to fulfill that role. Also, as he notes, the Madeira trade “is in many ways representative of how Atlantic trades were organized and how institutions grew up around them in the years between 1640 and 1815” (p.399). Madeira is a mirror, essentially; through its expansion one can also extrapolate the expansion of the markets for spices, medicines, and other goods. “The characteristics of the Madeira system are replicated wherever the behavior of the traders themselves, rather than the dictates of a monopoly agent, whether state or private, initiated changes in the features of a trade” (pp.399–400).

Hancock’s ambition with Oceans of Wine is substantial. Yet it is no insult to say that one measure of his success is that a sip of Madeira after finishing this book becomes a far more complex and rewarding experience than one might ever expect it to be.

—Ray Isle, Food & Wine

**POWER FOOD LEXICOM**

Miralda

Barcelona: Fundacion Food Cultura, 2008

588 pp. Illustrations. $24.95 (paper)

Miralda, the guiding force behind **POWER FOOD LEXICOM**, is a lofty Barcelona artist and former proprietor of Manhattan’s storied El Internacional restaurant. The two undefined coinages of his title offer an early clue that this book is artist-driven. Published in 2008 to commemorate World Food Day, **POWER FOOD** is far-ranging, sensual, and politically minded. This fervid volume provides evidence galore of the gastro-political passions raging throughout the world.

Is there anyone knowledgeable enough to cogitate every word and picture in this trilingual Basque, Castilian, and English book? I don’t think I’ll ever tire of flipping through **POWER FOOD**’s wildly diverse pages, at once encyclopedic

‘To help stinking Wines,’ one could rack them from ‘old and corrupt’ lees. Alternatively, one could hang ‘in them little bags of spices,’ like ginger, cloves, cinnamon, and grains of paradise; one could insert elderflower or lavender; one could introduce a boiled decoction of ‘some of these spices’ …To correct ‘rankness, eagerness, and prick of Sacks and other sweet wines,’ some stirred in white limestone; to help ‘pricked’ French wines, some added powders of Flanders tile and Roche alum; to ameliorate Rhenish wines, some racked it ‘into a clean and strongly-scented cask or vat’ and mixed it with a concoction of beaten honey and skim milk. (p.83)

It is also hard not to be both intrigued and alarmed by the offhand mention of Madeira merchant James Smart, found dead in his bed after having “overloaded his stomach” (p.141) with lobster.

All these many details parade by in service of Hancock’s larger goal. His overarching purpose is to tell the story of how trade in Madeira served a vital role in linking “the markets and cultures of the Atlantic,” (p.xxix) and specifically to show how individual people and their personal networks were the primary forces that allowed the Madeira trade
and maddeningly disorganized; brilliantly scholastic and folly-filled; inspirational and distasteful. There is something for everyone, though you may have to search to find it, since the book has no index. If, for example, you are fascinated by restaurant menus, POWER FOOD offers beautiful illustrations, salient information, and even a citation for a little-known Spanish book about menus (pp.162, 354–355, 359, 441–442).

This compendium, which presents articles, statistics, and abundant images limning food as energy, medicine, control, power, and superstition, is only one part of Miralda’s expansive project. He also organized a companion museum exhibition that explored the relationships among food, energy, and power through artworks and information compiled by a network of unconventional researchers, who analyzed a plethora of food-related topics, touching on rituals and traditions, religious directives and prohibitions, governmental control, advertising, social relations, and pop culture. A chief concern of POWER FOOD, both the book and the exhibition, is to arm its readers with progressive ammunition for participating in today’s fractious world of food politics. POWER FOOD has no table of contents. Instead, you will find a MODE D’EMPLOI (p.15) that suggests navigating the contents either in a “text-based” manner using the book’s unalphabetized lexicon and key words, or “based on the images that accompany these texts, which do not aim to illustrate them but to offer a transversal view.” Huh? The images and texts in POWER FOOD are not, in fact, directly correlated—an artistic trope that affords readers the opportunity to draw their own associations and interpretations. Alas, the deep transversal furrows and cracks in the spine of my review copy are evidence that an accurate index would have worked better than POWER FOOD’s repetitive lexicon and key words. Fortunately, the lucid introduction to this admittedly noncomprehensive project provides a clear goal: “to awaken our appetite, to stimulate our curiosity” about food, culture, energy, and power (p.10).

POWER FOOD covers consumibles from bugs to nuts. Hundreds of gorgeous, evocative, and little-known photographs, illustrations, and texts form the heart and soul of the book, beginning with an oversized cover image of a bullet and a powerful logo of a fork-and-spoon-clutching fist atop an avocado-green starburst. The next image is a two-page spread featuring a photograph of a cake shaped like an exploding atomic bomb and bearing the words “Operation Crossroads.” Only after my own research did I discover that this cutesy name refers to the nuclear tests carried out by the United States at Bikini Atoll in 1946. The cake is about to be cut by a frilly-hatted woman sporting an orchid corsage and a cat-swallowed-the-canary grin. Her immaculately manicured fingers rest lightly on the hairy, cake-knife-wielding hand of a one-star general in dress uniform. Beneath this image are three contemporary Hans Gissinger photographs of exploding cakes. Such captionless imagery and visual pairings make POWER FOOD’s theme clear. The book forces readers to look carefully while also leaving them wanting more. The stimulation of such active participation is, perhaps, POWER FOOD’s ultimate goal.

