization and the urge to define and defend one’s national and/or ethnic turf. As the author reminds us in a section on “British Ambivalence,” the love/hate, trust/distrust attitude that has characterized Franco-British relationships for centuries is very manifest throughout the nineteenth century, and still in evidence today. Relying on impressive documentary support, Trubek traces the ever-expanding tentacles of French cuisine, along with its lexicon, chefs, culinary standards, and “hauteness” throughout Europe and in America. Once again, the first stirrings are a bit hasty, for the eighteenth century provides revealing and amusing examples of Gallic expansion and Anglo-French démêlés from beginning to end, which Trubek does not discuss. The (hi)story of French émigré author-chefs begins in the early 1700s with Vincent La Chapelle, a Huguenot exile who was head chef for Lord Chesterfield, and then William of Orange and Nassau. His Modern Cook (London, 1733)/Cuisinier Moderne (The Hague, 1735) is arguably the most intriguing French cookery book of the period. At the other end of the century, the great Antonin Carême deserves more attention than Trubek gives him. Regarding cookbook squabbles, there is more to note than Hannah Glasse’s decrying of English gallowania as unjustified (pp.60–61). In a lengthy preface to his late eighteenth-century edition of a medieval English cookery manuscript, the Reverend Richard Warner disparages French beef dishes and cooking methods in general. What the Reverend does not mention, however, is that for over a century the British aristocracy resorted to
means fair and foul to lure French chefs into their households.6 And then, of course, the very essence of Gallic chauvinism can be found in Brillat-Savarin, whose Physiologie du goût is a protracted hymn to the glories of France, a nation destined to gastronomic greatness through its very being and its language (gourmandise, he notes, is untranslatable). Finally, it should be mentioned that British wine merchants owned or controlled enough of the Bordeaux wine trade in the eighteenth century to impose their preferences on the production and bottling of clarets.7

Chapter Five goes to the heart of the matter and tells us all about nineteenth-century French chefs, their apprenticeships, and the hows and whys of their mounting international celebrity, in the process throwing light on lesser-known chefs such as Joseph Favre. In a chapter that provides an exciting piece of social history, Trubek’s references illuminate the ever more important part played by the periodical press. Chapters Six and Seven, on “Schools, Standards, and Status” and “Culinary Expositions in England and France,” lead us into the multi-media and increasingly institution-structured world of today. A concluding “Epilogue” aptly synthesizes current trends: the evolving contours of French haute cuisine, the growing role played by globalization and non-French chefs, and changing tastes and customs in France itself, with the status symbol of culinary Frenchness still riding ever high.

There are some weaknesses as well as bothersome mistakes here and there. Recurring resort to Barbara Wheaton as a reference points to a neglect of more recent sources (there are quite a few; significant as it is, Wheaton’s Savoring the Past is now close to twenty years old). While François Marin is indeed the (supposed) author of the 1739 Les Dons de Comus ou les Délices de la Table (and not, as Trubek writes, “ou L’art de la Cuisine”), the quote from the preface (p.7) is not Marin’s, but that of the two Jesuit preface authors, Brunoy and Bougeant. Dons lacks interest as a cookbook and owes its renown to its groundbreaking manifesto-like preface. On page 12, Trubek gives Menon’s Cuisinière Bourgeoise’s publishing date as 1790. While Menon’s best-selling cookbook went through numerous editions, some of which were pirated, the original edition goes back to 1746. There are other errors, but, like those just mentioned, they are minor. Trubek’s Haute Cuisine is a valuable, easily readable, rich-in-content contribution to a relatively unexplored branch of social history.

And now, a table. Rebecca Spang’s The Invention of the Restaurant (hereafter Invention) reads more like a doctoral dissertation (of which it is indeed an offshoot) than a story partially experienced by the author. Her book is a good deal more francocentric than Trubek’s and hardly strays outside of France’s borders. On the other hand, much space and thought is given to antecedents. In true historical fashion, what is past is seen as prologue. Spang is Lecturer in Modern European History at University College, London. Her book comes with enviable pedigrees: Harvard University Press’s Thomas J. Wilson Prize; a bevy of well-known names in the acknowledgments. Invention is also nearly twice as long as Haute Cuisine, which enables it to avoid the pitfalls of foreshortening (Trubek’s “Definition of the Bourgeoisie” section in Chapter Four is barely over a page long). The cover illustration is positively mouth-watering, whereas Trubek’s is disappointingly unclear. Its twenty-seven illustrations are aptly chosen and well reproduced. In other words, this is a finely honed publication (a number of typos notwithstanding), and, more importantly, one that treats a truly engrossing subject in a fittingly inventive manner. The author’s approach goes well beyond social history. Spang tries, and succeeds, in evoking the mythical and mental parameters of a restaurant. In other words, hers is a study the French might well dub histoire des mentalités.

