to invite the essential questions of biography, such as what enables a person to take up a significant role in his world and how an individual’s work is shaped by his times. Few present-day nurserymen, for instance, are likely to have enjoyed an opportunity to develop a high level of expertise in roses, in addition to fruits and vegetables, in middle age. Fewer still are likely to have undertaken the education that led Bunyard to read widely in French as well as English literature and allude to both in his own writings. (On the other hand, few contemporary nurseryman are likely to share his stated disdain for bananas as leading to laxity in taste and intellect, which was intertwined with an equally stated and—to current readers—breathtaking racism toward the peoples who produced them.) The presence of such complexities as well as such flaws suggests that more remains to be said about Bunyard, who in a 1930 letter succinctly critiques the direction of his nation: “For a memorial I shall plant an avenue of Japanese Cherries; no Cypress for me, despite its age-long lore. No! Let us add a little to the beauty of the country; fifty years ahead it will need all we can provide” (p.73).

—J.D. Smith, author, Settling for Beauty and The Hypothetical Landscape

The Royal Garden of Pefkou:
A Study of Fruit Consumption in Medieval Nicosia
William Woys Weaver
Nicosia, Cyprus: Moufflon Publications, 2006
39 pp. Cyprus £5.25
(about $15.00; paper; available from www.moufflon.com.cy)

One would think that the distinguished food historian William Woys Weaver would boast the greatest number of initial W’s in a name, at least among food authors. As it turns out, however, he’s behind William W. W. Wong.1 Weaver may, however, win a prize for the most amusingly esoteric monograph, for his staple-bound, handsomely printed pamphlet about a medieval Cypriot garden.

Best known for works on vegetables and historic American cookery, Weaver also collaborated on Food and Drink in Medieval Poland (University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999). While preparing that work he attended a conference in Cyprus on ethnological food research and discovered a significant but unexplored connection between the culinary histories of that island and Poland. “I realized that Cyprus was a key conduit to the West for foods, wines, and other aspects of medieval lifestyle,” he writes in his preface to the Pefkou pamphlet. His interest also led to an article for Gastronomica, “The Origins of Trachanás: Evidence from Cyprus and Ancient Texts” (February 2002); and will result in a forthcoming book on the wines and foods of Cyprus.

The current work concerns a brief document, a 1468 agreement of transfer of a garden in Nicosia from an Armenian-Cypriot, George of Sis, to an Arab Christian named Theodore. The garden, which was leased from the king, was called Pefkou (The Pine) in reference to a prominent tree on the property. No physical traces of the garden remain, but we know from the 1468 inventory that it contained numerous fruit trees such as apricot, fig, mulberry, and pomegranate. The booklet includes a translation of the medieval French text of the agreement, an introductory essay that places the document in its historical context, and comments on each of the fruits listed in the inventory, with discussion of how they were used in medieval Cyprus.

Weaver provides many delightful asides and excurses. We learn of a monastery named “St. Nicholas of the Cats”; of Jayme Zaplana, whose involvement in a 1473 murder resulted in the seizure of his falcons and his velvet clothes; that in gardens such as Pefkou “Cypriot nobles kept pet monkeys, caged birds and peacocks”; and that “the thorny branches of the jujube were placed in trees around ripening fruit to impale or at least discourage fruit bats, which are a serious nighttime pest in gardens all over the island.” The author also makes suppositions (“if the hunters were successful, we can assume that Papa Prokopis and his wife enjoyed some excellent game dinners”) which, although avowedly conjectural, do add color to the text.

Most interesting to me is the mention that “Sweet oranges, called portokalia in medieval Cypriot Greek, were first reported in 1433” by a monk in the marginalia of a book, and that “this is one of the earliest references to the sweet orange in the Mediterranean.” Weaver is suitably cautious in pressing the claim for primacy, but in a recent phone conversation he said, “I’m told by Byzantine food specialists that this is, in fact, the earliest mention of sweet oranges in Europe.”

Portokalia means “Portuguese fruit,” and similar names for sweet oranges have long been common in Europe. L. Ramón-Laca recently wrote, “There is general agreement that the arrival of the sweet orange to Europe was linked with the activities of the Portuguese during the fifteenth century, and particularly the travels of circumnavigation to the east carried out by Vasco de Gama….“2 But the monk’s mention in 1433 appears to precede any other.

