

**Antonella Campanini, Food Cultures in Medieval Europe. Translated by Leah M. Ashe, Bruxelles, Berlin, Bern, New York, Oxford (Peter Lang Edition) 2019, 198 p. (European Food Issues, 15), ISBN 978-2-8076-1074-3, EUR 40,00.**

rezensiert von | compte rendu rédigé par  
**Paul Freedman, New Haven, CN**

In the English-speaking world there has been a need for a short, introductory outline of medieval cuisine which »Food Cultures in Medieval Europe« answers. Translated from the Italian, it is a breezy and affectionate treatment of food history from the late-Roman Empire until the European expeditions to Asia and the New World. The book is unlikely to be all that useful to readers of »Francia-Recensio« since there are more serious but accessible accounts available in French and German.

Campanini relies heavily on the work of Bruno Laurioux and Massimo Montanari (many of the latter's works of gastronomic history have been translated in English) and on her own expertise in Italian medieval and Renaissance cookbooks and culinary history. Although the book deals with Europe generally, its focus is on Italy and France with less attention to England, Iberia and Germany and almost none to Scandinavia and Eastern Europe for which medieval cookbooks survive.

The book is conceived as a gastronomic »journey« through time and space. Four of the six chapters are in chronological order with most attention directed to the final three medieval centuries for which a greater density of source material is extant. Specific topics include class differentiation, emerging national distinctions, the infatuation with imported luxuries such as spices and medical and religious dietary regimes. In the interest of brevity, the author reluctantly sacrifices discussing conviviality, a shame because routine as well as festive dining in company are a way of exploring attitudes towards food and the cookbooks are oriented around recipes for groups. Some exceptions are allowed, including a fascinating account of the marriage feast in Bologna for Annibale II Bentivoglio and Lucrezia d'Este in 1487 at which live rabbits were released from a »castle« and allowed to scamper around the dining area while the guests dined on rabbit pies »crafted in such a way«, according to a chronicler, »that the rabbits seemed not one bit different from those that had just run out from the castle« (p. 155).

There are a few inaccuracies. Sidonius Apollinaris complains to his correspondents about the manners and eating habits of the Burgundians, not the Huns (p. 31). The assertion that the upper classes of the late-Middle Ages could not have conceived of the peasants rebelling against their lot ignores the frequent revolts of the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries (p. 126). The author of the »Ménagier de



Herausgegeben vom Deutschen  
Historischen Institut Paris |  
publiée par l'Institut historique  
allemand



Publiziert unter | publiée sous  
[CC BY 4.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/)

Paris« was active toward the end of the 14<sup>th</sup> century, not during the 13<sup>th</sup> century (p. 137).

»Food Cultures in Medieval Europe« can be assigned to students and will also be helpful to medievalists looking for a rapid orientation in English to food in the Middle Ages.

Mittelalter – Moyen Âge (500–1500)

DOI:  
[10.11588/frrec.2020.4.77177](https://doi.org/10.11588/frrec.2020.4.77177)

Seite | page 2



Herausgegeben vom Deutschen  
Historischen Institut Paris |  
publiée par l'Institut historique  
allemand



Publiziert unter | publiée sous  
[CC BY 4.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/)