This comes across in the book’s title. We are reading not about the birth of the restaurant, but its invention. What causes, besides those of a historic and circumstantial nature, made Frenchmen turn to a “public space” for, among other reasons, privacy and seclusion? Another paradox, on which Spang dwells at length, is that the newcomer known as a restaurant had actually been around for years (one could say the same for the utopian food reverie it elicits). This she elucidates by way of a semantic sleight of hand, reminding us of the fact that the original meaning of the substantive “restaurant” denotes the species of food preparation that restores strength and/or health. The restorer par excellence was traditionally a bouillon, or concentrate of meat broth (today we still have mother’s chicken soup to keep us going). The inventive process is expounded on well into the first half of the book, step by step, stone by stone, setting by setting, with the lion’s share given over to the Revolutionary years. Spang subtly points out (p.117) that even though at first sight the renowned Revolutionary “fraternal” meals may seem to have nothing to do with the emerging restaurant, they educated eaters in a commonality of experience within public space. Spang’s in-depth exploration is understandable not only in terms of the historical significance and radical social changes of these times, or because they mark a turning point usually designated as the appearance on the scene of the restaurant as we know it today, but also because Spang, as her subtitile informs us, is engaged in a quest for the “modern.” Whereas a number of people, especially in
France, are aware of the etymological dimension of “restaurant” and its historical function, no one on either side of the Atlantic has, to my knowledge, insisted as much on the continuum between the old and the new, or “modern” restaurant. Spang’s approach is therefore quite original.

Just as Trubek does for chefs and culinary institutions, Spang leads us into the world of famous restaurateurs and their restaurants. The case of Véry, who was incarcerated during the Revolution for so-called counter-revolutionary activities, and was later raised on a gastronomic pedestal, is particularly telling of the evolution in ideologies and mentalités. Yet, the transition “from gastronomy to gastronomy” (the title of Chapter Six) uncovers the underlying continuum. This Spang achieves largely by devoting a good deal of attention to Grimod de la Reynière, said to have initiated “écriture gourmande” in his turn-of-the-century, multi-volume Almanach des Gourmands. It is the transition from a private to a public eating space incorporating the culinary developments of decades past that lies at the heart of the “modern” restaurant. With his nostalgia for ancien régime ways; his hosting of pre-revolutionary philosophical repasts; his invention of systems for rating restaurants and dishes, food and wine tastings, and a number of other ingenious mechanisms paving the way towards today’s food critics and columns, restaurant guides, etc., Grimod illustrates this transition to perfection. In addition, as noted in particular by Jean-Claude Bonnet in his remarkable 1978 introduction to a selection of Grimod’s works titled Ecrits Gastronomiques, Grimod enhances the theatrical component of the meal, turning it into a veritable performing art, an aspect that ties in well with Spang’s insistence on the restaurant as a locus that stimulates the imagination. Trubek’s chapter on the emergence of the restaurant perforce treats the subject more succinctly than does Spang’s entire book, with its detours into the restaurant’s innermost recesses, both tangible and mental. Yet Haute Cuisine covers territory relegated to the sidelines by Invention, in particular those factors engendered by the industrial revolution (broadly speaking) that modified the daily rhythms of life and produced the ever-accelerating mobility that typifies today’s modernity. “Putting Paris on the Menu” (Invention’s Chapter Seven) introduces us to the inner workings of a restaurant (pricing and marketing techniques, “menu French” and its lexicon) whose eaters have become world-wise gastronomes. Increasingly, these include foreigners. It is amusing to compare Spang’s Britons with Trubek’s. Loath to abandon the hate part of a love/hate relationship, the English (via that new post-Revolutionary breed known as tourists) now vent their ire at the “fickle” French who have forsaken the old ways for the new—while continuing, as always, to indulge in the pleasures of French meals. In a welcome sideline, Spang refers in recurring fashion to a host of contemporary plays based on various aspects of restaurant life, thus closing the gap between Grimod’s prandial theatricality and the real-life theater of the restaurant meal.

