

Pellegrino Artusi

"Science in the Kitchen
and the art of Eating well"

INTRODUCTION

Some seventy years before *Science in the Kitchen and The Art of Eating Well* began to be recognized as the most important book ever written on Italian Cuisine, Pellegrino Artusi met in Bologna, at the trattoria *The Re* (Three Kings) a law student whose name, Felice Orsini, was about to become very well known, albeit for reasons that have hardly anything in common with gastronomy and food talk in general. In 1858, in Paris, Orsini attempted to assassinate Emperor Napoleon III. Artusi describes the young terrorist as a "congenial young man, of middling height, lean build, pale round face, refined features, the blackest eyes, crinkly locks, who lisped slightly when he spoke." His life, as it can be imagined, was not spared. A tragedy, to be sure, but his "gesture," Artusi goes on to observe, may have weighed significantly in the French Monarch's decision to aid the Piedmontese in their fight against the Austrians. All this, and much more, can be learnt from a careful reading of recipe 235: *Maccheroni col pangrattato*. A little longer and decidedly more political than the average "Artusian" disquisition, this sort of rambling introduction to the preparing of a dish is not exceptional. What is perhaps astonishing, given the context, is the peculiar idiomatic expression Artusi employs to return to his gastronomic concern: "*Ritorriamo a bomba*" [Now let's get back to the bomb]. To introduce truffles (see recipe 408), nothing seems more natural to Artusi than comparing the colors of their internal

appearance to the political factions of the Whites and the Blacks that strove for power in Medieval Florence and caused its citizens so much pain. Not even the most sacred of texts is left undisturbed. To alert his readers to a certain terminological impropriety in everyday gastronomic parlance, Artusi does not hesitate to pilfer an example from the Bible: “the Holy Scriptures say that Joshua stopped the sun and not the earth. Well, we do the same when we talk about chickens, because the hip should be called the thigh, the thigh should be called the leg, and the leg should be called the tarsus” (see recipe 544). Stunned by the preposterous quality of the display, we might not even stop to ask what kind of subliminal connection possibly justified the linkage of such distant realities. Indeed, Artusi’s nonchalance knows no boundary: recipe 550 is about peacocks and is listed, as such, among those devoted to roasted meats. We would be hard pressed, however, to call it a real recipe, insofar as what we are told about these exotic birds may whet our curiosity, but hardly our appetite. We learn that they are native of Southeast Asia, and that they were first brought to Greece by Alexander the Great. Being so struck by their beauty, the greatest military leader of antiquity issued an edict to protect peacocks from the appetites of less sensitive souls. From Greece to Rome, things changed rather drastically. The orator Quintus Hortensius (who rivaled Cicero in The Forum) found them rather tasty and had no qualms about eating them. We are told so many things about peacocks that we could perhaps declare ourselves fully satisfied, were it not for the fact that Artusi keeps to himself the secret of how to prepare them for lunch or dinner. It may not be such a great loss, however. Nowadays, the temerity it took to disregard Alexander’s historical injunction might easily go unappreciated, as peacock fanciers are more likely to be frustrated by the difficulty they must experience each time they try to find their beloved fowl on display (plucked of course) in the poultry departments of our supermarkets. Thus we might be better off leaving the stuff of which such culinary dreams (nightmares?) are made to

Petronius Arbiter’s inimitable pen or to Federico Fellini’s visual interpretation of his “Saryicon.” In *Science in the Kitchen*, the art of teasing goes hand in hand with the profession of wisdom. When the simile or the artefact or the commentary is not drawn from history or mythology, the lore of other disciplines is readily accessed: lessons in geography or botany or zoology make themselves available in a great number of texts (the recipes for sturgeon and eel are preceded by full-fledged encyclopedic entries (see respectively 479 & 490) and, failing all else, some significant episode straight from the author’s experience of life. The recipe for Minestrone (47) has become, in this respect, legendary. It follows, in fact, the description of an outbreak of cholera that struck Tuscany in the year 1855 and showed no special consideration for Artusi himself: “I had taken lodgings in the Piazza del Voltone, in a whitewashed new villa run by a certain Mr. Domenici. That night, I felt the onset of a frightening disturbance in my body . . . ‘Damned minestrone! You will never fool me again,’ I cried out . . . Monday the sad news reached me that cholera had broken out in Livorno, and the first to be struck dead was none other than Domenici himself. And to think I had blamed the minestrone! After three attempts, improving upon the dish each time, this is how I like to make it.” And so on, without batting an eyelash. Whatever else they may be, Artusi’s pages read like a masterpiece of literary humor: a most meticulous dispensation of culinary rules, methods and advice goes hand in hand with a panoply of peculiar observations and preposterous remarks. The result may be termed a perfect admixture of the blasphemous and the naive: indeed a magnificent cocktail. Should we worry, at this point, that above and beyond its writerly merits, the most celebrated cookbook that ever came out of Italy—of a culture, that is, that is practically co-terminous with the notion of eating well—is no cookbook at all? Quite the contrary, of course. But it takes no ordinary food lover to appreciate and cherish a book that offers so much more than a mere list of successful recipes, and can be read and

enjoyed even by people who do not ordinarily spend a lot of time in the kitchen. I believe the best tribute a gastronomer like myself can pay *Science in the Kitchen* is in fact to describe it as a historical document of the first magnitude, one that brings Italian history and society to the dinner table and makes them available and understandable, just as it makes plausible and affordable the exquisite artistry of Italy's legendary cuisine.

