from the monthly newsletter, *Simple Cooking*, that he and his wife publish; a few are from other sources. All of them, from the book reviews to the numerous essays about recipes, reflect a passion for food that is not limited to haute cuisine or celebrity chefs. Discussions of ingredients like fennel pollen are undertaken with the same intensity and thoughtfulness as reflections on the culinary merits of Campbell’s soup varieties, or the importance of developing an American culinary canon.

The book provides honest reflections on food. Thorne’s thorough explorations and rich descriptions encourage the reader, by example, to create a personal culinary aesthetic. He calls this process “ruminative cooking.” The ruminative cook seeks “…to keep working out tiny new twists and turns to keep the dish alive and interesting …no matter how many times…” a dish is prepared (p.203). In his own culinary meanderings Thorne leads the reader through the history of a dish to his own interpretation (or several of them, as in the essays “Cod & Potatoes,” “Horiatiki Saláta,” and “Bagna Caôda”). In “Pepper Pot Hot,” the memory of a Philadelphia pepper pot first eaten thirty years earlier stirs Thorne to research the dish, admire the virtues of the Campbell’s soup version, and finally end up with recipes for *pozole* and *menudo*.

Equally engaging are the essays describing Thorne’s breakfast and midnight snacks. Only the truly self-actualized cook, sure of his or her culinary footing, could admit to eating and enjoying a five-month-old croissant, canned beef tamales, or bagels soaked in hotdog brine, all while making you want to dip your own bagel into the stuff!

While some of the essays take the long way round to address the subject at hand, the beauty of Thorne’s writing keeps you going for fear of missing a sentence like this: “Keep at it and the dish will eventually attain the melodic tautness of a well-tuned guitar. It will ring true, and that, to a cook, is an astonishingly satisfying thing” (p.140). In the end, the message of *Mouth Wide Open* seems a very clear one: cook and eat with abandon, creating your own culinary canon that drives your passions in the kitchen.

—Rachel Finn, Chicago, Il.

*Everybody Eats There: Inside the World’s Most Legendary Restaurants*
William Stadiem and Mara Gibbs
New York: Artisan, 2007
369 p. $25.95 (cloth)

A few years ago, my family surprised me with a meal at an upscale hotel near our hometown in rural Michigan. It was an unusual venue for us. Headed by a lawn-equipment salesman, my family has never had much use for fine cuisine. When we ordered, my sister—a former waitress—put in a request for a “a glass of murr-lott” with “a fill-it mig-nun, medium rare.” We giggled, along with the server, but our stepmother blushed profusely, explaining that my sister did, in fact, know how to pronounce her selections.

Diners have botched the names of meals in places of fine dining the world over, but my sister was making a deeply American joke: A nouveau riche customer fumbles in her upper-class surroundings. We may have churned out innumerable millionaires capable of buying the world’s finest meals, but our collective palate has rarely required such expenditures. For all the ways in which America has become a “gourmet nation” à la David Kamp’s *United States of Arugula*, there remains much in the tradition of what A.J. Liebling chronicled in his essay “Just Enough Money”: A diner relying on either the maître d’ or “food-snob publications” to determine his preferences and “drinking too much before dinner to kill the taste of what he has been told he should like but doesn’t.”

Liebling was describing Connecticut millionaires in 1959, but America still retains a wide swath of citizens who prefer simple fare regardless of their resources, particularly outside of our major cities and coasts. As such, many diners have likely found themselves on the earnest end of my sister’s joke when they’ve ventured into haute eateries—intimidated and out of their league, likely wishing for a food-snob publication or server to help them navigate the menu. For those troubled by such a state of affairs, *Everybody Eats There: Inside the World’s Most Legendary Restaurants* makes an alluring offer: “to enable outsiders to feel like insiders at the most exclusive dining places in the world” (p.x).

Penned by Mara Gibbs, a member of the Morton restaurant dynasty that spawned the Hard Rock Cafés and Morton’s Steakhouse in Los Angeles, and William Stadiem, a writer who has made a career out of covering Hollywood celebs and eateries, *Everybody* profiles one-hundred restaurants worldwide. From well-known, writer-centric Elaine’s on the Upper East Side of Manhattan to borderline-brothel Night Flight in Moscow, the list includes only those eateries with patrons of notable pedigree, whether hip-hop royalty flooding into Mr. Chow’s in London or heads of state crowding into Paris’s La Tour d’Argent. Food is strictly of secondary importance, a fact that may strike a diner seeking advice as curious, but it’s perfectly sensible upon reflection: Popular American culture prizes fame far more than food. If the authors want to sell books, it stands to reason that the former will take precedence for them.
Gibbs and Stadiem use food primarily to distinguish their pages from that of celebrity gossip rags, prescribing a culinary course of action for each eatery and thereby relieving diners of the burden imposed by making a selection from the menu: Order the bratwurst at Zurich’s Kronenhalle, the spaghetti vongole at Al Moro in Rome, and get through the unusual dessert course at Hong Kong’s China Club by pretending it possesses “aphrodisiacal qualities” (p.208). Having made short work of the menu, diners are thus free to dedicate themselves, as have the authors, to celebrity-watching, name-dropping, and otherwise attempting to adopt the milieu of fame as their own.

