

promoting cultivation, and encouraging experimentation. Di Palma also summarizes the six steps in preparing cider: picking, resting, grinding, pressing, fermenting, and bottling. The remaining seven essays by literary scholars also have much to offer. In short, this collection of essays is a welcome addition to the rapidly increasing literature on the role of alcohol in early modern society.

Lynn Martin, University of Adelaide

AT HANKA'S TABLE by Hanka Sawka and Hanna Maria Sawka, (New York: Lake Island Press, 2004).

::

Although written as a cookbook, with the second half of the book devoted to recipes, the first half of the book, *At Hanka's Table*, is the personal memoirs of the wife of famed Polish artist Jan Sawka interwoven with her relationship to food. Her life's story, infused with Polish history, is presented with the recipes of foods important to Polish holidays, traditional Polish life, and her personal experiences. Illustrating the book and underscoring the author's focus on the significance of food to culture are her husband's drawings of food, food scenes and pictures of the connections between food and the varied places the couple has lived.

Poland as a country has suffered numerous occupations which have sought to undermine its cultural and national autonomy. As Mrs. Sawka points out, preservation of Polish culture often fell on Polish women, particularly the Polish mother, who among other means employed food as a way of safeguarding traditions. It is therefore quite appropriate that a Polish mother—using as a roadmap her own personal story—compose a work which explains not only the personal significance of individual dishes and meals but also highlights the history and cultural meaning of the foods presented.

Mrs. Sawka begins the text with her life growing up in Poland under communism. She discusses the scant quantity of food, the communist culture of innovation in the face of limited resources, and the clandestine acquisition of food during the communist period. In her own personal experience, her mother's skills as a medical doctor were bartered for black market food items. The stories of the Polish food economy are illustrated beautifully by Jan Sawka's drawing of people queuing for meat—a staple image of Poland during communist rule.

The images of food plenty and scarcity echo throughout the book. For Sawka, who grew up with scant food availability, her first encounters with food abundance in Paris lead to amazement and innovation as well as frustration at the poverty that limited her ability in the past to acquire what was now available in great quantity. Her recipe for beef kidneys is presented amidst her story of the cat which stole the hard to come by meal. Her frustration, taken out by spanking the cat, resonates with numerous stories where the cat is the object of jealousy, most famously Robert Darton's tale of the Great Cat Massacre. Mrs. Sawka also discusses her shock at the abundance of food in the United States, which was so great that people *threw food away*. Hanka Sawka's textual images of the West as places of food bounty are illustrated by paintings by her husband, including Paris as a cornucopia and New York City as a cake at a dinner setting. She compares this world of plenty to her homeland where the sign of the cross is made before cutting into bread.

Hanka Sawka employs holiday fare to highlight Easter activities unique to Poland such as blessing the Easter basket which included a sugar or butter lamb

representing Christ, the use of onion skins to dye Easter eggs, and the reenactment of the mass baptism of Poland in 966 on Easter Monday. She discusses Poland's repeated invasions in food recipes such as that for mazurek—a traditional Easter cake of Turkish influence—and the chopped beef dish tartar, a relic of the Tartar invasion. She tells of Polish traditions such as keeping the Christmas carp in the bathtub—and the potential difficulties of the family growing attached to the pet intended as a meal. Similarly, Jewish immigrants from Poland raised carp destined for the Sabbath table in their bathtubs as described in Barbara Cohen's famous tale "The Carp in the Bathtub."

This work is of interest to those examining Polish food customs and history and those seeking examples of the significance of food to personal narrative. Above all, this work is a narrative of Sawka's personal life and the foods that have been a part of it. From presenting her mother's recipe for duck's blood soup (a soup served by parents to a potential bridegroom to indicate his advances are not welcome by the family) served to Jan Sawka when he came to ask for Hanka's hand in marriage, to a whole section of international foods reflecting the various places outside of their Polish homeland that the couple resided and visited, this work is the story of Hanka Sawka's life through the prism of food.

Helene Sinnreich, University of Mississippi

AROUND THE TUSCAN TABLE: FOOD, FAMILY, AND GENDER IN TWENTIETH-CENTURY FLORENCE by Carole Counihan, (New York and London: Routledge, 2004).

Carole Counihan's engaging book offers a peek into the lives and foodways of twenty-three Florentines. Based on narratives tape-recorded between 1982 and 1984, updated in 2003 by follow up interviews, the book uses food culture to bring examine social life in twentieth-century Florence. On the broad scale, the anthropological approach informed by gender analysis demonstrates the impact of modernization on food procurement and preparation as well as diet and cultural beliefs in central Italy. Early twentieth-century Florence, a society of scarcity, became by the twenty-first century a society of overabundance, transforming a food culture centered on "only a little but let it be good" to one characterized by "a lot, but is it good?" (p. 177) Using the decline of the traditional Italian sharecropping or mezzadria system as a backdrop, the book traces the shift from the use of local and seasonal produce and production linked to nature to reliance on "standardized, processed and preserved" (p. 56) food. Over the course of two or three generations, food is disconnected from its natural or agricultural roots.

Florentine families, particularly since the 1980s, have experienced an increasing "meal destructuring," a movement away from the large midday communal meal to the "one-plate" or single course meal served in "bars, pizzeria, trattorie, or quick-service restaurants" (p. 183). Skillfully using the voices of the book's subjects, Counihan shows how this trend and other changes in foodways have subtly and profoundly changed the nature of eating in Florence. The picture presented is a highly nuanced one, in which family continues to be the center for eating and traditions but the nature and role of the family are altered.

Counihan's subjects reveal how changes in eating styles and beliefs have eroded familial support systems linked to communal, albeit overwhelmingly female,