became the Drink of Reason, and the “coffee house Internet” was of singular importance in the dissemination of scientific and economic ideas generated by the New Reason.

Tea, for its part, was a foodstuff and a medicine in China before it was a drink—a common pattern. Tea came to Europe as a tonic and luxury item in the later sixteenth century and was made fashionable in Britain by the court of Charles II. As coffee helped to fuel the development of modern capitalism, tea helped to sustain its growth. The value of tea in the Industrial Revolution was considerable, particularly in the management of workers. “Tea breaks” kept people more alert, perhaps happier, and also, by preventing waterborne diseases, healthier. Beyond the clichés, it would be hard to exaggerate its significance in Britain. “The story of tea,” as Standage puts it, “reflects the reach and power, both innovative and destructive, of the British Empire” (p.220).

Coca-Cola is declared the symbol par excellence of American industrialism-cum-consumerism. Carbonated water’s origin as “artificial mineral water,” and Coke’s earlier American incarnation as the “Intellectual Beverage and Temperance Drink,” have long been buried in the dregs of history’s glass. No product better represents American economic primacy in the twentieth century, or the advance of globalization, than Coca-Cola.

Additional chapters are devoted to wine and the Greek and Roman cultural values it embraced and extended, and to the role of spirits, sugar, and slavery in the Colonial period. But as the history of the world began in a puddle, or a cup of water, so it may end there. Standage takes a moment to mention a particular hobby-horse of his (see his blog), the bottled-water industry, reminding readers that most bottled water comes from public supplies and costs more than gasoline, while “for many people in the developing world, access to water remains a matter of life or death” (p.269).

Control of sources may ultimately define our own century.

But Standage comes to edify, not to scold. An NPR reviewer I chanced to hear in early September enthusiastically endorsed A History of the World in 6 Glasses as his favorite book of the summer, clarifying a question I had been asking myself: To whom is this book addressed? The “summer book” audience? I imagined Standage had a higher brow in mind, so it is puzzling that his editors (presumably) felt compelled to identify such figures as Plato (“Athenian philosopher” [p.8]) and even Stalin (“brutal Soviet leader” [p.256]). There are no footnotes, and the notes are casual.

So I, for one, am convinced that A History of the World in 6 Glasses is—and ought to be!—destined for afterlife as a public TV series. It seems a perfect match. Meanwhile, it is a good read, full of information, never less than engaging, and occasionally profound. Don’t take it to the beach. Take it on the subway.

—Alison Ryley, Research Librarian Emerita, New York Public Library

Sustenance & Desire: A Food Lover’s Anthology of Sensuality and Humor
Edited and with paintings by Bascove
Boston, MA: David R. Godine, 2004
222 pp. Illustrations. $24.95 (cloth)

Sustenance & Desire: A Food Lover’s Anthology of Sensuality and Humor is, like a love affair, by turns lyrical, meditative, hilarious, disappointing, and soul-satisfying. Bascove, a New York artist who has edited two previous anthologies (on New York City’s bridges and on the pleasures of reading), here compiles seventy-seven pieces of prose, humor, and poetry linked by themes of food, hunger, longing, and desire, illustrated with her paintings.

She has gathered at her feast an impressive mix of literary luminaries from around the world: Vladimir Nabokov, Marcel Proust, and Pablo Neruda show up alongside May Sarton, Kakuzu Okakura, Joyce Carol Oates, Calvin Trillin, Czeslaw Milosz, and Virginia Woolf, to drop just a few of the many names within. The book is divided into four sections—“Nourishment,” “Desire,” “Hunger,” and “Sustenance”—each introduced by a series of hors d’oeuvre–like quotations to set the mood (though the collection overall, to its detriment, lacks an introduction). M.F.K. Fisher gorgeously opens the section on nourishment: “I still think that one of the pleasantest of all emotions is to know that I, I with my brain and my hands, have nourished my beloved few, that I have concocted a stew or a story, a rarity or a plain dish, to sustain them truly against the hungers of the world” (p.12). And it is her classic, stunning meditation “Why Do You Write about Food?” (from The Gastronomical Me) that greets us as we enter the main body of this opening section. Jhumpa Lahiri draws us further in a few pages later. “I am the daughter of former pirates” (p.19), she announces at the beginning of her lyrical essay “Indian Takeout,” before she goes on to describe the white poppy seeds and date syrup resin, the contraband cumin, squash, and lentils that constituted the booty her parents spirited back to Rhode Island in an old satin-lined suitcase on visits to her mother’s native Calcutta.

