details and facts, helping the reader to understand the range of ingredients and practices.

Al-Warraq’s text also educates the modern reader on a fundamental aspect of medieval Arab society, that of adab. This concept translates generally into “decorum” (Nasrallah’s apt rendition) and is the rubric used for modeling all kinds of behavior in society: hunting, dress, games, and ways to address people, to name a few. Food has its own adab, and the text discusses the details of decorum associated with eating. The book ends with four helpful sections put together by Nasrallah: an appendix lists key people and places related to the cookbook and is followed by thirty-five beautiful plates of mostly Persian and Arabic artwork that give the reader a fascinating visual reference point. After these Nasrallah provides an Arabic-English glossary as well as an English-Arabic one, both of which will be of great utility to students of Arabic and culinary history.

The book will have many uses for different readers. It explains food from the cultural, linguistic, historical, and medical points of view, giving the reader a window into the richness of daily and intellectual life in Baghdad. The recipes are fun to read and constantly shift the boundary between the exotically distant and the uncannily familiar. We notice a remarkable continuity in how we understand and use food today, yet we also witness unusual ingredients and exotic combinations. Both of these teach us a valuable lesson about the rich cultural history of Baghdad and invite us to resist the relentless one-sided representation of that city in today’s media.

—Leyla Rouhi, Williams College

The Good Wife’s Guide (Le Ménagier de Paris):
A Medieval Household Book
Translated by Gina L. Greco and Christine M. Rose
232 pp. $69.95 (cloth) $24.95 (paper)

The late-fourteenth-century manuscript known as Le Ménagier de Paris, newly translated as The Good Wife’s Guide, is a unique artifact of French medieval female domestic education. This translation, by Gina L. Greco and Christine M. Rose, is the first in English to have kept all the parts of the original 1393 manuscript together. Greco and Rose have included the original “gardening” section, over 380 recipes, menus for feasts, tips on choosing servants, advice about keeping fleas out of bedclothes, medical care for horses, and directions for raising and training hawks. “Prose and poetry, treatises and recipes, morals and menus” (p.1).

Several versions of the manuscript circulated in the late Middle Ages, and at least one of them appears to have been recopied well into the sixteenth century. Like many other medieval manuscripts, the text is a compilation of various bits from numerous sources. It was common practice in medieval and early modern Europe for authors to compile their own books by copying from other sources. The French bibliophile and collector Baron Jérôme Pichon did not publish Le Ménagier as a printed book until 1846.1 In the twentieth century a modernized French version and an English version appeared, both abridged.

Greco and Rose write of their intention in translating the book. “Considering this compelling text as a whole is crucial to historicizing reading practices, understanding the author’s purposes and the late medieval audience’s actual reading matter, and noting what they cared to preserve for use in their households” (p.5). Staying true to their word, in addition to the valuable compilation of recipes and menus incorporated from Le Viandier of Taillevent and other medieval sources, they have included three “verbose didactic texts” that the translators have restored to their proper place to allow modern readers to study and judge for themselves the text as it was meant to be read in the Middle Ages.

Many food historians will be at least vaguely familiar with Le Ménagier’s culinary riches. They are all gloriously rendered in this translation. Yet, the themes of wifely conduct—obedience, fidelity, patience, virtuous hard work—were equally as important for a young wife’s education as learning to shop in the Paris markets, compose a menu, and hire servants. The splendid and erudite introduction that Greco and Rose supply makes it possible for the modern reader to navigate the sections of rather grim medieval moral instruction. The three sections earlier translators dropped are the story of Griselda, the story of Melibee and Prudence, and the allegorical poem Le Chemin de povreté et de richesse. In restoring and explicating these, Greco and Rose open a valuable window onto the role of and expectations for a good bourgeois wife in Paris in 1393. Greco and Rose warn us pointedly that in these texts women are frequently compared to animals (dogs, horses) because of the medieval feminine ideal of unquestioning loyalty and obedience to their master (or husband).