This booklet will surely serve researchers as a source for such serendipitous discoveries and delight general readers with a taste for the arcane.

—David Karp, Los Angeles, CA
Arranging the Meal: A History of Table Service in France
Jean-Louis Flandrin; translated by Julie E. Johnson, with Sylvie and Antonio Roder; foreword to the English-language edition by Beatrice Fink
Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007
229 pp. $34.95 (cloth)

Jean-Louis Flandrin, eminent historian, teacher, and gastronome, died in 2001. We now have one final volume of his work in Arranging the Meal: A History of Table Service in France. His was a long and distinguished career. He was a member of the Annales School of historical research, so-named for its principal publication, Annales: Économies, Sociétés, Civilisations, founded in the interwar period by Lucien Fèvre and Marc Bloch. The demographers of the INED (Institut national des études démographiques) and the scholars of the Annales School pioneered the application of mathematical analysis to hitherto-neglected documents, notarial documents, censuses, inventories, and similar materials. Flandrin first distinguished himself with his work on the history of the family and of sexuality, including Families in Former Times: Kinship, Household and Sexuality, from 1979.

Subsequently he turned his considerable skills to the study of food history, particularly but not exclusively in France, and he began to subject culinary sources to quantitative analysis. For three decades a steady flow of essays appeared in learned journals: papers on the variation in proportions of specific foodstuffs (notably, sugar) in manuscripts and early printed cookbooks, on the influence of humoral theory on the making and ordering of menus, and more. With Massimo Montanari he published L’Histoire de l’alimentation (Paris: Fayard, 1996), published in the United States as Food: A Culinary History from Antiquity to the Present (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999). Flandrin’s introductory essays to several parts of that notable collective work are the closest he came to giving us a synthetic history of cookery and gastronomy.

The material in this present volume was to have moved beyond these earlier works by extending his studies in time down to the present day, and geographically to include much of Western Europe; the volume would have concluded with that synthetic overview. It is unfortunate that Flandrin’s untimely death deprived us of these insights. In his foreword to L’Ordre des mets (Paris: Odile Jacob, 2002), the French edition of this present work, Georges Carantino explains that Flandrin had written three-quarters of the book before his death. Carantino and others who were familiar with Flandrin’s work and thought have filled in the remainder of it with such outlines and notes as survive. As it is, we have Flandrin’s chapters on the “classical” meal as it evolved from the fourteenth to the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, on both meat days and fast days, on its components—roasts, entrées, and entremets—and the sequence of dishes. His principal sources are menus, both of actual meals and of ideal ones; such manuscripts as survive from the Middle Ages; and printed cookbooks, which in the case of the first century of printing, often included substantial numbers of more or less accurately transcribed medieval recipes. The work of his students and associates has also considerably enriched this present volume.

Flandrin’s application of quantitative analysis to the study of cookbooks has yielded some interesting results. For example, he found that in the sixteenth-century cookbooks published in France, sugar is most often used, beyond confectionery, with fish. This practice would accord with the Galenic belief that the potential harmfulness of fish, whose humors are cold and moist, would be tempered by the heat and dryness of sugar. Unfortunately, the cookbook evidence is, in my opinion, too slender to support a heavy burden of generalization based on quantification. In the ancien régime, French cooks, even male cooks, were rarely literate, and in any event they came to knowledge of their craft by means of an apprentice system. Cookbooks were more likely to be used by the managers of substantial households—stewards in the cases of the grander establishments, and middle- or upper-class women and their female housekeepers in smaller households. They would have turned to cookbooks not for instruction in cooking everyday foods, but for extraordinary ones. The text of the Viandier attributed to Taillevent concludes that the author does not include recipes for ordinary dishes, such as “stewed chard, cabbage, turnip greens, leeks, veal in yellow sauce and plain shallot pottage…,” because “women are experts with these and anyone knows how to do them; as for tripe, which I have not put in my recipe book, it is common knowledge how it is to be eaten.” Moreover, in cookbooks one often sees references to items that were unlikely to be available at all. The tendency of writers to claim knowledge beyond their experience has never died out. In the 1938 edition of the Larousse Gastronomique the reader is told to cook aurochs “like beef,” although the aurochs is believed to have gone extinct in 1627. Counting recipes may tell us something...