A few sporadic pages of POWER FOOD are devoted to Castilian-only artistic factoids designed to make readers think about biomass (p.153), genetically modified foods (p.501), and other hot-button topics. Formatted to resemble the nutritional information on food packaging, these texts are superimposed over the same giant bullet image from the cover. POWER FOOD’s “bullet points” can certainly shock. Here are five of my favorites:

- The drug LSD occurs naturally in the ergot fungus found on rye (pp.78–79).
- “Pliny declared that the best known beers were brewed in Egypt, in Gaul—present-day France—and in Hispania—currently Spain and Portugal” (p.122).
- There are different types of cannibalism, including sexual cannibalism, so named for the erotic pleasure derived from eating parts of live humans (p.163).
- Both turtle blood and liquid from giant hornet larvae are ingested by some Asian athletes to help “recover energy after prolonged physical exercise” (p.203).
- Disingenuous military “recruits put garlic into their rectum” in order to suffer high temperature or hyperthermia and be wrongly diagnosed with severe infectious illnesses, and thus be exempted from service (p.377).

Many great images are deployed in POWER FOOD, including a stellar German illustration of a chicken’s family tree (p.132); marches parading with framed images of giant tubers (p.301); a detail of Diego Rivera’s 1953 mural “The People Demand Health” (pp.378–379); an unusually beautiful shot of ordinary buckets, pots, kettles, and pans lined up single file along an interminable cement wall (pp.390–391); Miralda’s tremendously cheeky skull sculpted from maize and salt, displayed alongside an 1820 “Treatise on Adulterations of Food and Culinary Poisons” (p.482); and splassy color cartoons of Swee’Pea, Bruttus, Winmy, Olive Oyl, and Popeye (pp.410–411). Long associated with the power of spinach, Popeye is dethroned in Luis Gasca’s brilliant revisionist history debunking the “miraculous properties of this bitter plant…based on an exaggeration and a mistaken belief that endured for more than a century.”
POWER FOOD is honest. It depicts real, messy kitchens that were not tidied for the camera (pp.113–114). It welcomes suggestions, corrections, and contributions to continue the many projects within projects that inform this global analysis of the past, present, and future of food and its associations with human power. Miralda’s network is extensive—even H.M. Rey Juan Carlos of Spain helped in his venture. Though it is easy to quibble with some of POWER FOOD’s details, Miralda’s essential achievement and ongoing work entitle him, too, to a crown.

—Harley Spiller, New York, NY

**Appetite City: A Culinary History of New York**

William Grimes

New York: North Point Press, 2009

384 pp. Illustrations. $30.00 (cloth)

New York is a fascinating food town with a more colorful and intriguing restaurant history than many imagine. With a few exceptions, this story has been surprisingly under-reported by historians and food writers. Now William Grimes, a former restaurant critic for the *New York Times* and author of the cocktail history *Straight Up or On the Rocks*, seeks to fill this vacuum, bringing his considerable experience as the official palate of New York to his latest work, *Appetite City: A Culinary History of New York*.

Although Grimes titles his work a “culinary history,” his nearly exclusive focus is on public eating establishments in New York City from the late eighteenth century to the present, garnished with a soupçon of market history. This market history is some of his best work, as he brings to life the sights, smells (both pleasant and not so), and mucky streets of the cacophonous Fly, Fulton, and Washington Street Markets that sated both New York’s fancy folk and hoi polloi through much of the nineteenth century.

One would expect that someone as knowledgeable about food as Grimes obviously is from his years of restaurant reviewing would bring as astute an eye to evocations of the cuisine of yesteryear as to the market. When he invests the time to describe the making of a proper turtle soup—from displaying the gargantuan beasts publicly to attract notice (Nibo’s Coffee House), to the required butchery and blood-draining, the initial cooking, prying the succulent meat from the shell, creating the turtle stock with the shell and traditional calves’ foot and ham, and then the final assembly with the memorable addition of glistening turtle fat (Nash and Crook Chophouse)—Grimes is at the top of his game. Although I came away ruing my inability to time travel to taste this epicurean marvel, his detailed description came as close as the printed word ever could to allowing me mentally to savor this renowned dish. Equal to the sensual pleasure created by Grimes’s insights is his ability to convey the utter extravagance of this nearly forgotten dish and the social milieu in which this type of cuisine could flourish.

Grimes does not paint these superb pictures often enough. Instead, there is a flat quality to his reporting of the seemingly identical menus of chops and potatoes, or spaghetti and fish and red wine in straw-covered fiaschi, or of whatever the particular style du jour was that formed the fare of many establishments. While Grimes has clearly plumbed plenty of primary sources, as his bibliography makes plain, he adds little insight or context to them. This failure to step back from his subject and discuss a bigger picture is disappointing.

Grimes occasionally shows a casualness toward culinary history that may simply be part of his failure to put events in a careful chronology or in context. In his opening pages he relates the tale of the “dashing Louis de Singeron, a French nobleman who fled revolutionary France [and] chanced into a career as a confectioner” (pp.9–10). He credits Singeron with stunning early-nineteenth-century New Yorkers with the inventiveness of the French culinary arts by “introduc[ing] the practice of stamping New Year’s cakes with hearts pierced by arrows” (p.10) and never mentions the long Dutch tradition of intricately stamped New Year’s cakes. Thus a reader could easily come away with a misimpression of the culinary practices that were already established in the city Singeron encountered.

Grimes’s breezy treatment of a broad subject through time may come from his background as a reporter, and for some it will make *Appetite City* an ideal starting point for learning a bit about New York’s public dining. Grimes catalogs virtually all of the notable restaurants that have opened their doors to New York’s voracious diners. With the exception of the grand dames of New York restaurants, such as Delmonico’s, Le Pavillon, or the Colony, or various chains and conglomerates such as the Alice Foote MacDougall or Restaurant Associates empires, few establishments merit more than a brief paragraph or two, and Grimes often relies on the decor or the notable personalities that kept the places running to describe the restaurant scene. For readers desirous of tasting the smorgasbord of New York dining, *Appetite City* fits the bill nicely. For those who want to drink deeply of the social and culinary history underlying