

The Culture of
Food

Massimo Montanari

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This book is about the history of food in Europe and the part it has played in the evolution of the European cultures over two millennia. It has been a driving force in national and imperial ambition, the manner of its production and consumption a means by which the identity and status of regions, classes and individuals have been and still are expressed. In this wide-ranging exploration of its history the author weaves deftly between the classes, regions and nations of Europe, between the habits of late antiquity and the problems of modernity. He examines the interlinked evolutions of consumption, production and taste, to show both what these reveal of the varied cultures and peoples of Europe in the past and what they suggest about the present.

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Editorial Review

From Library Journal

A history of hunger and scarcity as well as consumption, this account of food in Europe from the Middle Ages to the 19th century, with a glance back and forward, emphasizes class and regional differences in dietary habits. A varied diet has always reflected social status, and Montanari (history, Univ. of Bologna) shows what extremes this has taken. He contrasts royal meals of many dishes with single-food diets and shows how burghers responded to hungry paupers and peasants. In addition, Greco-Roman ideals of moderation are contrasted with Germanic and Celtic ideals of the powerful appetite. There is much about meat and bread, beer and wine, which predated rice, maize, potatoes, pasta (originally a luxury food), tea, and coffee. Though one wishes that Montanari had extended his treatment to the 20th century, this remains a fascinating book that will appeal to curious lay readers as well as scholars. Recommended for all academic and larger public libraries.

R. James Tobin, Univ. of Wisconsin Lib., Milwaukee

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Review

"Massimo Montanari has sliced through the evidence of anecdotes, novellas, dietary tracts and demographic surveys to show the close and often surprising connections between food as precarious necessity and food as symbol of power, culture and social ambition." *Times Literary Supplement*

Language Notes

Text: English (translation)

Original Language: Italian

Users Review

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