many striking coinages in her book, the story of our “lengthening food chain” (p.58).

Vileisis starts with the diary of Martha Ballard, a midwife who lived, as many Americans did in the 1790s, on a farm near a mill, with her own dairy, gardens, cattle, and sheep. “To most pre-industrial Americans the food chain was eminently tangible” (p.21), writes Vileisis.

Describing Martha gathering wood, making bread from her own flour, picking bugs from plants, milking cows and using their fat for tallow, she concludes that “the project of procuring food was not a sliver of experience squeezed in as quickly as possible but rather a dominant and all-encompassing focus for her and each member of her family” (p.28).

Vileisis charts the changes in industrial-age America that would increase the disassociation between eating and food production and make Martha’s world obsolete: the increase in shipping food by rail, the disappearance of wild game from markets, the rise of the canning and meatpacking industries, the prevalence of a “new domestic ideology” (p.43) that saw cooking as a job for servants, the reliance on “experts” in all matters culinary.

What held this new system together was a “covenant of ignorance” (p.171) that has remained in place, with few challenges, until the present day:

Food manufacturers did not want to be pestered by careful scrutiny of their ever-changing production methods...And housewives did not want to be bothered with knowing details: it was precisely the unknowing aspect of the emerging food system that reduced time in both shopping and cooking and also helped recast cooking as desirable work for women of all classes. (p.171)

Although *Kitchen Literacy* is heavily dependent upon a few standard food histories (*Perfection Salad, Appetite for Change*), Vileisis has a gift for synthesis and summary, and she has done some original research and interpretation: through a comparison of such unexpected objects as meat charts and food advertisements, she depicts a movement toward abstraction and mystification that also characterized the larger food culture. And in resurrecting Thomas De Voe’s little-known memoir, *The Market Assistant*, Vileisis has found a fascinating chronicler of America’s changing foodways in the mid-nineteenth century and, probably, America’s first Greenmarket advocate.

If there is a phantom presence in *Kitchen Literacy*, it is John and Karen Hess’s *The Taste of America* (first published in 1977). “Typically, the history of America’s remarkable food system has been recounted as a singularly progressive tale” (p.9), writes Vileisis. This generalization hardly applies to the Hesses’ work, a polemical chronicle based on original scholarship that tells a regressive story similar to *Kitchen Literacy’s*. The Hesses were the first to do what Vileisis now attempts: to tell the story of how industrialization led to the slow decline of “kitchen literacy.” The Hesses charted the decline mainly through cookbooks; Vileisis takes a wider approach. Although *The Taste of America* is cited once in the footnotes, the Hesses are conspicuously absent from a list of “authors and scholars whose works have informed *Kitchen Literacy*” (p.312). This omission might have to do with a difference in temperament as much as anything: the Hesses passed their verdicts like hanging judges and took a Nabokovian glee in deflating received ideas and established reputations; Vileisis, by contrast, is a measured and always empathetic writer.

Like E.D. Hirsch’s wildly popular *Cultural Literacy*, whose title this book is meant to echo, *Kitchen Literacy* has a practical and prescriptive bent. In her epilogue Vileisis offers some unassailable suggestions for achieving kitchen literacy: Shop at farmer’s markets. Get to know local producers directly. Join CSAs. Pay attention to government policies that affect food and agriculture. And, finally, start your own garden.

Bringing a handful of sage from her garden to her cutting board, Vileisis surprises a bunch of tiny spiders. After gently carrying them back to the garden, she concludes: “But having spiders in my kitchen reminded me that my foodshed is always part of a larger whole...At the other end of my food chain, wherever it may be—there are always spiders, worms, birds, rivers, and people” (p.245).

—John Broening, Denver, co

*The Story of Tea: A Cultural History and Drinking Guide*  
Mary Lou Heiss and Robert J. Heiss  
Berkeley: Ten Speed Press, 2007  
viii + 417 pp. Photographs, maps.  $29.95 (cloth)

Early on in *The Story of Tea*, Mary Lou and Bob Heiss, owners of Cooks Shop Here, a specialty-food store in Northampton, Massachusetts, write that they consider tea to be, above all, a Chinese drink. This statement explains their approach. Two-thirds of the book deals with the production, history, and cultures of tea in China and Japan. Readers who expect information about tea in general and about all of the various leaves used worldwide to revitalize or calm will, like me, initially be disappointed, as *The Story of Tea*...
focuses on true tea steeped from the leaves of the *Camellia sinensis* bush. There is no mention of the infusions that qualify as tea in the layman’s mind, such as rooibos, mate, or tisanes like chamomile and peppermint. I had hoped to find more information about tea culture throughout parts of Africa and the Arab world, where sweet, mint tea is consumed; or more than a passing mention of the Russian samovar rituals, or of South Asia’s spice-spiked chais. I expected a more comprehensive take on this elegant drink steeped in history, which has long been underappreciated by most Americans, myself included.