Roy Blount, Jr. offers up a couple of deeply hilarious, loveable pieces—a parodic restaurant roundup and the rhyming “Dream Song”—and Diane Ackerman elegantly
muses on aphrodisiacs in an excerpt from her *A Natural History of Love*. Margaret Visser counters with an exploration of the anaphrodisiac qualities of lettuce in “For and Against Sex,” from *Much Depends on Dinner*. (Her gruesomely fascinating “The Artificial Cannibal” shows up in the section on hunger.) Lucille Clifton strikes a note of need and yearning in her poem “Salt”:

…and she is salt
to him,
something that rubs raw
that leaves a tearful taste
but what he will
strain the ocean for and
what he needs. (p. 97)

The anthology’s promise of “sensuality and humor” gives way to something darker in pieces like Barbara Ehrenreich’s scathing “Serving in Florida,” her razor-sharp first-person reportage on waitressing from *Nickel and Dimed*. And the mood turns downright haunting in Primo Levi’s somber “Last Christmas of the War,” a grim reminder that in hells like Auschwitz the very terms “eating, food, hunger, [have] meanings totally different from their usual ones” (p.131). Even in our comfortable quotidian lives, sustenance often comes down to “daily murder and redemption” in our struggle to “feed the gut, brain, and soul” (p.166), as we are reminded in an excerpt from Betty Fussell’s brilliant memoir *My Kitchen Wars*. Perhaps, in the end, this is a food lover’s anthology of not only sensuality and humor but death as well, as wittily presaged by Les Murray’s pithy poem at the beginning of the volume:

A fact the gourmet
euphemism can’t silence:
vegetarians eat sex,
carnivores eat violence. (p.9)

A hint of death also colors Bascove’s fine illustrations throughout the book. Her highly mannered paintings possess a surface voluptuousness yet are oddly static and restrained, teasing us with the appearance of sensuality but stopping short of deep-heated eroticism. These illustrations are technically proficient, even beautiful, but they rarely break a sweat. Her figures seem detached, emotionally disconnected: The couple in her 1988 painting *At Table* (plate before p.81) appears flattened with ennui, devoid of hunger or longing; and the hard-edged, vaguely menacing *Woman Cutting Fruit* (following p.192) fixes us with a forbidding stare. These qualities are more easily forgiven in her still lifes—of melons, peaches, thwacked leeks and halved artichokes, lush eggplants—but the knife is never far away from the flesh.

“Sex without sin,” Luis Buñuel wrote, “is like an egg without salt.” Maybe in the realm of sensuality, the sinister is no less indispensable, and so this book succeeds by eschewing the sentimental in favor of the edgy, raw, and occasionally dark.

—Meryl S. Rosofsky, New York University

**Daughter of Heaven: A Memoir with Earthly Recipes**

Leslie Li


xix + 274 pp. Recipes. $25.00 (cloth)

Written in elegant prose, this heavenly memoir offers cultural and culinary perceptions amid the sights, smells, and tastes of two worlds, as seen through the eyes of two women. One is Nai-nai, the wife of Li Zhongren, whose husband was the first democratically elected vice president of China. The other is her granddaughter, this book’s author. Nai-nai is no ordinary lady. She lived through very interesting times, including Chiang Kai-shek’s 1949 flight to Formosa, the country now known as Taiwan. Her granddaughter, Leslie Li, has also lived through interesting times, when intercultural marriages demand understanding. As the product of one such union, Li is unsure of her heritage. She wonders who she is and where she fits in.

The author’s Chinese cultural education begins in 1958 when Nai-nai comes to New York to live with her traditional son and his nontraditional, and mostly non-Chinese, family, including Leslie Li, who defines herself as three-quarters Chinese and one-quarter Polish. She does not want to be or to act Chinese. When Grandma arrives, she cooks for Leslie, her sister, their Chinese father, their American-born Polish mother, and their friends. Granddaughter Leslie neither understands nor appreciates the efforts of Nai-nai, who cooks only Chinese regardless of others’ likes and appetites. Realizing how little the girls know about their father’s heritage, Nai-nai sets out to educate them.

The family moves frequently, to China, the United States, Hong Kong, and Europe. Chapters entitled “Moon Cakes,” “Jade Rabbits,” “Elixirs of Immortality,” “Clear Brightness and Hungry Ghosts,” and “Chinese New Year” reveal the Asian influences in their lives, while “Food Shame and Sand Wishes” and “Bitter Rice Sweet Rice” discuss Western exposure. But no matter the continent, each