his subject all that it can yield, letting it speak by way of an abundance of authors and texts ranging from antiquity to our day, so as to stuff his feathered bird in true gourmet fashion. A jumbled sampling of such satura includes Ovid, Alexandre Dumas, the Bible, Levi-Strauss, Baudelaire, Bachelard, Kant, Descartes, and Artaud. In an appendix, an ode to the phoenix by the poet Lactance titled “Carmen de ape phoenix” apotheosizes Weiss’s mythical bird. One also senses the discreet presence of Barthes and semiotics.

Brillat-Savarin is, of course, at hand as well. The professeur has a similar knack for neologisms and is a well-known master of the tongue-in-cheek (Physiologie has been labeled a pastiche of Idéologie writings). Could Weiss’s text, while promoting an aesthetic approach to his subject, likewise be a take-off on dogmatic approaches to food? The book’s concluding section questioning the kosher status of the philoxen points in this direction: It is a saucy illustration of Talmudic reasoning getting all tied up in the strands of culinaria hebraica, the final pointe of a text both breezy and intense.

Is Cuisiner merely a ragout of sorts, or is it a masterly blend of multiple ingredients? Take your pick. Culinary terms and gastronomic anecdotes are never far away, and there is sufficient first-person narration to convince us that Weiss himself is an aficionado. Yet this little essay, this vignette, tells us more about poetry, myth, ontology, and inner yearnings than cookery or gastronomy. Early on in his text, Weiss states that every dish is a symbol and that attainment of depth means further that readers will not discover here

A conference held in Tours in December 2002 resulted in twenty-seven short published papers on aspects of food pedagogy, whether virtual or actual. Organized by historians Julia Csergo and Christophe Marion, the conference notably brought together respondents from a variety of sectors.

Historians with university posts, teachers in high schools that offer practical training for tourism and the culinary professions, agricultural engineers, and a European Union official concerned with food policy all add their two centimes to the sprawling roundtable conversation. Most participants acknowledge the interest of studying food. None dispute the legitimacy of food as an object for serious research in any number of disciplines. More than one respondent notes that because food is accessible from many disciplines, its inclusion in curricula could facilitate an integrated or interdisciplinary approach to education at any level. Similarly, in the domain of research, food works as a fulcrum for approaches from the historical to the economic, from the literary to the anthropological, without leaving aside the hard tacks of biology and chemistry.

Currently in French secondary schools, whose curricula are mandated and regulated at the national level, the study of food is entirely incidental to aspects of the life sciences such as digestive processes. Any study of food history therefore depends on the interests of individual teachers (and, elsewhere, university professors), while the number of graduate-level programs devoted uniquely to food history may be counted on the fingers of one hand. Clearly, the interest of privileging food over other classroom topics, especially at the secondary level, remains open to debate. Several respondents who teach in practical training programs or who work in industry state that their view of their market does not reveal any need at all for food history. Yet other practical programs already incorporate aspects of food history into classes. Moreover, food-related research flourishes in a variety of contexts. The number of food-related publications, both serious and frivolous, increases apace. So where, one may ask, is the beef?

One respondent observes that all history is written strategically. That is, any narrative reflects the motivations of a writer who responds to a particular context and to pressures that may be external or internal or both. That food history pedagogy has been raised as an issue by historians may suggest that this book is a plea for history, for the work of memory, culture, and seemingly gratuitous analysis in a society that rewards the practical, the professional, and the productive. It is ironic that the short papers, some blatantly self-interested, are largely anecdotal rather than researched. The editorial decision to privilege inclusiveness and breadth over depth means further that readers will not discover here
any thorough, much less conclusive, analysis. The volume does suggest some interesting questions, at least in embryonic form, about food-related dilemmas characteristic of contemporary developed societies, including the particular forms these debates assume in France. It is disappointing that these questions are not pursued.

—Julia Abramson, University of Oklahoma

Food and History, volume 1, no. 1
The European Institute of Food History, Tours, France
Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 2003
274 pp. 50

Along with the appearance or rebirth of several journals devoted to food (Food and Foodways; Food, Culture and Society; as well as the journal now in your hands) readers will also be delighted with the newly launched Food and History, which is devoted to food in the past. Edited by Massimo Montanari, the articles reflect a high level of scholarship and cover a broad range of topics, focusing mainly on Europe, with emphasis on the Middle Ages. Most submissions are in English, but there are also some in French, Italian, and German. The format is pleasant, academic in feel, and fairly hefty. So too is the price, at 108 euros for a year’s subscription of two issues.

This first issue includes a fine article by Jean-Louis Flandrin on national taste preferences and changes in culinary preferences from the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries; it is, however, also available translated and in expanded form in Food: A Culinary History. There is also a classic article by Fernand Braudel (also in French, first appearing in Annales in 1961) on the roots of European food history. It is interesting to see how many lines of inquiry were nascent over forty years ago and how many have flourished, particularly the materialist approach and the idea of the longue durée. But this field has blossomed in many ways that Braudel could not have imagined.

Apart from these two pieces, the contents are new and open up hitherto unexplored topics. There are ten research articles, as well as various other sections, including works in progress at the European Institute of Food History. A proportion of the journal is by Montanari himself—an editorial introduction, a description of current research on written and oral food histories, and the article “Who Invented Anorexia,” which reviews the literature since the 1980s. Covered are Rudolph Bell, Caroline Walker Bynum, and the work of Vandereycken and van Deth, but the article might have included more recent work, especially that of Joan Jacobs Brumberg and Michelle Stacey.

The offerings on late-medieval Europe are particularly strong. An extremely well-researched article on sugar in late-medieval Sicily by Mohamed Ouerfelli provides a fresh look at European production between the years of imports from the eastern Mediterranean and New World plantations. We learn that financing derived largely from Pisans displaced after the conquest of their port by Florence, a fact that has the potential to revise the history of sugar, particularly in its European context.

An article on the late-medieval English meal structure by Gilly Lehmann is among the most detailed and thought provoking on the topic anywhere. It does, however, require very close reading and familiarity with the sources and is clearly written for specialists in medieval cuisine. The presence of such an article reveals that this journal does not yet seem to have found its target audience. Some authors assume nothing beyond an interest in food, while others clearly address an academic audience. The ideal journal would be able to reach both, but that is, admittedly, a very difficult task.

Particularly savory is a short article by Barbara Santich (the only non-European contributor, it appears) on adultery and cannibalism in some truly lurid medieval folktales. Each involves jealous husbands feeding their cheating wives the heart, and sometimes more, of their murdered lovers. The discussion offers some fascinating explanations about what these tales may have meant to medieval readers and how perversely they treat the familiar theme of true love.

An article by Johanna Maria van Winter on festive meals in the late Middle Ages intends to show by examining manners and festive gatherings how the meal was used as a means of communication. But the evidence presented sometimes suggests just the opposite. Manners and all ritualized behaviors obviate the need to communicate. Power relations need not be negotiated once status and behavior are explicitly encoded in the ritual. Individual expression and real communication are thus stifled—which was exactly the point in a courtly setting where threats had to be controlled. In the case of courtly meals, the communication is one-way and propagandistic.

Other articles compare Kazakh and Mongol foodways and look at how Italian cuisine infiltrated twentieth-century Flemish cookery. A discussion of the history of cow’s milk and tuberculosis in late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Germany and Switzerland by Barbara Orland is particularly revealing about the ways that scientific controversy, the economic interests of the dairy industry, and