The only male child of a prominent merchant from Emilia-Romagna, Pellegrino Artusi moved to Florence where he ran a rather successful money-lending institution, dabbling with literature on the side and, above all, collecting and refining the recipes that would eventually constitute the book that made him famous. In Florence, he entered the world that many of us have read about in the pages of Henry James but that, by the end of his life, looked much more like the rather violent scenario described by E. M. Forster. Artusi's long life bridges in fact the so called *Risorgimento*, the political process that led to the Italian unification, and the early (and not so early) years of the Kingdom of Italy, a period during which the capital was in fact moved from Torino to Florence (Rome was still in the hands of the papacy and, more to the point, well protected by the presence of a French Army). Artusi had ample time to witness how the initial patriotic enthusiasm was being eroded by the dire necessity of politics and replaced by a more and more justified sense of moral disappointment. To give Italian, and more precisely, Florentine history a gastronomic twist, we might venture to say that Artusi's trajectory begins with meals that may have delighted William Wetmore Story and his friends (and many other Anglo-American expatriates such as Elisabeth and Robert Browning, Margaret Fuller, etc.) and reaches the dinner table of the people who look at Florence from "A Room with a View." This does not mean, however, that *Science in the Kitchen* was a book written with a foreign audience in mind. It is in fact one of the few texts that could be said to have had a direct influence on the daily life of a vast number of Italians.

Although Artusi initially published it at his own expense and distributed it directly from his home in Piazza d'Azeglio, the book quickly became so popular that perhaps only the internationally acclaimed *Pinochio* and *Gnore: Diary of a Schoolboy*, which were written a few years before, can claim an even greater success in the strenuous task of "unifying" if not Italy at least that section of its population that constituted or aspired to constitute its middle class, its bourgeoisie. Artusi is very explicit: his recipes are for those who can afford them, those who have enough money not just to feed themselves but to feed themselves pleasantly and, above all, intelligently. He does not believe in wasting money (he was a banker, after all) and instructs his readers how to be parsimonious; he also distinguishes quite clearly care and thrift from stinginess and greed. Before the turn of the 19th century, Italy managed to balance its budget (the one and only time since the unification), but it did so at the cost of widespread hunger and social unrest. In 1898 General Bava Beccaris fired his cannons against masses of Milanese workers who had trouble procuring not *Lombata di Castrato Ripiena* (296), but bread, pure and simple. While *Pinochio* and *Gnore* determined the mores that encompassed the entire sphere of public education, *Science in the Kitchen and the Art of Eating Well* took over in the more private but equally important domain of domestic life. The whole world knows how elusive the notion of an Italian identity can be and how troublesome, even to day, and even in the realm of food where each of the nineteen historical regions that make up the nation claims gastronomic autonomy. If today the name Artusi epitomizes the whole notion of Italian cuisine, this can only be viewed as a small miracle; especially if one thinks that most of his recipes, those that have come to constitute the backbone, so to say, of the Italian canon, originate exclusively from his native Emilia-Romagna and from Tuscany, his adopted home. Members of a tradition that trace its origins back to Celtic roots, the people of Romagna fry with butter and lard and favor pasta dishes and meats. Quintessentially Mediterranean,

Tuscans fry instead with oil and much prefer soups and vegetables. Clearly Artusi brought together in an unprecedented amalgam the two determinant factors of Italian culture, the barbarian vigor of the Gothic and the gentler “design” of the Renaissance. Not only does Artusi represent this happy marriage of Celtic and Latin values, but he also displays a refreshing curiosity for ingredients that Italian cuisine had managed to disregard: A lover of eggplants, potatoes and tomatoes (which Italians began to grow only in the first decades of the 19th century and remained unpopular long after those years), he becomes a passionate supporter of their diffusion, proving once again that what is now regarded as the classic summation of a century-old culinary tradition was, when it first appeared, a conspicuously avant-garde book. The recipes from Tuscany and Emilia-Romagna are complemented by a handful of entries from other regions (none excluded) and also by some infallible specimens of foreign dishes, from roast beef (521-522) to German cake (645). French Cuisine, however, is significantly downplayed. This is particularly meaningful if we consider that in the days of Pellegrino Artusi French cuisine knew no rivals anywhere in the western world. Artusi not only shows how many “French” dishes can claim citizenship in Italy as well, but he engages in a real campaign to de-Frenchify the terminology of cooking and to introduce full-fledged Italian names in their stead. This gets lost a little in the translation, but I thought it worth of at least a mention: to this day, in Sicily, a chef is known as a *Monsi*, from the French *Mon-sieur*. I suppose one could say that Artusi was determined to bring back to Italy a number of culinary “secrets” that my ancestor Catherine de’ Medici had brought to Paris from her native Tuscany in the 16th century, when she became Queen of France and patron saint extraordinaire of a French cuisine that prior to her arrival could hardly be said to have existed. Artusi’s belated attempt to balance the gastronomic scales of the two “rival” nations may have stirred some resentment among our “cousins beyond the Alps” who very elegantly

retaliated by excluding Artusi from mention in the *Larousse Gastronomique*.

