profession or accreditation of nutrition practitioners. There is little mention of the American or British Dietetic Associations, fundamental resources for nutrition students or other health professional trainees.

Nevertheless, the text’s attempt to integrate nutritional science with a health-promotion approach is an important contribution. *Nutrition: A Health Promotion Approach* serves as a reminder that dietary requirements and nutrient metabolism cannot fully be addressed without describing the context in which people make choices about food.

—Jennifer Black, New York University

*Medieval Cuisine of the Islamic World: A Concise History with 174 Recipes*
Lilia Zaouali
Translated by M.B. DeBevoise; Foreword by Charles Perry
266 pp. Illustrations. $24.95 (cloth)

This book draws on the sources of medieval Arab cookery with which we have become acquainted through the work of modern scholars who translated and edited the manuscripts, most of them compiled in Charles Perry’s *Medieval Arab Cookery* and various other writings. However, author Lilia Zaouali draws directly on editions in the original Arabic, ranging in history from tenth-century Abbasid Baghdad to thirteenth-century Aleppo, Baghdad, and Murcia in Arab Spain. All were written by or for courtiers and aristocrats and reflect the opulence of their milieus, containing, apart from recipes and kitchen procedures, literary anecdotes, poetry, descriptions of notable banquets, and discourses on health and hygiene. In this engaging and informative book Zaouali weaves historical narratives to provide a context for these culinary writings and presents complementary material from medical texts and belles lettres. She also includes a number of attractive pictures on food-relevant themes.

The historical and cultural background to the recipes is set in a wide-ranging first chapter on the sources for culinary history, the authors of the main books of recipes and their milieus, and rules and influences from the religious sources. We then read about culinary influences from the various historical backgrounds: antiquity, Arabs of the desert and the oases, Persian courtly cuisine, the Turkish invasions, and the cultural character of the various conquered lands, including Spain. Poets, doctors, and geographers embroil the picture. There then follows a section on materials, techniques, and terminology. The main part of the book consists of the recipes, which are classified by genre: appetizers, breads, roasts, stews, fish, dairy, pasta, couscous, sauces, pastries, and fermented condiments and wine. The last chapter contains recipes from contemporary North African cuisines, which the author believes to have some continuity with the medieval traditions. The medieval recipes are presented to the reader with short prefaces, many of which suggest that they are possible to prepare in the modern kitchen and will be pleasing to a modern diner.

The search for continuity and the project of re-creating these historic recipes is part of a romance of the past, which seems to be pervasive. The author is clearly aware of the discontinuities: the ingredients, methods, the prevalence of New World products in modern cookery, the forgetting and abandonment of many ingredients basic to medieval cookery (notably *murri*, a condiment made of rotted grains, apparently resembling soy sauce), and the diminution of strong tastes of spices, vinegar, and sugar. Yet, the author has a desire to find continuities, and she finds them primarily in North African cuisines, not so much in the Middle East. For the most part, however, modern palates would deem the medieval tastes too harsh, with their indiscriminate use of spices, vinegar, sugar and honey, fats and oils. These features were common both to the Muslim world and to their European counterparts. These similarities are usually explained in terms of diffusions and imitations by the Europeans of the Muslim civilizations in diet, ingredients, and medical ideas. This is doubtless true, to an extent. Another factor, however, is that the recipes that come down to us from both sides are those of the aristocrats and of the rich. The main concern was to display opulence and luxury, which were embodied in the use of expensive ingredients: spices, sugar, honey, different meats, nuts, pickles, and cheeses, all in the same pot. Do we really want to eat all that?

We can postulate a kind of civilizing process that included the table, and that affected both Europe and the Middle East. In eighteenth-century France this process was ideologically explicit, with the rejection of heavy spicing and complex foods in favor of purity of ingredients. In many other places, including the Ottoman Middle East, the process was implicit: Ottoman courtly food, for instance, was largely domestic and simple, the greatest extravagance being in pastries and sweets. So many of the foods we associate with the Middle East, such as stuffed vegetables and various salads and dips, as well as the diverse rice dishes, date back to those later centuries rather than to medieval times. It has been said that the regions like North Africa and Iran that maintained continuities from the distant past were only
London is a familiar city to many Iranians. Like Los Angeles, it has become a home away from home in substantial ways for Iranians of all backgrounds. The Persian restaurants and businesses of London are among the oldest Iranian establishments in Europe, and the city’s neighborhoods have known generations of Iranian residents.

Sally Butcher’s *Persia in Peckham* offers a lively and fresh look at Iranian culture and cuisine in London. Butcher, an Englishwoman married to an Iranian, owns a shop called “Persepolis” in Peckham—a neighborhood in South East London—where she and her husband sell a variety of ethnic (mostly Iranian) products to the vastly diverse population that gives Peckham its unique character. *Persia in Peckham* provides a wide range of recipes centered on Persian cuisine, enriched with regular asides on Iranian history, culture, and customs, all served with a refreshing dose of affectionate humor.

The well-known stews, kebabs, rice dishes, and pickles are all here, their preparation explained with clarity and made easy to follow. But *Persia in Peckham* is at its best when Butcher offers creative twists on Persian fundamentals. Drawing on her own British heritage as well as the rich supplies of London markets, Butcher playfully brings fusion into Persian cuisine and explores the ways in which traditional recipes can open up to change. Tuna steaks (unheard of in much of Iran) are barbecued with a pomegranate sauce; chiles (hardly ever used in Persian cuisine) are added to the plum stew. Haddock is battered in doogh, the fermented yogurt drink that, to the best of this reviewer’s knowledge, has never been used as batter before. The results are very good. Old and familiar tastes are made new with these surprising additions. In Butcher’s own words, the book “takes Iran as the center of its culinary universe and then roves freely around the Middle East, as well as visiting the shop’s own neighbours in Peckham just for fun. These are full of wonderful African and Caribbean spices and vegetables and inevitably these foods have crept into our food” (pp.10–11). Butcher introduces amusing categories with entertaining titles: “Lorry food” (pp.62–67) gives a glimpse into her dealings with truck drivers who bring her goods from Iran, and provides two delicious suggestions for picnic and travel food using Persian and Western staples: rice, dried salami, tuna, *lavash* bread, and herbs. “Big *Barberi* burgers” (pp.115–116) are a successful marriage between the well-known Iranian kebab-and-bread meal and the Western burger. The section on pickles and jams teaches the reader to make the traditional *Hafte-Bijar* and eggplant *torshi* but also invites experimentation with hot tomato sauces and barberry jelly, both of which turn out delicious.

There are regular breaks from recipes, during which Butcher briefly explains some aspect of Persian culture: