cuisine, do not delve more into the history and evolution of Ghanaian cooking. The reader is provided an overview of Ghana and the different crops and animals consumed in the country that numbers only three pages.

The authors do try to make up for the brevity of their introduction by including helpful tips or interesting facts for each recipe, such as how the peanut, a native to South America, was introduced to West Africa by the Portuguese (p.104). While The Ghana Cookbook would have benefited from a more comprehensive introduction at the outset, this is a small quibble in an otherwise excellent book that fills a lacuna in a more comprehensive introduction at the outset, this is a small quibble in an otherwise excellent book that fills a lacuna in a

NOTE

The Oxford Companion to Food
Alan Davidson
Edited by Tom Jaine (revised and updated edition)
Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014
922 pp. $65 (hardcover)

Sometimes you can’t help but be annoyed when a classic is revised and updated. Do I really need another copy to take up precious shelf space? Can I really bear to abandon this weathered friend whose pages I have meticulously and voraciously scoured over the years and scribbled in its margins? Well, the answer in short is yes. The field of food studies has grown so immensely that an update was absolutely required, and Tom Jaine, with the help of many great food writers, has done a superb job with it. Perhaps most impressively, the wit and wisdom of Alan Davidson that shone on every page has not been lost; one can still hear his voice clearly, and it is actually hard to discern what’s new without a careful comparison to the original.

There is a very good reason this work became a classic and better reason that it will continue to be. It is truly delightful to read, even cover to cover if you have the time to be so enriched. Of the many reference works that appeared nearly two decades ago, Scribner’s Encyclopedia of Food and Culture, The Cambridge World History of Food, the revised Larousse Gastronomique, and several others in their wake, including my own Food Cultures of the World, this is the only one I keep within arm’s reach for first reference. Each of these serves a particular function, but I think the Oxford Companion is the only one you actually have fun reading, as one entry leads to another or as you randomly pick a letter and go all the way through.

If you are interested in food and don’t own a copy, buy it now. To prove a point, I randomly opened to the page with the heading “blood puddings.” Did you know Homer’s Odyssey refers to a stomach filled with blood and fat and roasted over a fire? Or that the Roman cookbook attributed to Apicius has a pudding with chopped hard-boiled egg yolks, pine kernels, onions, and leeks? Or that there is a fifteenth-century English recipe using the blood of a porpoise with oatmeal? Or that there are a range of modern French boudins noirs including herbs and brandy (from Lyon), apples (from Alsace), and spinach (from Poitou). The Flemish version with currants and raisins sounds the most interesting. But so too are the Spanish morella, Italian sanguinaccio, German Blutwurst, Hungarian kishka. And if you are wondering about other places in the world, just look at the earlier entry on “blood.” I must have been channeling the upcoming Oxford Symposium (which Alan co-founded) and whose theme is offal.

Let’s go back one entry earlier: “blini,” those Russian buckwheat crepes served with herring, chopped egg or caviar, and sour cream. Did you know they were eaten at funerals with boiled wheat and vodka, with a tipple poured directly into the grave for the benefit of the dead? Laura Mason wrote this entry and captured Davidson’s wry humor very nicely. And one entry earlier than “blini” is “blewit,” something I have never heard of, apparently a blueish-lilac edible mushroom, found in large fairy rings. On the previous page is “bleak,” a little freshwater fish which “when fried their skins are agreeable crisp and crunchy, while the inside remains succulent.” Not only edifying, but appetizing! This is exactly the way I encourage you to use this book. Just start, open a random page, set aside a few hours at least, abandon anything awaiting your attention, and eventually the book will become a good old friend, exactly as it has for me.

—Ken Albala, University of the Pacific

Chop Suey, USA: The Story of Chinese Food in America
Yong Chen
New York: Columbia University Press, 2014
xvii + 292 pp. Illustrations. $30.00 (cloth)

When historian Yong Chen journeyed from China to study at Cornell University, he was struck unexpectedly with a longing for home and by the stark awareness of his Chineseess.