I must dwell a moment longer on the notion of middle class I have introduced above, perhaps a little too cavalierly. Let me just clarify that in our time and in those countries at least where famine is no longer a recurrent scourge, and where, on the contrary, nutrition has reached very high standards, the art of eating well (if not science in the kitchen) is practiced by large and varied groups of individuals to whom the notion of middle class would apply either marginally or not at all. In Artusi’s time, however, the identification of gastronomic concerns with upper middle-class “membership” was inevitable. The ever increasing number of people who are, today, in a position to share the privileges of Artusi’s contemporary readers and devotees may explain the continuous success of this book, which first appeared in 1891 and has gone through countless printings, growing from the initial 471 recipes to the 758 recipes of the fourteenth edition (1910), which went to press a few months before the death of the author and must be regarded as Artusi’s definitive legacy. The latest edition of *Science in the Kitchen*, edited by the late Piero Camporesi (Einaudi 1970), is a model of philological acumen and we have used it as a base for our own American edition.

Artusi was in touch with some of the “best minds of his generation” and was gratified by their friendship. He was particularly fond of Paolo Mantegazza, a celebrated lecturer and a professor of ethnography at the University of Florence. It was from him, more perhaps than any other “positivist” thinkers that Artusi learnt the art of self-reliance that permeates *Science in the Kitchen*. Some of the more daring beliefs held by Mantegazza, however, might raise a few eyebrows, even today: his idea of procuring coca leaves to alleviate the pain of hunger among the poverty-stricken population of fin-de-siècle Italy is perhaps highly original, but it bears witness to the political paternalism that dominated Italy’s tormented path as an incipient nation.

In perfect harmony with its bourgeois premises, *Science in the Kitchen* came about as a very profitable labor of love. Artusi borrowed many of the recipes from innkeepers, *maîtres d'hôtel*, friends and also from ancient cookbooks of which he owned a rather large collection. At times, as, for instance, in the case of recipe 334, Tripe Meatballs, he himself reveals his sources: the late 17th-century Neapolitan chef Antonio Latini. All in all, two basic culinary traditions find a home in Artusi's book: the unpopular (then) and highly fashionable (now) cooking of the peasantry, and the cooking of courtly chefs. From this point of view he was a precursor of today's rustic chic and took pains to show the dependence of refined, high-class cuisine on genuine, country style, home cooking. What he did not learn from books, chefs and literary (scientific) friends, Artusi learnt from his correspondents: housewives and housekeepers who bought *Science in the Kitchen* and wrote the author to offer suggestions, modifications and variations. A diligent interlocutor, Artusi acknowledges the contributions of his readers. He also acknowledges the assistance of his two cooks, one hailing from Romagna and one from Florence, *bien sûr*, both of whom he "tormented" for a good number of years, only to make them beneficiaries, after his death, of a considerable sum of money. In the end, no matter what his sources were, Artusi managed to construct a very harmonious book: one in which the reader feels comfortable (directions are rarely cast in the insufferable language of injunctions). The reader's creativity is welcomed and measures are taken to alleviate his or her fears of inadequacy. Artusi often encourages would-be chefs to try things out on their own, adding a quantity, decreasing it, or substituting for an ingredient that might not suit their tastes.

To conclude, a few caveats: let us not forget that the book was written more than a century ago and people not only had less sophisticated stoves and gadgets to cook with, but they also had completely different nutritional and dietary ideas as well as exigencies: fats metabolized much more quickly when you had to bicycle ten or twenty

kilometers to get to a meal and as many to return to your home. In any case, the notion of an "Artusian" predilection for extravagant quantities of lard is fictional. The same goes for spices: neither Tuscan nor Romagnol cuisine is spicy, and even salt and pepper, Artusi reminds us, ought to be used sparingly. He may have been off in his listing of "the nutritional value of meats," but here too we have to make allowances for time-honored beliefs that have been proven "guilty" only in the last few decades. One thing is however, incontrovertibly, true: Artusi had a sweet tooth. How else can we explain devoting almost 200 recipes to cakes, pies, ice cream, and other sweets? Such temptations you may want to ward off; but then again, do not try to be successful all the time... Rarely has a book meant so much in terms of procuring gastronomic pleasure while at the same time providing an uncannily efficient key to the understanding of a culture that supports such *jolie de vivre*, oops . . . I meant *gioia di vivere*, of course.

LORENZA DE' MEDICI

P.S. I strongly believe that all previous American editions of *Science in the Kitchen* are plagued with very serious faults. Some are abridged, some have simply, and all too often, misunderstood the original (Artusi who, as we said, was not a Tuscan, covered his Italian with a rather thick Tuscan patina, one that a true Tuscan would have perhaps avoided, thus causing a translator's task). Worse than all they have not shown any serious interest (in fact they have often eliminated) all that makes this book exceptional: sadly, they have turned a literary classic into yet another mistranslated cookbook. Both culture in general and gastronomic culture in particular, would be better served if such editions were to be taken off the market. For the mistakes we ourselves may have inadvertently made, we not only apologize, but would greatly appreciate our readers bringing them to our attention. We promise that, in a true "Artusian" fashion, we will incorporate appropriate suggestions in all our subsequent editions.

PUBLISHER'S NOTE

One of the marvels of this book, one of the marvels of this translation of the book, is the kitchen world Artusi evokes. It is a world populated, first of all, by women fearlessly handling the most improbable parts of butchered animals, and serving them up to the endless appetite of men.

We said "serving them" but should have said "having them served," because the kitchen Artusi describes relies on servants. Even if the cook is the lady of the house, as Artusi often implies (the book's "target audience" includes middle-class households that could not afford a cook), whoever cooks the meal can depend on servants to help with preparations (see recipe 636) and to serve the food, which is "sent" — rather than "taken" — to the table.

In addition to its human inhabitants, who seem to spend most of their daily lives chopping, puréeing, stirring, etc., Artusi's kitchen is also well stocked with implements and utensils. Unfortunately, unlike more modern cookbooks, Artusi does not include a section describing the kitchen equipment he considers essential. But an inventory is not impossible. A paragraph in recipe 324 is devoted to a brief description of the copper pots and pans in which 90% of Artusi's cooking is done. Other ubiquitous utensils are the wooden mixing spoon and, above all, the indispensable mezzaluna. Indeed, it would not be too much to

say that the whole book is an ode to the versatility of this one humble tool, without which traditional Italian cooking seems inconceivable (and anyone trying to make do with a blender beware!).

Then, of course, there are the sieves. Sooner or later, not only vegetables but also meats and fish fatally end up pounded in a mortar and then passed through a sieve. A sieve can also function as a baking dish, as in recipe 584. As to the soft meshed strainer mentioned in recipe 653 (Artusi actually specifies that the mesh is made with horsehair), we must confess to have never seen one.

In Artusi's time, when the hearth was the heart of the kitchen, baking was an expensive proposition and families that wanted to save on fuel had a great deal of it done at the local baker's. There, a large wood-burning oven would serve the whole neighborhood. At home most people did not have a proper oven and would use a "forno da campagna," a Dutch oven or the small oven in the hearth which Artusi recommends for cooking dishes in *bain-marie*.

Finally, we cannot leave the kitchen world Artusi brings to life without noting the two fundamental smells that permeate it: the smell of broth in all its configurations, constantly simmering somewhere, inexhaustibly produced, and the very lifeblood of most of Artusi's recipes; and the smell of "battuto" sizzling in butter or oil, the onion-and/or-garlic-celery-carrot-parsley mixture (finely chopped with the unfailing mezzaluna) which constitutes the quintessential Italian flavoring.

Artusi's is a book of wonders, but you must be patient because they need time to blossom and unfold. Read it with an eye to the experience Artusi is evoking as much as for the individual recipe. Use it to recreate a world where cooking was a way of life and a toil, but also an endlessly varied and eminently satisfying exercise of imagination and love. Understanding that world better does not mean waxing nostalgic for it (could anyone today possibly want to spend so much of one's existence slaving over a hot stove?), but it does mean learning a language that the

current "just in time" mentality is making more *foreign* every day. In this sense, Artusi's is not so much a cookbook as a manual for an apprenticeship in creative and generous self-expression.

SCIENCE
IN THE KITCHEN
AND THE ART
OF EATING WELL

THE STORY OF A BOOK
THAT IS A BIT LIKE
THE STORY OF CINDERELLA

See how often human judgment errs.

I had just put the finishing touches on my book, *Science in the Kitchen and the Art of Eating Well*, when my learned friend Francesco Trevisan, professor of Literature at the Scipione Maffei Secondary School in Verona, happened to come to Florence. A passionate scholar of Ugo Foscolo, he had been chosen to serve as a member of the Committee to oversee the construction of a monument to the Bard of the Sepulchers in the church of Santa Croce.¹ Having had the pleasure, on that occasion, of hosting him at my home, it seemed to me an opportune moment to ask him his refined opinion of my culinary work. Alas! After examining the work, and with it my humble efforts of many years, he passed the terrible sentence: *This book will have little success.*

Dismayed but not entirely convinced by his opinion, I was pricked by the desire to appeal to the public, and thus decided to turn, for publication, to a well-known Florentine publishing house. I enjoyed what could be described as friendly relations with the proprietors of this house since the time, some years back, when I had spent a considerable sum of money on various publications of mine. I then hoped that they might be willing to indulge me. Indeed, to encourage these gentlemen, I proposed that we make the undertaking a partnership;

¹ One of Ugo Foscolo's most famous poems is entitled "Dei Sepolcristi" ("On Sepulchers?"). Many illustrious Italian artists and men of letters are either buried or honored by a monument in the church of Santa Croce in Florence (unless otherwise specified the notes to the text are the editors').

and so that they might give the matter due consideration, after having shown them the manuscript, I also wished them to have a real sampling of my cooking. Thus I invited them one day to dinner, the results of which appeared satisfying both to them and to the fellow-guests I had invited to keep them good company.

