

= Food in England =

Food in England is a 1954 book by the social historian Dorothy Hartley . It is both a cookery book and a history of English cuisine . It was acclaimed on publication ; the contemporary critic Harold Nicolson described the book as a classic . It has remained in print ever since .

The book provides what has been called an idiosyncratic and a combative take on the history of English cooking . The book is unusual as a history in not citing its sources , serving more as an oral social history from Hartley 's own experiences as she travelled England as a journalist for the Daily Sketch , interviewing " the last generation to have had countryside lives sharing something in common with the Tudors . " The book strikes some readers as principally a history , but it consists mainly of recipes . Some of these such as stargazey pie are old @-@ fashioned , but all are practical recipes that can be cooked .

= = Context = =

Dorothy Hartley 's mother was from Froncysylltau , near Llangollen in North Wales , where the family owned quarries and property . In 1933 Hartley moved to a house in Froncysylltau , where she lived for the rest of her life . It was there that she began work on the book for which she is best known , Food in England , leading to its publication in 1954 .

= = Book = =

= = = Approach = = =

Most of the chapters address aspects of English food , whether types of food such as meat , eggs , fungi , and bread , or ways of dealing with food such as salting , drying and preserving . Some chapters such as ' Elizabethan households ' are explicitly historical . Every chapter , however , is also a history . For example chapter V , Meat , discusses " a rather interesting mediaeval miracle " and illustrates a traditional " Colonial Travelling Meat Safe of Mosquito Net " . The text switches repeatedly from instructions ( " To prepare mutton fat for a mutton piecrust , melt it over a bowl of hot water " ) to historical asides ( " Mutton fat was used in the mountain @-@ sheep districts for the same purposes as suet or goose @-@ grease in the valleys " ) . Many of the processes are distinctly old @-@ fashioned ; thus , Hartley describes basting , dredging , and frothing , switching between the past and present tenses : " Dredging . This was done between basting . Thus you dredge with powders or spices to give flavour , or with acid juices , or chopped herbs , which the pouring fat washes down into the crevices of the roasting meat . "

A substantial part of the text consists of recipes . In the Meat chapter , these begin with recipes for beef , including " Baron of Beef " , " Sirloin ( Norman @-@ French , sur loin ) " , " Rib of Beef " , " Boiled Beef with Carrots " , and " Oat Pudding , for Boiled Beef " . Each recipe has a heading in italics ; some have an illustration , drawn by Hartley , or else a quotation or proverb . There is no list of ingredients . The first paragraph often describes the dish or its ingredients . Thus for sirloin , she advises " This is the best beef joint and should be roasted . Never have the undercut taken out ... " . The instructions are given in a few paragraphs : " Let the sirloin be well hung ; dust it lightly with dry mustard , pepper and brown flour to give a crisp crust ; bed the fat end well under the lean undercut , and secure in place with string or carefully placed skewer . Roast carefully , basting frequently . "

Where quantities or cooking temperatures have to be specified , these are included in the instructions ; otherwise , matters are left to the cook 's discretion . Thus in " Spice Sauce ( sauce for fish or flesh ) " , Hartley directs " Take a quart of sharp cider , .... some mace , a few cloves , some lemon peel , horse @-@ radish root sliced , some sweet herbs , 6 schaloys [ shallots ] , 8 anchovies , 3 spoonfulls of shred red peppers ... " .

For baking , where exact instructions are needed , these are given in Imperial units , but the oven temperature and timing are again left mainly to the cook 's experience . Thus for " Bath Buns " , she

instructs : " Make a light dough with 1 / 2 lb. of flour , 1 / 4 lb. of butter or lard , 1 oz. of castor sugar , 2 eggs , 1 / 2 pint of lukewarm milk , and about 1 @. @ 2 oz. of yeast . Rub butter into flour ; blend ... Set it to rise in a warm place , ... bake lightly and thoroughly till golden brown . "

= = = Contents = = =

Food in England has 27 chapters :  
There is a bibliography and an index .

= = = Editions = = =

= = Reception = =

= = = Contemporary = = =

On its publication in 1954 , the book was received with immediate acclaim , and has remained in print ever since . The Manchester Guardian called it " fascinating ? unusually readable " ; Harold Nicolson in The Observer said , " it will become a classic " , though he made gentle fun of the combative Englishness of Hartley 's culinary pronouncements .

= = = Modern = = =

The Sunday Times , reviewing the seventh edition of the book , wrote " For food scholarship at its best see Dorothy Hartley 's robust , idiosyncratic , irresistible Food in England ... As packed with diverse and fascinating information as a Scotch bun with fruit , this untidy bundle of erudition is held together by the writer 's huge enjoyment of her subject , her immense curiosity about everything to do with the growth , preparation , preservation and eating of food in this country since the Middle Ages . "

The cultural historian Panikos Panayi describes the book as a tour de force , seminal , and richly illustrated ; and he notes that Food in England is partly a recipe book , partly a history . He contrasts it favourably with Philip Harben 's Traditional Dishes of Britain , published a year earlier , which he criticises as accepting the " stereotypical stalwarts of British food " , whereas Hartley rightly accepts ( Panayi quotes ) that " foreign dishes ... like the foreigners , become ' naturalised English ' " .

The historian of food Bee Wilson , rereading " this endearing work " 58 years on for The Guardian , wrote that she had remembered it as a history book and an epic account of English cooking , " interspersed with recipes . " She was therefore " startled " to find that almost the whole of the text is " taken up with practical recipes and techniques , with very little historical narrative . " Wilson finds the book as Hartley explicitly intended , an untidy kitchen , " a warm friendly place " . For Hartley , writes Wilson , " the past is not a foreign country " , but ever @-@ present . She notes that Hartley " announces dogmatically " that English cooking is old @-@ fashioned " because we like it that way . " Wilson finds " Hartley 's devotion to archaic recipes such as stargazey pie and posset ... mildly crazed . " But whether mad or not , Hartley " approaches the cuisine of the past with the humour and sharpness of a journalist . "

The Historic Royal Palaces curator Lucy Worsley presented a BBC film , ' Food in England ' , The Lost World of Dorothy Hartley , on 6 November 2015 . Worsley , writing in The Telegraph , calls Food in England " the definitive history of the way the English eat . " She describes the book as " laden with odd facts and folklore ... a curious mixture of cookery , history , anthropology and even magic , ... with her own strong and lively illustrations . " She admits it is not a conventional history , since Hartley breaks " the first rule of the historian : to cite her evidence . She wasn 't fond of footnotes . " In a year of filming Hartley 's places and people she knew , Worsley discovered that " my frustration with her technique as historian was misplaced . " Hartley had travelled continually to

gather materials for her weekly Daily Sketch column , sometimes sleeping rough " in a hedge . " The work is thus effectively , Worsley argues , an oral history , as Hartley interviewed " the last generation to have had countryside lives sharing something in common with the Tudors . " The emphasis on local , seasonal food chimes well , Worsley suggests , with the modern trend for just those things .

The Museum of English Rural Life at the University of Reading curates the Dorothy Hartley collection . It cites the Oxford Dictionary of National Biography 's entry on Hartley , calling Food in England " Arguably her best work , and the one for which she will be remembered " . It calls the book " as full of magic and potions as any medieval herbal . "