but “our” food in the national sense, a construction of wa that is more political and ideological (as in “our unique Japanese culture”) and much less the stuff of “peace and harmony,” which is the reading Andoh uses. Washoku is used most often in Japan to contrast with yooshoku, or Western foods, such as spaghetti, pilaf, or sponge cake—or a Big Mac. It is almost never used on its own, only in opposition to a foodway that is not Japanese. Washoku implies, moreover, a pan-Japanese cuisine, which almost everyone would deny exists. It also may imply that there is a “right way” or an “authentic way” of making specific dishes. My own years of cooking in Japan and in Japanese cooking schools have taught me that some people want to instill in me a right way of doing things, while others will remind me we do not live in textbooks. And in the end, I take Andoh’s meaning of washoku here to be common sense in a Japanese kitchen, and thus I take away with me transferable, not unique, ways of cooking.

The commonsense details are wonderful. I will pore over the making of pickles, both slow and “impatient.” I will use dried sardines to make stock, and I will be alert for the glazed-over eyeball of a fish when I shop. I will rush out to get a jar of black sesame paste for an intense sorbet. (Andoh doesn’t mention it, but a tablespoon of this paste, mixed with a little honey and a cup of rich yogurt, makes a wonderful, nutritious breakfast.) And my rice-making techniques can always be improved.

I might quibble about the use of sidebars, recurrent ones called “Kitchen Harmony” or “Harmony at Table,” which occasionally seem excessive. Do you need to be told, if your hands get greasy from squeezing fried tofu, to wash them in warm water with soap? And I might ask for more discussion of the regional aspects of Japanese foods. But as a fine reference for the experienced cook and a useful text for the less experienced, this is both a rigorous and a friendly volume. Itadakimasu! Let’s eat!

—Corky White, Boston University

Will Write for Food: The Complete Guide to Writing Cookbooks, Restaurant Reviews, Articles, Memoir, Fiction and More…
Dianne Jacob
New York: Marlowe and Company, 2005
306 pp. $15.95 (paper)

The perfect rose is given a blue ribbon and proclaimed best in show. This excellent reference book deserves a similar prize because it, too, is in a class of its own. Dianne Jacob anticipates and answers questions for food writers of every level of accomplishment. She is a patient tutor who knows her stuff. She has also invited many of her luminary pals to share their knowledge: Calvin Trillin, Judith Jones, David Leite, Deborah Madison, Jeffrey Steingarten, Alan Richman, and Colman Andrews are among the stars offering wise counsel and useful tips.

Few contemplate the evening when they will walk onto the stage at Carnegie Hall and toss off a violin concerto or strut onto the center court at Wimbledon, vanquish the opponent, and blow kisses to the throng of wildly cheering spectators. Yet many firmly believe all that is needed to transform themselves into esteemed persons of letters is a pocketful of recipes and a little time. Indeed, you might think it would be a piece of cake to write a good recipe. After all, if you want to roast a chicken, you need only remember where and when you put it in—but good cooking involves the skill of rescue and retrieval, and good writing is an art as well as a craft. To achieve success, a recipe must be compiled with impeccable accuracy and unambiguous clarity—and simultaneously inspire the anticipation of pleasure. Jacob says, “A well-written recipe is poetry, like beautiful writing” (p.166). She notes, too, that “writing about food isn’t just about describing flavor and smell, anyway. Food may be the subject of a story, but the point of the story can reside in recounting, reporting, and finding the right details, as well as in history, associations, implications, and of course, the context of the story itself” (p.35).

Will Write for Food strikes an exquisite balance between issuing cautionary warnings and encouraging the novice to take up her mouse and start typing. Jacob tells the beginner how to get started and reminds old pros of things they have forgotten or never knew. Best of all, she tells the truth. Food writing is not an easy field to get into. It is tough and getting tougher. Even so, there are always new opportunities for writing recipes or a memoir. Jacob explores the steps necessary to land a job as a restaurant critic or a book reviewer. She shows the reader how to compose a query letter and a book proposal. She lays at the reader’s feet a tapestry of food writing opportunities that may not have previously been considered—how, for instance, to write about food in history, how to write a food reference book, or how to explore issues related to food and health.

Dianne Jacob describes adventures in food journalism and lets the reader know how to set about finding a literary agent and getting work published in the fields of kitchen science, biography, autobiography, and even mystery writing. As she herself explains, “The variety [of areas to explore]
shows how mainstream the subject of food has become and how it can be translated into many styles of fiction and nonfiction writing” (p.21).

—Irena Chalmers, Culinary Institute of America

**Bookends**

Paul Kinstedt, with the Vermont Cheese Council
White River Junction, VT: Chelsea Green Publishing, 2005
276 pp. Illustrations. $40.00 (cloth)

If there was ever a time for a book on farmstead cheese making in America, this is it. America now boasts at least one cheesemaker in each of its fifty states. The American Cheese Society reports that its cheesemaker membership has gone from 179 to 279 in just three years. And if the same group’s annual cheese competition is any indication, the creation of new cheeses and new cheese-making operations is going at breakneck speed. In 2005, 749 cheeses were submitted for judging. In 2003, there were 413. Now, Professor Paul Kinstedt from the University of Vermont, in conjunction with the Vermont Cheese Council, has combined his passion and expertise in cheese science with this trend. The result is the pragmatic and eminently readable *American Farmstead Cheese: The Complete Guide to Making and Selling Artisan Cheeses*.

The common definition of farmstead cheese is cheese that is made exclusively from the milk of a cheesemaker’s own animals. For that reason, the term almost always applies to small cheesemakers. It is that growing group of individuals in the United States to whom *American Farmstead Cheese* is geared. And yet, because Kinstedt farms out some of the less-scientific chapters to those working in the cheese-making field, it is also a book that is equal parts business, education, and storytelling. As such, it will find an audience with anyone who is interested in cheese, whether in business or as a consumer.

A prospective cheesemaker would be well advised to pay attention to the chapter “The Business of Farmstead Cheesemaking” and to its author, Allison Hooper. Hooper is the co-owner of Vermont Butter & Cheese Company in Websterville, Vermont, and she shares her first-hand account of the joys and pitfalls of starting and running a cheese-making business.

If the future of cheese and how we make it matters—and it should—then so too does Catherine Donnelly’s chapter, “The Pasteurization Dilemma,” which fleshes out the facts about raw milk in cheese making.

Kinstedt turns to cheesemaker and consultant Peter Dixon for “The Art of Cheesemaking.” Although Dixon acknowledges that cheese making has improved thanks to scientific advances, he correctly points out that artisanal cheese is to be celebrated because of its relative lack of uniformity. He cautions, however, that there are limits to creative expression. “For the less experienced cheese makers, [then], traditional methods should be supported by scientific principles to the extent necessary to make consistently high-quality cheese” (p.199).

Kinstedt himself provides comprehensive information on cheese making, ranging from the milk itself to a much-needed explanation of hard-to-understand starter cultures to the basic steps of cheese making and other information essential for making high-quality cheese.

What *American Farmstead Cheese* lacks in design (it definitely looks like a textbook) it makes up for as the only one-stop information source on cheese making that includes material applicable to all facets of artisanal cheese making. As the cheese-making trend continues to soar, this book should fly off the bookstore shelves and into the hands of every hopeful and, for that matter, existing cheesemaker.

—Laura Werlin, author, *The New American Cheese*