Cornbread Nation 2 provides a good start to such considerations. The volume is hampered, however, by such a large number of contributors for its size, which leaves the reader wanting more depth. A few essays problematize the subject of barbecue, such as Robb Walsh’s “Texas Barbecue in Black and White,” which explores barbecue along racial lines, and Stephen Smith’s “The Rhetoric of Barbecue,” an extended analogy between barbecue and religion. Many of the contributions, however, are less thoughtful in their approach, providing, for example, pat, one-page explanations of complex issues like kashruth (p. 25). Inconsistent footnotes, redundancies, and the sometimes high-quality but often haphazard collection of essays in the second half of the book further frustrate the reader.

Despite these shortcomings, Cornbread Nation 2 is an entertaining collection. Its diversity of approaches and readability outweigh its flaws. Its very existence—a barbecue collection from a university press—speaks volumes about the establishment of food studies.

—Jonathan Deutsch, Kingsborough Community College, CUNY

Greek Salad: A Dionysian Travelogue
Miles Lambert-Gocs
Williamsburg, VA: Ambeli Press; and San Francisco: The Wine Appreciation Guild, 2004
283 pp. $14.95 (paper)

Greece is a country at once widely accessible but also mysterious—an amalgam of East and West, of ancient and modern, with layer upon layer of history often obscured to the sunglass-clad throngs of summer travelers. Despite its often breathtaking beauty, Greece is a country whose charms are not always immediately apparent. As for the Greeks themselves, their most alluring national characteristic is also their Achilles’ heel: their Zorba-the-Greek-like warmth and spontaneity can sometimes seem like complete chaos. When visiting Greece, one just has to learn to enjoy the caprice of unplanned days.

Miles Lambert-Gocs does just that in Greek Salad, his infinitely pleasurable ramble through the Greek islands and mainland. I can think of no better armchair Cicerone. His voyage is a rich one, filled not only with accounts of his peregrinations but with the insights born of a fertile and well-informed mind. As if mirroring the very essence of Greece, Lambert-Gocs moves effortlessly between antiquity and the present, studding his beautifully written narrative with rare depth of knowledge, crisscrossing fluidly over millennia with the stroke of his pen.

Lambert-Gocs became enamored of Greece as a teenager. He returned there to work with the US Department of Agriculture between 1979 and 1983, later wrote about wine for The Athenian, a family-run magazine, and then published his acclaimed first book, The Wines of Greece. For a xenos—a foreigner—he knows the country better than most Greeks do and relays its idiosyncratic charms with appreciation, humor, and deep-rooted knowledge. While the title of his book, Greek Salad, refers to what is arguably the country’s most clichéd export, it also denotes a happy concoction of his own adventures in Greece. It also contains a drop of humor: in Greek “making a salad” of something means making a mess of it.

But there’s no mess here. The book follows the author as he journeys with or without his teenage daughter, almost always in search of local wine. The Greek table is a constant backdrop, but what I enjoyed most about this book are the characters we meet along the way, from Dzordz (“George”), the son of an aunt of an acquaintance of Lambert-Gocs from a wine shop in Astoria, Queens, to Lefty, a disgruntled Athens-born waiter on the Cycladic island of Andros. Lambert-Gocs evokes their “Grenglish” patois with a well-honed ear and imparts fascinating tidbits of information. From Vlach etymologies inherent in the names of northern Greek villages to impressions left upon the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century European travelers to Greece to the poetic waxings of ancient scribes regarding Chian wine and women, Lambert-Gocs’s tasty Greek Salad taught me a great deal about the country I have adopted as home.

—Diane Kochilas, Athens