Using prose that recalls Hal Rubenstein (the InStyle magazine fashion scribe), Stadiem and Gibbs leave far more last impresions with their descriptions of the scene than with the to-do lists for the table. A visit to South Beach’s Shore Club will take you to “the noisiest grand hotel anywhere, from the rat-a-tat of the Manolos on the hard sandstone corridors to the all-night disco thump of the bars and restaurants overlooking the dreamy pool, which may be the only dream thing in this REM-deprived caravansary” (p.266). Stadiem and Gibbs also alert diners to potential surprises— “You didn’t realize there were so many tall people in South America, but here they are” (p.268) —and the risks involved in pursuing the ultimate dining experience in Brazil: “Rogerio Fasano is waiting to feed you again tonight, and you better make room, because, like most things in Sao Paulo, it will be to die for, one way or another” (p.251).

Everybody Eats is best understood as a window into the lives of lower-level Hollywoodites like Stadiem and Gibbs, whose primary currency is social networking rather than talent or fame. Indeed, the book’s unwritten epilogue offers a case in point: Last August, Daily Variety announced that the book had been optioned by Arthur Sarkissian, the producer of Rush Hour 3. The script, based on a chapter entitled “The Pikiest Eater,” will follow a demanding gourmand who terrorizes chefs. In understanding the marketability of such a curious subject, it pays to remember that Everybody is driven by connections, not content, as is usual in Hollywood in particular, and American popular culture in general. The name of the picky eater chronicled by Stadiem and Gibbs? Arthur Sarkissian.

—Tracie McMillan, Brooklyn, NY

Brewing Justice: Fair Trade Coffee, Sustainability, and Survival
Daniel Jaffee
xv + 346 pp. Illustrations. $55.00 (cloth)

Far from claiming that fair trade is an easy route to justice, Daniel Jaffee in Brewing Justice provides a critical and comprehensive account of fair-trade coffee farming in Oaxaca, Mexico. His fieldwork in two indigenous Oaxacan communities revealed that, in fact, coffee production is in a state of great crisis. Beginning in 1989, the price of coffee plummeted. The situation worsened between 1997 and 2004, and even today a pound of coffee is, in real terms, worth less than half of what it was nearly two decades ago (p.6). This situation has threatened the stability of cultural and economic life in coffee-growing communities and also endangers the ecological balance of highly biodiverse regions (p.37). Jaffee observes that the intensified cultivation of coffee beans has led to a decrease in subsistence farming, resulting in a state of food insecurity, in which “producers found themselves heavily invested in a commodity they couldn’t eat and inadequately invested in crops they could eat” (p.173).

Brewing Justice compares how the coffee crisis affected households that belonged to independent organizations and cooperatives, in contrast to those in neighboring communities using conventional trade markets. Families that produced coffee beans through conventional farming became increasingly impoverished, while the groups participating in fair trade practices were somewhat protected by guaranteed fixed prices. Jaffee’s book offers an innovative case study of fair trade’s impact on the quality of community life, as well as a much-needed critique of the use of conventional trade structures to implement alternative commercial systems.

As Jaffee explains, fair trade endeavors to reverse the traditional model of exchange and offer an alternative structure based on independent governance and a fixed-price model that can potentially assure a degree of economic stability for crops susceptible to crisis, such as coffee (pp.18–19). Yet the impetus for developing fair trade rules also lies in a faith-based model of charity and community-development schemes aimed at helping the “foreign poor.” Jaffee exposes the moral and ethical dimensions of trade by juxtaposing economic rules with such cultural assumptions as the idea that “what the world’s poorest need is more trade” (p.34). Jaffee finds that not all of the Oaxacan producers believe that justice lies in market access. Rather, political means can offer a greater capacity to “reverse the process of corporate-led globalization” (p.29). Jaffee skillfully questions the complicated