My enticements were in vain, however, for after much thought and shilly-shallying on the matter, one of them said to me: "I'm terribly sorry, but only if your work had been written by Doney² could we talk about it seriously."

"If it had been written by Doney," I replied, "probably no one would understand a thing in it, which was precisely the case with that large tome, *The King of Cooks*. With my Manual, on the other hand, one need only know how to hold a wooden spoon to work something out."

It should be noted here that publishers generally care not a whit whether a book is good or bad, useful or harmful. For them it need only bear a well-known name on the cover, so that they might sell it with ease; a famous name serves to give it a push, and on the wings of its guidance it may then soar to great heights.

Thus having to start all over again, I went in search of a less demanding entrepreneur. Knowing by reputation an important Milanese publishing house, I turned to them, since, as they claimed to print *omnia generis musicorum*, I thought that amidst that hodgepodge they might find a small place for my modest work. Before long came the humiliating and ever so brusque reply: We do not deal in cookbooks.

Let us have done, I told myself, with begging others for help, and publish the book at our own risk and peril. And so I hired the Florentine typographer Salvatore Landi (proprietor of "The Art of Printing") to print the book. Yet as I was negotiating the terms of our agreement, I had the idea to offer the book to yet another large publisher, better

² Owner of a famous restaurant in Florence at the time.

suited to publications of this sort. Truth be told, I found him better disposed than any of the others; but on what conditions, alas! Two hundred lire for the work, and the surrender of all royalties! May this, and the others' reluctance, stand as proof of the discredit into which cookbooks had fallen in Italy.

At this humiliating proposal I exploded in a fit of rage, which I need not repeat here, and decided to take my chances and publish entirely at my own expense. Discouraged as I was, however, and to prevent an utter fiasco, I had only a thousand copies printed.

Shortly thereafter, it just so happened that a great charity fair was to be held at Forlimpopoli, the town of my birth. A friend of mine wrote to me asking to contribute two copies of my *Life of Foscolo*. But as I had none of these left, I compensated with two copies of *Science in the Kitchen and the Art of Eating Well*. I should never have done so, since I later learned that those who had won the books, instead of appreciating them, held them up to ridicule and then went off and sold them to the tobacconist.

Yet even this was not to be my last humiliation. Having sent a copy of my work to a Rome magazine to which I subscribed, not only was it not accorded the few words of praise and criticism promised in a notice for all books sent to said magazine as gifts; it was actually listed in the rubric of books received, with a mistake in the title!

Finally, after so many setbacks, a man of genius suddenly appeared and took up my cause. Professor Paolo Mantegazza, with that quick and ready wit that is his trademark, immediately recognized that my work indeed had some merit and might be of use to families. Congratulating me for my work, he said: "With this book you have done a good deed; may it have a thousand editions."

"Too many," said I. "I would be happy with two." Later, to my great astonishment and surprise, he praised the book and recommended it to the audience at two of his lectures.

At this point I began to take heart and, seeing that the book was

beginning to have a measure of success, however limited at first, I wrote to my friend at Forlimpopoli, to complain about the offense his town folk had given to a book that would one day bring honor to *their* town. Anger prevented me from saying *my* town.

When the first edition sold out, with some hesitation—since I still could scarcely believe my good fortune—I began the second printing, also of only a thousand copies. As this sold more quickly than the previous one, it gave me the courage to undertake a third one, of two thousand copies, and then a fourth and fifth, of three thousand each. These were then followed, at relatively brief intervals, by six other editions of four thousand copies each. Finally, seeing that as my manual aged, it only seemed to gain favor, and the demand for it only became greater and greater, I decided to increase the print runs of the next three editions to six thousand copies each. 52,000 copies have thus far seen the light of day, many of them supplemented with new recipes (for cooking is an inexhaustible art). All of which is very reassuring to me, especially as the book's buyers also include learned and illustrious people.

With my pride tickled by these happy results, I was anxious to oblige the public with editions of increasing elegance and accuracy. When, one day, it seemed to me that those overseeing the printing were less than fully committed to this purpose, I said to them in jest: "So just because my book smells of stew, I suppose that you, too, disdain to take it seriously? But let me tell you, and I say this reluctantly, that with our century tending towards materialism and life's enjoyments, the day shall soon come when writings of this sort, which delight the mind and nourish the body, will be more widely sought and read than the works of great scientists, which are of much greater value to humanity."

