cheese in a taco to the whole myriad of goat cheeses and French cheeses” (p.14). Cumulatively, these sidebars help readers grasp why seemingly simple yet critical details make a difference in not only how Waters thinks about food but also in how she encouraged so many others to think likewise.

What proves curious about Waters’s memoir, however, is that it concludes with a chapter entitled “Opening Night.” Although the chapter includes more details than simply the ones chronicling that historic day for Chez Panisse, her memoir ends shortly thereafter. While the sidebars help fill in many of the specifics, historians such as Freedman note that Chez Panisse, by its very nature, is a philosophical work in progress. The absence of details leading one from opening night to the present day only leaves the reader wanting more. Perhaps a second volume is thus in order.

Regardless, no one can deny the life story of this accidental revolutionary is essential reading for individuals wanting to understand how we eat today. For example, Waters concludes by making this seemingly grandiose claim: “[F]ood is the most political thing in all our lives. Eating is an everyday experience, and the decisions we make about what we eat have daily consequences. And those daily consequences can change the world” (p.302). When a trip to the local Walmart yields the particulars about where the various apples on display were sourced, Waters’s influence is undoubtedly not far away.

—Todd C. Ream, Taylor University and Excelsia College

Interpreting Food at Museums and Historic Sites
Michelle Moon
Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2016
xiii + 205 pp. Illustrations. $35.00 (paper)

Over the past two months I have started and stopped this review multiple times (apologies Gastronomica editors!). Specifically I was struggling for the hook that would bind together a synopsis of Michelle Moon’s excellent book. Ultimately I gave up and am borrowing the metaphor that Moon used for the book in its opening pages—a braid of challah (a loaf of bread crafted from woven strands of dough). The key point is that the volume is not exactly a book in a traditional sense. Much like Moon’s challah, the book is not a single entity but rather multiple strands that can be consumed as interwoven ideas or pulled apart and consumed separately—a point that Moon also makes in her introduction (p.xi). In evaluating this book it is equally important to acknowledge a second point that Moon makes: the book is not about food history or museums and food. Instead, it is a book on how museum professionals can be “interpreters of food history” and the connections between food and broader social processes.

As for the volume specifics, Interpreting Food is the sixth contribution in the American Association of State and Local History’s Interpreting History series. It is also the first volume in the series whose focus is on material culture (food) instead of a group of people or a particular time period. The volume has seven chapters, with chapters 2–6 being its core. Each of these core chapters addresses an important theme in food studies. Topics include (by chapter): food and identity, food and health, food and place, food technology and fashion, and food politics (her actual titles are lengthier and more creative). Describing the book as a series of chapters, however, does not do it justice: each chapter is an historical and cultural sketch of the stated theme, framed around brief sections on “Best Practices,” “Discussion Starters,” “Key Interpretive Concepts,” and “Fresh Ideas,” which are first-person narratives on the subject at hand. True to her aim, each chapter provides the reader with more than enough foundational resources to start building out food-centered exhibits in museums and other historical settings. The premise behind both the volume and the chapter organization is that food touches many of the significant social issues today, including race, class, health, gender, and politics, and thus this work seeks to provide a guide for educators to contribute to contemporary discussions on those topics (and others) through food.

I will admit that there were a few times during my reading when I found myself starting to say “but what about...?” For instance, W.O. Atwater is not mentioned at all in the book (Atwater is seen by many as the key player in the food science movement of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries). However, to nitpick about omissions is not entirely fair given the aim of the book. Moon is quite upfront about the fact that her intent was not to produce a compendium of scholarship on a particular topic (p.xii) but rather to produce a guide for making food the center of museum interpretations. Overall Moon has done an admirable job drawing from many disciplines for this work, including historical archaeology, folklore, food studies, government documents, historians, and more. She should be commended for the array of scholarship that was incorporated into the book.

At one point one of Moon’s interlocutors uses the term “intellectual pantry” (p.32). In many ways this book is Moon’s intellectual pantry; the organization may not be familiar to some readers, but all the necessary ingredients are present and there is a clear logic to the book’s organization. Interpreting Food is
a bit idiosyncratic but ultimately wonderful—a volume that should provide a start for museum educators who are looking to tackle contemporary issues through food. Ultimately Moon sees this work as a somewhat aspirational book: “food interpretation elevates our humanity. Food builds bridges, crossing divides of class, language, culture, geography, gender, and age” (p.5). Her guidance for educators and her ambition to engage contemporary issues through food are to be commended; it is a needed addition to the literature on museum interpretation.

—Mark S. Warner, University of Idaho