The manuscript was supposedly originally compiled by an older Parisian man in order to guide his young bride in her new life as a wife and the mistress of a respectable and wealthy household. Importantly, this edition puts a young wife’s culinary and household duties into the larger

context of how she was to conduct herself in her marriage and in society. The book’s sections of marketing instructions, menus, and recipes are, like the rest of the book, very helpfully footnoted, and there is a glossary of culinary terms as well. These sections comprise a detailed exposé of how the medieval upper bourgeoisie indulged themselves in the pleasures of eating, drinking, and entertaining. Where the previous translation by Eileen Power (The Goodman of Paris, 1928) rendered the medieval French into a slightly tortured English, Greco and Rose have made their translation far easier to read, helping to attract an audience that should include interested amateurs who are not medieval specialists.

—Kyri Watson Claflin, Boston University

NOTE

Tomato Rhapsody: A Fable of Love, Lust & Forbidden Fruit
Adam Schell
New York: Delacorte Press, 2009
340 pp. $25.00 (cloth)

A delight to read, this book follows in the medieval-Renaissance literary tradition of Italy, even in the author’s cleverly penned chapter titles: “In which we learn of Truffles and other Mushrooms” (p.27) or “In which we learn the Recipe for Insalata di Pomodoro e Menta” (p.58). Set in sixteenth-century Tuscany, the book is both a fable and a love story with a villainous stepfather, Giuseppe; a lovely maiden, Mari, who is Christian; and the sweet, innocent Jewish boy, Davido, who is meant for another. With imagination and humor Schell weaves their story with that of the tomato—pomo d’amore. Nonno, Davido’s grandfather, sails with Christopher Columbus to the New World and is abandoned there. But he discovers the tomato and ultimately brings it back to Italy, cultivates it, and transforms it from a shunned poisonous fruit to a sweet love apple embraced first by the Jews and then by Christians.

Without any attempt or desire to re-create history, Schell is clearly aware of such figures as Cosimo I de’ Medici, who becomes the misunderstood and reluctant Cosimo de Pucci de’ Meducci III, the Grand Duke of Tuscany. He runs away from his stressful life to become a peasant farmer, if only for a short time, before he is discovered by his chef and must return to the Meducci estate. This is at once a parody, spoof, and satire of historical characters. Schell cleverly incorporates into the fable the tradition of Italian feste (festivals), patron saint’s-day celebrations and processions, and even the palio (horse race), but with a twist. Here, the palio becomes a donkey race in which the rider has one arm tied behind his back, and it is held at the Festa del Santo Ubiaco.

The overriding theme of the book is not just the tomato—it is food. The Meducci chef, Luigi Campoverde, cleverly procures giant truffles, olives, and tomatoes not with money but with objects he borrows from the Meducci household (pp.77, 128, 129), while the Good Padre fantasizes on what he will do with an eggplant he’s about to pick from his garden:

…the eggplant, cut width-wise into finger-thick slices…dip the slices into egg batter and then dredge them in chestnut flour with coarsely crushed walnuts, pignoli, sea salt and red pepper flakes. Filling a skillet half-knuckle deep with olive oil…fry until their outsides are golden and their insards soft…lay slices of particularly pungent, semi-firm cow’s milk cheese upon the fried eggplant…oven to soften the cheese and back the eggplant. (p.22)

We learn two different ways that pizza was invented—first by accident, when a focaccia spattered with bits of tomato and cheese is slipped onto a hot brick near a fire (pp.293–294); then by plan, when chef Luigi makes a “pizea” for little Margarita (pp.309–310). We also learn how olives were cured (pp.171–172, 186–187), how the tomato was accidentally turned into a lovely sauce (pp.274–275), and much more. In Tomato Rhapsody not only is the history of the tomato re-created, but Italian food is, too. Read it with pleasure.

—Katherine McIver, University of Alabama at Birmingham

Swindled: The Dark History of Food Fraud, From Poisoned Candy to Counterfeit Coffee
Bee Wilson
384 pp. $26.95 (cloth)

Readers will learn in Bee Wilson’s engaging new book about food fraudsters through the ages that fishmongers in nineteenth-century northern England sold their catch to the working poor by candlelight on Saturday evening. Sounds romantic, doesn’t it? The truth, however, is that the wealthy had already bought the freshest fish that morning, long before workers, who had only just got their weekly pay in late afternoon, finally had a chance to shop.