Blind is the man who cannot see this! The days of seductive, flattering ideals, the days of the hermits, are coming to an end. With greater eagerness than it ought to, the world is rushing to the well-

springs of pleasure, and those who know how to temper this dangerous inclination with healthy morals shall take the palm.

And so I conclude my opening peroration. Let me close, then, with a well-deserved tribute and expression of thanks to the publishing house of R. Bemporad & Son of Florence, who made every effort to bring this manual of mine to the knowledge of the public and to disseminate it.

P R E F A C E

Cooking is a troublesome spite. Often it may drive you to despair. Yet it also very rewarding, for when you do succeed, or overcome a difficulty in doing so, you feel the satisfaction of a great triumph.

Beware of books that deal with this art: most of them are inaccurate or incomprehensible, especially the Italian ones. The French are a little better. But from either, the very most you will glean are a few notions, useful only if you already know the art.

If you do not aspire to become a premier cook, you need not have been born with a pan on your head to become a good one. Passion, care, and precision of method will certainly suffice; then, of course, you must choose the finest ingredients as your raw materials, for these will make you shine.

The best teacher is experience, under an adept's watchful eye. Yet even lacking this, with a guide such as mine, and devotion to your labors, you should be able, I hope, to put something decent together.

It was at the insistence of many gentlemen and ladies of my acquaintance, who honor me with their friendship, that I finally decided to publish the present volume. Its materials had long been prepared, and served only for my personal use. I thus present it to you now as the simple amateur that I am, certain that I shall not disappoint you, having tried and retried these dishes many times myself. If at first you do not succeed, do not despair; with good will and persistence, you shall manage to make them one day, I guarantee it, and perhaps even

to improve them. For I, after all, cannot presume to have reached the acme of perfection.

Yet seeing that this volume marks the 14th edition and a total print run of 52,000 copies, I may discreetly assume that my dishes have been generally well received, and that to my great fortune few people, thus far, have cursed me for stomach aches or other phenomena that decency forbids me to mention.

Finally, I should not like my interest in gastronomy to give me the reputation of a gourmand or glutton. I object to any such dishonorable imputation, for I am neither. I love the good and the beautiful wherever I find them, and hate to see anyone squander, as they say, God's bounty. Amen.

FROM THE AUTHOR TO THE READER

Life has two principal functions: nourishment and the propagation of the species. Those who turn their minds to these two needs of existence, who study them and suggest practices whereby they might best be satisfied, make life less gloomy and benefit humanity. They may therefore be allowed to hope that, while humanity may not appreciate their efforts, it will at least show them generous and benevolent indulgence.

The meaning contained in these few lines, which preface the third edition of this book, was better expressed in a letter to me by the celebrated poet, Lorenzo Stecchetti. It is my pleasure to transcribe them here:

The human race survives only because man possesses the instincts of self-preservation and reproduction, and keenly feels the need to satisfy both. The satisfaction of a need is always accompanied by pleasure. The pleasure of self-preservation lies in the sense of taste, and that of reproduction in the sense of touch. If man did not find food appetizing, or experience sexual desire, the human race would quickly come to an end.

Taste and touch are therefore the senses most necessary, indeed indispensable to the life of the individual and the species. The other senses are only there to help, and one can, after all, live life blind and deaf, but not without the functional activity of the organs of taste.

How is it, then, that on the scale of the senses, the two most necessary to life and its continuance are considered the basest? Why are those things that satisfy the other senses—painting, music, etc.—called art and deemed noble, while those that satisfy the sense of taste are considered ignoble? Why is a person who enjoys gazing at a lovely painting or listening to a beautiful symphony held in higher esteem than one who enjoys eating an excellent dish? Is the equality among the senses perhaps comparable to that among humans, whereby those who work may be well off, but those who do not are even better off?

The blame, no doubt, must lie with the tyrannical sway the brain now holds over all the organs of the body. In the time of Menenius Agrippa, the stomach ruled; nowadays it no longer even serves, or, if so, serves badly. Of all those who overwork their brains, is there a single one who can boast of good digestion? They are all nerves, neuroses, and neurasthenia. The height, chest-size, strength and reproductive powers of this ingenious, rachitic breed of sages and artists, all refinement and glands, are in daily decline. Indeed they do not even eat, but rather overstimulate themselves and keep going by dint of coffee, alcohol and morphine. Thus are the senses that direct the brain's functions deemed nobler than those that preside over self-preservation—the time has come to right this unjust verdict.

God bless the bicycle, which lets us know the joys of a hearty appetite, notwithstanding all the decadent and decayed who dream of chlorosis, consumption and boils in the name of the ideal art! Let us go out, out into the open air, into the free-flowing, healthy air! It reddens the blood and strengthens the muscles! Let us not be ashamed, therefore, to eat the best we can and return gastronomy to its rightful place. In the end, even the tyrannical brain will be the better for it, and this

nerve-wracked society will finally understand that, even in art, a discussion on how to cook eel is every bit as worthy as a disquisition on the smile of Beatrice.

