implements through comments and inspection of the items; not to do so would be deemed an affront to the host.

For the newcomer to Japanese tea culture, this book includes step-by-step instructions on how to conduct a chanoyu party; how to serve thin tea (usucha) and thick tea (koicha); and how to serve a kaiseki meal (the light dinner served before tea at a formal tea gathering).

Although this small book may be somewhat dated and nostalgic, it is still very informative and would be a great asset to any Westerner visiting Japan who is unacquainted with tea ceremony etiquette and ritual.

—Judith Krall-Russo, tea specialist, Edison, NJ

The Fortune Cookie Chronicles: Adventures in the World of Chinese Food
Jennifer 8. Lee
New York: Twelve, 2008
308 pp. $24.99 (cloth)

Knowing the origins of fortune cookies can be an obsession. It was for Yasuko Nakamachi, a graduate student of history at Kanagawa University, near Tokyo, whom Jennifer 8. Lee wrote about in the New York Times before publishing the book now under review (see “Solving a Riddle Wrapped in a Mystery,” January 16, 2008). It became an obsession for Lee, as well, a Harvard graduate back home in New York City and a metro reporter for the Times. Why did both women need to know the origin of this famous bakery product, and what did they learn?

Lee bears the middle name of “8,” ba in Chinese, which connotes prosperity. Her book is a great read, and if it catches on, her future should be prosperous. But first she needs to learn a bit more about fortune cookies, as well as about other popular Chinese food mysteries. Although she knows that there are more Chinese restaurants in the United States than all the McDonald’s, Burger Kings, and Kentucky Fried Chickens combined, she does not clearly state the origin of these cookies that represent her combined heritage. Lee’s earlier article reveals much more; it tells what her book does not detail adequately—that fortune cookies are neither Chinese nor American; they are Japanese. The article also explains how and why they came to the United States.

Loaded with curiosity, Lee cannot rest until she finds answers to all that she considers an adventure in the world of Chinese food. Her writing is delightful and expert, and she offers up a great deal of information about her culinary curiosities, which appear in eighteen chapters. She ruminates on such questions as, Why is chow mein the chosen food of a chosen people? What is the relation between Jews and Chinese food? Who was General Tso? Was there a kosher duck scandal? And what are the facts surrounding American stir-fries? She even asks, What did Confucius really say?

Although this book is thoroughly researched, including a five-page bibliography, Lee did not always delve deeply enough. She fails to cite numerous articles that have appeared in Flavor and Fortune, which would have yielded helpful information to fill out her stories, especially those regarding fortune cookies and bean sprouts. Nevertheless, like a good mystery, her book is difficult to put down. Her curiosity is healthy, her culinary explorations hearty. The Fortune Cookie Chronicles is a fine chow down, which deserves your attention.

—Jacqueline M. Newman, Editor, Flavor and Fortune

The Grand Literary Cafés of Europe
Noël Riley Fitch
London: New Holland, 2006
160 pp. Illustrations. £29.99 (cloth)

Biographer Noël Riley Fitch’s customary beat covers twentieth-century American expatriates (Anais Nin, Sylvia Beach, Ernest Hemingway, Julia Child) and the Paris they played in and loved. So it’s only fitting that she’s rounding out her œuvre with another biography, though this time of place: a tour of Europe’s greatest literary cafés, buttressed by a survey of coffeehouse contributions to literature and political history.

After detailing Paris’s ten best literary cafés, Fitch leaves her comfort zone, spiraling around Europe to include coffeehouses in Bucharest, Leipzig, Lisbon, Padua, and eighteen other cities. The book, serendipitously sized to fit—what else—coffee tables, is handsomely illustrated with photographs antique and new (the latter shot by the lucky Andrew Midgley) that do a lovely job of evoking the café’s fundamental objective: existing as a venue for the gentle passing of time.

An engaging introductory essay begins by taking the reader through the science and history of coffee as a beverage and the Arab origins of the coffeehouse. Fitch tells us that in England, colonial imports were responsible for tea eclipsing coffee (noting that Thomas Twining’s was originally a coffeehouse) and explains the deterioration of cafés in Germany and the Baltic states by blaming alcoholic beverages. She does touch on regional differences, like those
among German Café-Konditoreien, Italian caffé-bars, and Parisian café-brasseries, but a deeper discussion would have been appreciated, as treatment of this key point feels rather superficial. The rest of the book subdivides into profiles of each grand café, naming its illustrious patrons and recounting their various caprices and apocryphal anecdotes. At the very end is an abridged list of coffeehouse cameos in literature, music, art, and cinema.

Most of the gloriously chandeliered, gilt-mirrored cafés showcased in Fitch’s book survive today based on their reputation as past breeding grounds for revolution, art, or fashion—as well as the margins they make on their memorabilia—rather than on their relevance to the present. The rise of television, home coffee machines, cell phones, and public toilets all contributed to the demise of this institution, which was rather easily replaced by Starbucks and cyber-cafés. But the romance and mythologies surrounding Europe’s grand cafés live on—and Fitch’s book contributes to that effort.

—Nathalie Jordi, Dublin

Soul of the City: The Pike Place Public Market
Alice Shorett and Murray Morgan
175 pp. Illustrations. $18.95 (paper)


The market was established in 1907 through the efforts of Councilman Thomas P. Revelle, who aimed to lower the cost of produce by encouraging farmers to sell their own goods. In its first years the market was a resounding success. Frank Goodwin conceived of and constructed the buildings that house the marketplace and sold the majority interest in the market to his nephew, Arthur Goodwin, in 1925. Conflicts soon arose over the management of the marketplace, particularly over the Goodwins’ practice of renting the best stands to shops run by middlemen. In 1933 the market passed from the Goodwins to Joe Desimones, an Italian immigrant who worked his way up from stall owner to majority shareholder. In 1973 the Preservation and Development Authority took control of the market and brought it and the surrounding seven acres under the protection of the National Register of Historic Places.

The latter part of Soul of the City chronicles the troubles the market faced in the 1970s and again in the 1980s, when politics and financial strain threatened its closure. The book firmly supports the saving efforts of Victor Steinbrueck and, later, his son, Peter Steinbrueck, who authored the book’s forward. The history of the market depicted in Soul of the City is a pleasing mix of fact, celebration, and unveiled advocacy.

True to its name, Soul of the City is also an indirect portrayal of the history of Seattle, by means of a microcosm. The wider history of the city frequently intersects with the market’s own, through political figures like Revelle and Senator Warren G. Magnuson, and through events like the General Strike of 1919 and the internment of Japanese Americans in the 1940s. Shorett and Morgan spend their strongest chapters focusing on the individual characters of the marketplace: immigrants from diverse backgrounds whose travails speak to the dynamics of the population of Seattle at large. Unfortunately, in the authors’ attempt to make the past more immediate, their writing can be florid. The tone works best when they rein themselves in for the more serious historical chapters, or let themselves have fun with the colorful characters, particularly in Chapter 5. The story of Nellie Curtis and her “hotel” in Chapter 8 is another delectable highlight.

Punctuated by pictures and individualized anecdotes, Soul of the City is less a scholarly work than a loving portrait—a good, quick reference for those interested in the market. It captures both the history and the atmosphere of a clearly beloved city and place.

—Margot Kaminski, New Haven, CT