But my initial reaction was unfair. Slowly, I was drawn into the book and discovered that *The Story of Tea* is a thoroughly researched volume that would be equally at home in the libraries of tea experts and casual drinkers. The Heisses have compiled an important resource, beginning with such basic information as the botanical name for the plant (*Camellia sinensis*) and its three varieties: *sinensis* (China bush, grown throughout China and Japan); *assamica* (Assam bush, cultivated primarily in India); and *cambodi* (Java bush, grown in Java and throughout Southeast Asia). Each type’s terroir is thoroughly described. The book’s technical information—and there is a lot of it—is presented in near-scientific fashion, yet it remains accessible and entertaining, keeping the reader engaged. The breadth of information the Heisses have compiled is staggering, from tea production in China and Japan to interesting tidbits of history that contextualize the drink. Unfortunately, less historical information is given about the drink in areas outside China, Japan, Europe, and the United States, such as India, Indonesia, and Kenya—three of the world’s largest producers of the tea—and here is where the book suffers. Discussion of India’s tea industry is limited to a few pages and feels like an aside, which is curious, given that this country is the largest producer of black teas (primarily Assam and Darjeeling) in the world. No mention is made of tea culture or drinking rituals in India; the same holds true for other regions of the world, most notably Morocco, to which only one page is devoted. There is no discussion of the rest of North Africa and West Africa.

Yet apart from this omission, *The Story of Tea* is an otherwise satisfying and extremely enlightening book. An entire section, organized by tea type, offers taste, flavor, and production notes in an easy reference format that will do much to help expand the palate of the novice whose experiences may be limited to Lipton or Celestial Seasonings. A glossary including terms used to describe the taste, manufacturing process, and shapes of processed tea leaves completes the volume. The Heisses even offer a few recipes—sweet and savory—for the interested cook.

That the authors are passionate about tea goes without saying. They are excellent guides, leading readers through the tea gardens and production facilities of Asia and entertaining us with the history of this complex and fascinating beverage.

—Rachel Finn, Chicago, Ill.

**Thomas Jefferson on Wine**

John Hailman

Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2006

xvi + 457 pp. $38.00 (cloth)

John Hailman’s *Thomas Jefferson on Wine* is a fascinating exploration of the early days of the modern global wine trade, as experienced by one of the most significant figures in United States history. Many readers will know little about Jefferson’s pre-presidential ambassadorship to France, let alone the wine discoveries he made in that position. Indeed, only Jefferson scholars are likely to have considered his life apart from a few well-known historical events. Similarly, even wine aficionados are unlikely to know much about the quality and nature of wines of the late 1700s, or how they were produced, sold, stored, and consumed. Hailman, who has been a wine columnist and judge as well as a Jefferson devotee, masterfully interwines these two subjects.

As a wine drinker by choice in a nation devoted to whiskey, beer, and cider, Jefferson worked hard to obtain his preferred drink and to persuade his friends of its merits. Jefferson kept copies of his letters to heads of state and to his wine-procuring agents, leaving a wealth of information concerning the world of wine two hundred years ago.

Jefferson’s pursuit of wine and a greater understanding of grape growing and winemaking make an unusual lens through which to see him as a more complete person than textbooks can show. The story of how Jefferson, even as president, “paid for…[his wine]…with u.s. Bank notes cut in half and mailed separately,” reveals an eccentric side not found in traditional portraits (p.268). Hailman makes clear that this book, more than thirty years in the making, “is offered especially to those who know a little about either wine or Jefferson, but would like to learn more about both in a relatively painless way” (p.ix).

Hailman provides a helpful overview of the state of wine technology in the 1700s and explains the difficulties of obtaining wine in the United States, including piracy, storms at sea, and thirsty boatmen who would sample the wares and then refill the barrels with river water. Hailman