It is true that man does not live by bread alone; he must eat something with it. And the art of making this something as economical, savory and healthy as possible is, I insist, a true art. Let us rehabilitate the sense of taste and not be ashamed to satisfy it honestly, and as best we can, according to its own dictates.³

It is not for money, nor the pursuit of honor in an art that the unjust world wishes to appear to revile, but in the conviction that I am doing something useful for the public, that I now reprint, with corrections and a supplement of 100 new recipes, this gastronomical treatise of mine, having also been encouraged by the reception given the first edition of 1,000 copies, which has now sold out.

I beg the kind Ladies and good Housewives, for whom this work of great effort and expense is intended, to study it with love, for they will derive great advantage from it. May they continue to bestow their much-desired favor on me, and I shall be a happy man.

³ The paragraphs that follow were added by the author under this heading in the second edition of the work.

A FEW HEALTH GUIDELINES

The emperor Tiberius used to say that man, after the age of thirty-five, should no longer have any need of doctors. While this aphorism, in a broad sense, may be true, it is no less true that if called in time, a doctor can nip an illness in the bud and even save you from a premature death. Moreover, even if a doctor does not cure you, he often provides relief, and always gives comfort.

The emperor Tiberius's maxim is true inasmuch as man, by the time he has reached the halfway point in his life, ought to have gained enough experience about himself to know what things are harmful and beneficial to him. By means of a good diet, he should be able to govern himself in such a way as to keep his health in perfect balance. This is not difficult to do so long as his condition is not threatened by innate defects or internal injuries. Moreover, having reached that age, any man should also have acquired the conviction that the best care is prophylactic, or preventive, that one should expect very little from medicines, and that the cleverest physician is the one who prescribes few and simple things.

Nervous and oversensitive persons, especially if idle and apprehensive, imagine themselves as having a thousand ills that in fact exist only in their imaginations. One such person, speaking of himself, said to his doctor one day: "I don't know how a man with so many ailments can survive." Not only did he survive, with a few small inconveniences shared by many; he actually lived to a ripe old age.

These unhappy hypochondriacs—for that is exactly what they are—deserve all our sympathy, for they are unable to free themselves from the fetters of an exaggerated, constant fear, and there is no way to convince them otherwise, since they feel suspicious of the zeal of those who seek to comfort them. You often see them with a sullen look in their eyes, clasping their wrists and sighing audibly as they gaze with horror into the mirror to look at their tongues; at night they will leap from their beds, frightened by the throbbing of their startled hearts. Food, for them, is an ordeal, and not only because of the quality of the ingredients; fearing they have eaten too much, they will worry about some impending disaster, or else, wishing to correct this with excessive abstinence, they will lose sleep at night or have unpleasant dreams. Always thinking of themselves, they live in fear of catching a cold or cough, and go outside so wrapped up they look like pig-livers in cheesecloth. With each new hint of cold, they add layer upon layer, to the point of discrediting the very layers, I say, of an onion. For such persons as these, no form of medicine is valid. A conscientious doctor would say to them: have fun, amuse yourselves, take frequent walks in the open air, as much as your strength will allow, travel, and in good company, if you can afford it, and you will feel better.

It goes without saying that I am speaking here of the privileged classes, since those not favored by fortune are forced, in spite of themselves, to make a virtue of necessity and to seek consolation in the belief that an active, frugal life leads to a sound body and lasting health.

Passing now from these preliminaries to some general considerations of good health, let me recall for you a few precepts that have long enjoyed the endorsement of science, but which are never repeated enough. First of all, as concerns wardrobe, I turn my attentions to those of you Ladies who may be mothers, and I say to you: Start by dressing your children lightly, from infancy, for with this method, when they are grown up they will be less sensitive to sudden changes in atmospheric temperature and less subject to colds and bronchitis. And

if in winter you do not let the stove raise the heat in your apartment above 12 or 14 degrees Centigrade (about 60 degrees Fahrenheit), you will probably be safe from pneumonia, which has become so prevalent these days.

With the arrival of the first cool days, do not weigh yourself down all at once with too many clothes. One outer garment should suffice, one that can be easily taken off or put back on with the frequent alternations of the season, until the cold has definitively settled in. Later, when spring is approaching, remember the following proverb, which I find to be unquestionably true:

*In April stay appared,
In May go just halfway,
In June discard your pantaloons,
But give it not away,
For it may serve another day.*

Try to live in healthy houses, full of light and well ventilated: illness flees where the sun shines in. Pity those ladies who receive guests in semi-darkness, and in whose homes you stumble into the furniture and know not where to put your hat. Because of this custom of living in dimly lit rooms, of not moving their feet or getting out into the open air, and because their sex tends by nature to drink little wine and rarely eats meat, preferring vegetables and sweets, such ladies are seldom seen with red cheeks, the sign of prosperous health, or with fine complexions all blood and milk. Their flesh is not firm but flaccid, their faces like vetches that one grows in the dark to adorn tombs on Holy Thursday. Is it any wonder, then, that among women one finds so many hysterics, neurotics and anemics?

