the food on those tables. What would it have been like to cook with those unfamiliar herbs and spices? What is it like to eat off a bread trencher, to do without forks? It is not surprising that many a teacher has wanted to inspire an enthusiasm for the Middle Ages by leading his or her class through the reenactment of a medieval meal.

The Scullys have come to the rescue. Terence Scully has written extensively and enthusiastically about medieval cookery. His editions of manuscripts including the Viandier, the Viandier, and that of Master Chiquart, chef cook to Amadeus, Duke of Savoy, and the subsequent translation of it into English, have been welcome additions to the published record of medieval culinary practice. In this present volume he is joined by D. Eleanor Scully in offering their readers a guide to the maze of French medieval cookery. They have given us a brief historical introduction, planning advice, and a substantial selection of recipes, mostly from the Viandier, the Ménagier de Paris, and Chiquart’s Du fait de cuisine. The recipes are presented in the original fourteenth- and fifteenth-century French, with an extensive commentary and the Scullys’ modern interpretations of the recipes for use in the contemporary kitchen. There are simple recipes for stuffed chicken and complicated ones for elaborate freestanding pies. Quotations from medical authorities about various ingredients diversify the text. There is also a description of a day in the life of a French cook in a ducal household in 1416.

These are rather relaxed interpretations. The recipes are designed to be executed in modern kitchens; the boar’s head is confected from papier maché. The reader will not need to learn the art of hearth cooking, and will rarely need to search for obscure ingredients. This is a book that welcomes the curious, and, as such, should bring much pleasure and instruction to its users. But I really cannot understand why the University of Michigan Press elected to use as a cover illustration Oudry’s great eighteenth-century still-life painting, The White Duck, which was, alas, stolen from the estate of the Dowager Marchioness of Chomondeley long ago, when there are so many spectacular, and more appropriate, medieval manuscript illuminations. Still, this book is to be recommended to anyone who would like to explore this phase in the development of Western cookery.

—Barbara Ketcham Wheaton, author, Savoring the Past

Feast Your Eyes: The Unexpected Beauty of Vegetable Gardens
Susan J. Pennington
In Association with Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition Service, Washington, D.C.
153 pp. 100 color illustrations. $29.95 (paper)

This beautiful history of ornamental vegetable gardens is worth seeing for the illustrations alone. Drawn primarily from the Smithsonian Institution’s Archive of American Gardens, the illustrations and accompanying text depict 350 years of ornamental vegetable gardens. Beginning with Louis XIV’s extravagant gardens at Versailles, the panorama veers east to the delicate color and ink gardens of the Ming Dynasty. It works its way back to England where the eighteenth century banished vegetables to the edges of the property lest they “blemish the prospect” of the romantic landscape garden, and then moves to America, where the Aztecs nourished their infinitely varied crops, Thomas Jefferson lavished attention on the vegetables at Monticello, and the two world wars sprouted victory gardens.

The text offers a serious but abbreviated history of ornamental vegetable gardens—all the rage in the seventeenth century, banished to the periphery in the eighteenth, gradually if sporadically recuperated during the nineteenth and twentieth until bursting into the glorious fecundity of the last thirty years. The writing is concise, informative, and readable, but it rarely offers the analytic depth, lyric beauty, or narrative intrigue of, say, Michael Pollan’s Botany of Desire. Chapter 7, “The Glorious Vegetable Garden,” is little more than an extended caption for the twenty photographs of vegetables and flowers mingling with contemporary garden sculpture, bee skeps, rustic trellises, metalwork, and brickwork. The last chapter, perhaps the most entertaining of all, offers a little history and lots of lore about vegetables that are not really vegetables: ornamental peppers that are not to be eaten, sweet potatoes that produce vines but no taters, flowering cabbages that are not cabbages and do not flower.

Susan Pennington is a scholar of horticultural history; she is interested in visual beauty, cultural developments, and historical change, but she is (admittedly) not a gardener. As a result, the book is less helpful than it might be for anyone interested in designing and harvesting an ornamental vegetable garden. The captions make no attempt to identify individual plants, and surprisingly little attention is paid to how combinations of plants create the mosaics of color, texture, and form that make the ornamental kitchen
garden ornamental. One wonders to whom the book is addressed. Vegetarians and food lovers will be disappointed that so little thought is given to questions of taste and nutrition. Gardeners, accustomed to feasting on the rich, dark purple and the mottled pink and white of their beautifully rounded eggplants, may feel puzzled or even irked by the subtitle, *The Unexpected Beauty of Vegetable Gardens.* Unexpected? I don’t think so. Even if Alexander Pope and Katherine Lane Weems were foolish enough to banish the vegetables to the periphery, Susan Pennington joins a host of contemporary gardeners, writers, artists, and foodies who know just how delicious and beautiful the feast can be.

—Ilona Bell, Williams College

*The Human Evolution Cookbook*

Text by Harold L. Dibble

Recipes by Dan Williamson; Illustrations by Brad M. Evans


103 pp. Illustrations. $19.95 (paper)

What is a good way to teach people about human evolution? *The Human Evolution Cookbook* teaches its readers about the evolution of humans in an amusing way. It is filled with recipes such as *Flint Fritters* and *Glacial Gravlax.* These recipes, however ancient the names may sound, are actually made from modern ingredients that were not available in the Stone Age. The book offers all kinds of humorous information about humans, from Australopithicus to Homo Sapiens, followed by three study questions in each section, which are partly amusing, partly serious. For example, one question asks: “What would you rather do and why: face down an angry hippo or chase away a pride of lions from their dinner? And what do you call a bunch of hippos anyway—a hoard, herd, gaggle, school, or flock?” (p. 29).

This book uses a great strategy for teaching people about social studies: hilarity. It includes humorous cartoons about what cave people liked, as well as what they believed in. The cartoons are informative, but some of them are just plain funny, such as the one with the caption “Never watch a caveman movie with an anthropologist.” The book also suggests a few activities, mostly having to do with the main character, a Neanderthal named Thag. One activity is to “Dress up Thag in modern clothing.” Most of you can guess what this entails—a paper cut-out of Thag, with paper cut-outs of modern clothes next to it (including a “Bush 2000” T-shirt).

Although this description makes *The Human Evolution Cookbook* sound a little ridiculous, the book contains plenty of serious information. Here is what we learn about the Middle Paleolithic or Mousterian Period: “Most of the tools characteristic of the Mousterian are made of flakes. These flake tools come in a wide variety of shapes and sizes and for a long time people didn’t know what to call them or how to interpret them” (p. 51). This is information that might be found in a college textbook. Of course, then the reading goes on in its own funny way, ending with these three delightful study questions:

1. What is your favorite Mousterian tool type and why? Explain exactly how you would use it to provide food for your family. Would you expect to live for a long time like that?

2. Explain in detail why you ended up spending good money on this stupid book in the first place.

3. It’s true that archaeologists learn about the past by finding and analyzing the discarded trash of our ancestors. Do you think that this reason alone is sufficient enough to designate the state of New Jersey as our official National Archaeological Site (state motto: “Come Dig Us”)? (p. 56)

I believe that *The Human Evolution Cookbook* would be best for readers who are seventeen or older, as most younger children aren’t very trustworthy with fire (for cooking, of course) and aren’t ready for human evolution in as much depth as it is explained here. Still, this book taught me a lot that I never learned in Social Studies, and made the learning of that material fun and easy to remember (another thing that never happened in Social Studies!).

—Leila Crawford, Williamstown, MA