The undisputed merits of Invention notwithstanding, it could use a bit of revamping here and there, for it is not without certain drawbacks. It is less reader-friendly than Trubek’s book and still smacks here and there of a dissertation, while lacking a bibliography. This lacuna may have been imposed by the publisher, but finding references dispersed in the footnotes, especially when the latter are not taken into account by the index, detracts from the book’s scholarly readability and partially disguises the fact that the bibliographical updating of the original text is uneven.

There are some notable gaps (unless I failed to detect the references in the footnote labyrinth), such as the monumental Flandrin/Montanari edition of Histoire de l’Alimentation (Paris: Fayard, 1996) nearly one thousand pages long, or recent authoritative essays or editions covering authors Spang deals with. The bibliographical dispersion may also mislead the reader. Footnote 4 on page 248, for example, points to a quote on page 2 drawn from Les Dons de Comus, and situates it on page 7 of said work. A preceding and initial footnote reference to this work indicates 1759 as the date of publication (that of the original edition). Yet footnote 4 obviously refers to another, unmentioned, edition, since the quote comes from the Preface, and thus would appear on a Roman-numeral page in the eighteenth century. In fact, footnote 4 refers to Stephen Mennell’s 1981 edition of the preface. There are other instances of such carelessness. On page 49, we read that authorship of the Encyclopédie entry for “Goût” (“Taste”) has been “alternately attributed to d’Alembert or Voltaire.” Turning to the corresponding footnote on page 266, we discover that there are actually three entries under this word, and that Barbara Stafford, among others, attributes the relevant (longer) entry to d’Alembert. Yet the truth, as revealed by Richard Schwab’s published inventory on the subject, lies elsewhere. There are, in fact, six entries under the heading “Taste”: a short one by Jaquicot dealing with physiological aspects; the one discussed by Spang, on grammatical and literary aspects (signed and indubitably authored by Voltaire); the third drawn from Montesquieu’s papers and completed by d’Alembert; the three others centering on taste in architecture (Blondel), song (Rousseau), and painting (Landois). The tendency to simplify and thereby misrepresent is magnified by Spang’s penchant for generalization based
on a narrow sample, more apparent for the decades preceding the Revolution, where she seems to be in less familiar territory than in the Revolutionary years and the decades that follow. A statement like “For de Jaucourt, as for the other encyclopédistes [my emphasis], cookery erred when it left the realm of need and entered that of the arts and sciences” (p.50) is unfounded. Aside from the fact that there were not several, but dozens, of contributors to the Encyclopédie, among whom a consensus of opinion was not necessarily the rule, a good many of them, perhaps even a majority, probably did not give that much thought to cookery and may not even have read Jaucourt’s article. In spite of all of his moral posturing, Diderot himself, who was a true gourmand, surely thought differently. The above is but one of several examples of generalizations leading to misrepresentation. Many of these may be found in Chapter Two (“The Nouvelle Cuisine of Rousseauian Sensibility”), which unduly inflates Rousseau’s influence on the restaurant’s raison d’être in the decades preceding the Revolution.

One socially relevant turn-of-the-century meal configuration, situated in a space that is neither truly private nor public, is missing in both books; namely, the table of the so-called amphitryon, or systematic dinner host. In ancien régime times, this was a spin-off of salon traditions, referred to by Mercier in several of his chapters, and caricatured in a well-known episode of Diderot’s Rameau’s Nephew. During the post-Revolutionary and especially the Empire and Restoration years, such dinner hosts not only competed with one another but, more significantly, turned their dinner table, renowned for the gastronomic dishes being served, into a means of wielding power. The best-known case is certainly that of Talleyrand, whose spread was catered by none other than Carême and turned into an instrument of diplomacy. A lesser-known, yet equally significant amphitryon was Cambacérès, one of Napoleon’s principal lieutenants and protégés.

As any picky eater would, I have found that here and there, in both Spang’s and Trubek’s books, there is a little too much of this, and not enough of that. But when all is said and done, this double meal was a distinct, palatable pleasure, and a most nutritious one as well.

NOTES
1. Vatel was a famous chef at the time of Louis XIV who committed suicide when the fish he had ordered for a banquet honoring the monarch failed to be delivered in time. This sensational episode is immortalized in a well-known letter written by the Marquise de Sévigné and has recently been adapted for the screen by Gérard Depardieu.
2. P2866, 4-14 October, 2000, p.172. Page 172 somewhat redresses the balance by advertising a “café du commerce” serving “cuisine traditionelle.”