and favorite paella, followed by a classic flan. More adventurous cooks will find plenty of recipes to test their expertise, such as Octopus with Paprika, Rice with a Crust, Cardoon in Milk Sauce with Saffron and Cinnamon, Beans with Clams, and Partridges with Grapes, finished off with Fig Compote with Red Wine and Spices.

More clues to the Spanish culinary arts can be gleaned from the book’s brief explanations and notes. You can learn how to prepare octopus, cut up a chicken, roast red peppers, fix variety meats, or venture into furred and feathered game—all part of the Spanish repertoire. You will discover that a cork added to stew can tenderize the meat, and that paella reaches the point of perfection when left to stand for five minutes on top of a damp dishtowel before serving.

Where the book falls entirely short, however, is in its cultural indicators. Mere translations of recipe names fall flat: Important Potatoes, Widow’s Potatoes, and Eggy Mimosa do not entice the cook to look further. Regional references are noted by name only—Santiago Torte, Murcian Rice and Fish Stew, Asturian Beans, for example—while careless or too-literal translations abound: flamed for flambé, “crunchy fruit” in lemon sauce, and “Little Pavian Soldiers” misguide the neophyte Spanish cook. The opportunity to convey the country’s gastronomic culture, though not Ortega’s original intention, would have greatly enhanced the appeal of this cookbook to foreigners.

Instead, 1080 Recipes is a mere replication of 1080 Recetas de cocina, at best a support for cooks wishing to reproduce the fundamentals of Spanish cuisine.

—Jane Canova, Williams College

**Pepper**

Christine McFadden

Bath, UK: Absolute Press, 2008

256 pp. Illustrations. £25, $45.00 (cloth)

The history of the spice trade is essentially the history of the quest for pepper, starting some three thousand years ago. Although pepper has long not been traded ounce for ounce for gold, in volume and value it is still the most important spice traded worldwide. Pepper production doubled in the ten years up to 2003, as Vietnam and Brazil established huge new plantations, and Indonesia increased its output, leading to a glut and stockpiling as prices declined. A small Asian harvest in 2007 seems likely to restore balance.

No longer exotic, or even unusual, pepper and salt are put on the table in restaurant and home alike without much thought. Christine McFadden’s book brings the focus back to pepper by providing a very readable account of the history, trade, production, and processing of pepper and other pungent spices often used as pepper.

Pepper has long been named according to its origin, the best being Malabar, Wynad, Tellicherry Extra Bold, Lampong, Sarawak, and Muntok. As we consumers pay more attention to the provenance of our food, spice merchants now offer peppercorns by region of production in addition to the standard, anonymous jars of peppercorns on supermarket shelves. McFadden provides a useful guide to the aromatic and flavor profiles of pepper from different regions, with recommendations in some recipes about which one to use. The charts of comparative tasting notes on pepper and the “exotics” are helpful for the shopper and cook.

Photographs and extensive notes on black, white, green, and red peppercorns are followed by similar treatment of long pepper, cubbes, and the unrelated grains of paradise, pink pepper (Schinus terebinthifolius), allspice, Sichuan pepper, and sansho. McFadden also provides a useful chart on the wider pepper family, including the pungent leaves used in many regions of the tropics.

Grains of paradise, and even long pepper and cubbes, are becoming easier to find as spice merchants respond to a demand from chefs and experimental cooks. While McFadden includes a few recipes using these spices, I would have welcomed more suggestions about dishes to make with them, as well as with hoja santa (Piper auritum) leaves from Central America and lá lót/chaa phluu (Piper sarmentosum) leaves now available in Asian groceries.

The recipes are nicely varied with standards like steak au poivre, hot and sour soup, and chicken curry alongside chickpeas with feta and preserved lemons, tomato rasam, and pepper meringue grissini.

The book is handsomely produced, which adds to its attraction on the cook’s shelves.

—Jill Norman, London

**A Sacred Feast: Reflections on Sacred Harp Singing and Dinner on the Ground**

Kathryn Eastburn

Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2008

xxiii + 162 pp. Illustrations. $24.95 (cloth)

Singing may be an expression of the soul, but in Kathryn Eastburn’s *A Sacred Feast: Reflections on Sacred Harp Singing and Dinner on the Ground*, it’s a time for get-togethers and
a doorway to delicacies such as pork barbecue, cornbread, and homemade fried pies.

Drawing the name “sacred harp” from a famous shape-note songbook, the singing tradition is far-reaching—from the southeastern to northwestern United States—and is more than two hundred years old. Prompted by her own curiosity, Eastburn explores the singing community with both personal narrative and documentary shrewdness.

Though appealing, the musical intricacies of shape-note singing in four-part harmony are much less interesting than Eastburn’s own experience with the culture. As a journalist and freelance writer in Colorado Springs, she abandoned the church shortly after leaving parts of Kentucky and Tennessee, where she grew up. Through her research in the community, the bonds she forms soothe her own inner turmoil of supporting a son in the military while vehemently opposing the war in which he’s fighting.

Her written and emotional journeys draw us from Birmingham to Henegar to Seattle and sometimes back again, and we learn of Tom and Curtis Own in Southwest Texas, Reba Dell Windham in Alabama, and Karen Willard in Seattle, glimpsing the traditions from the inside out. Similar to the members of this singing culture, we too begin to ruminate on its healing and uplifting properties. To Eastburn, it’s a salve, and through her we see the importance of the relationships forged during their singing get-togethers.

Through simple prose descriptions of “meals on the ground,” a form of potluck meal after the singing has taken place, Eastburn illustrates the intimacy of community. The conventions are an opportunity to come together, mark the passing of time, and share through singing. They swap recipes for Red Velvet Cake or Dollar Store Dressing—some of which make it into Eastburn’s book. Notations and quotes from each contributor provide us with deeper understanding, and we can in our own kitchens explore the richness of Shelbie Sheppard and Charlene Wallace’s Layered Salad.

A Sacred Feast is the product of Eastburn’s simultaneous desires for documentation and self-understanding. As she witnesses the transformative power of sacred harp singing and community, we share in her growth vicariously. Although participants might share a slice of cake or a songbook with each other, they also share life.

—Jessica Orr, Raleigh, NC