shows how mainstream the subject of food has become and how it can be translated into many styles of fiction and nonfiction writing” (p.211).

—Irena Chalmers, Culinary Institute of America

Bookends

Paul Kinstedt, with the Vermont Cheese Council
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

The Perfect Egg and Other Secrets
Aldo Buzzi
New York: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2005
150 pp. Illustrations. $16.95 (cloth)

The egg is today the least expensive thing to eat…so basic that the cookbooks tend to make no mention of it. But it too has its secrets. (p.48)

This is a delicate book whose very design evokes the way it should be held: like an egg. The book is arranged in two parts, with each comprising slivers of anecdotal tales that seek to seduce the reader with playful witiness. In the same way that Buzzi describes pigeons, the pages “fall into two categories: the edible and the inedible” (p.58): tantalizing, captivating, and highly descriptive passages intersperse with sometimes vague and boring banter. Reading Buzzi is like being a student peering over the shoulder of a master chef as he demonstrates a dish, dotting his lectures with little-known secrets and riddles (both figuratively and literally) about antiquity, gastronomic masters, historical spaces, and,