Get in the habit of eating everything, if you don't wish to become a burden to your family. Those who refuse many things offend the others and the head of the family, who are forced to conform to their

caprices to avoid making twice the number of dishes. Do not become a slave to your stomach: this whimsical entrail, so easily annoyed, apparently takes special delight in tormenting those who eat more than they need, a common vice of those not constrained by necessity to eat frugally. If you were to pay heed to it—now with its nausea, now with its upchucks of flavors of foods already eaten, now with its unpleasant acidities—it would reduce you to the diet of a convalescent. Thus, if you are innocent of all excess or overindulgence, then wage war on it. Fight it head-to-head and conquer it. Yet if your nature should decidedly rebel against a given food, then and only then should you concede defeat and desist.

Anyone who does not engage in physical activity must live more moderately than others. In this regard, Agnolo Pandolfini, in his *Treatise on the Care of the Family*, says: "I find that sobriety, not eating and not drinking when you do not feel hungry or thirsty, are integral parts of a healthy diet. And however raw or hard to digest a thing might be, I find that, old as I am, from one sunrise to the next, I shall have digested it. My children, take to heart this simple, general, and perfect rule. Take care to learn what things are harmful to you, and stay away from them; and find and keep doing the things that are beneficial and good for you."

Upon awaking in the morning, find out what best agrees with your stomach. If it does not feel entirely empty, limit yourself to a cup of black coffee; and if you precede this with half a glass of water mixed with coffee, it will better help to rid you of any residues of an incomplete digestion. If, then, you find yourself in perfect form and (taking care not to be deceived, for there is also such a thing as false hunger) you immediately feel the need for food—a definite sign of good health and presage of a long life—this is a most suitable moment, depending on your taste, to complement your black coffee with a piece of buttered toast, or to take some milk in your coffee, or have a cup of hot chocolate. After some four hours, the time needed to digest even a

scant and liquid breakfast, one moves on, in accordance with the modern custom, to a solid repast around 11 or 12. This meal, being the first of the day, is always the most appetizing, and therefore it is better not to slake your hunger entirely, if you wish to enjoy your dinner later on. And unless you lead an active life and engage in physical labor, it is not a good idea to drink wine with your morning meals, since red wine is not easily digested, and white, being alcoholic, clouds the mind when one needs to concentrate.

It is better, in the morning, to take one's meals with pure water and, at the end, to drink a small glass or two of bottled wine. Another custom is to have tea, plain or with milk, which I find a very fine complement; it does not weigh on the stomach and, as a warm tonic for the nerves, it aids digestion.

At dinner, which is the principal meal of the day and, I would say, a kind of family celebration, one can truly indulge oneself, though more in winter than in summer, for in the heat one needs light and easily digestible foods. A broad, diverse range of foods from the animal and vegetable kingdoms, with meat predominating, best contribute to good digestion, especially if washed down with aged, dry wine. Take care, however, not to overeat, and beware of those foods that tend to stimulate evacuation. And do not wash out your stomach with excessive drinking. In this regard, some health experts advise drinking only water even during dinner, and saving the wine for the end. You may try this if you have the nerve for it; to me it seems a bit too much to ask.

Here is a good rule to follow: at dinner you should stop eating at the first bite that seems to turn your stomach, and move on immediately to the dessert. Another good practice for avoiding indigestion while partaking of copious meals is to eat lightly the day after you have eaten heavy foods.

Ice cream at the end of dinner does no harm; indeed, it does good, since it draws back to the stomach the warmth necessary for good digestion. Unless your thirst demands it, always abstain from drinking

between meals, so as not to interfere with digestion, since this labor of nature's highest chemistry must not be disturbed.

Between lunch and dinner, you should allow an interval of seven hours, for that is how much time is needed for full digestion. In fact, for those with slower systems, even that is not enough. Thus, if one has lunch at eleven, it is best to wait until seven for dinner. In truth, however, one should only go back to eating when the stomach demands relief, and this need will make itself all the more pressing if you stimulate it with a walk outdoors or with some moderate, pleasurable exercise.

"Exercise," writes the aforementioned Agnolo Pandolfini, "preserves life, kindles the body's natural warmth and vigor, skins off excess and harmful materials and humors, fortifies every faculty of the body and the nerves. It is necessary for the young, useful for the old. He who does not exercise, does not wish to live in health and happiness. We read that Socrates used to dance at home and jump for exercise. The simple, restful and happy life has always been the best medicine for health."

Temperance and physical exercise are thus the two factors on which good health depends. Be advised, however, that "when overdone, virtue is as vice become"—since the constant discharges of the organism need to be replenished. You should beware of falling from one excess, overabundant eating, into the contrary one: scant and insufficient nourishment, which weakens the body.

During adolescence, during growth, that is, man needs a great deal of nourishment. In adulthood, on the other hand, and especially in old age, moderation in eating is a virtue indispensable to prolonging one's life.

To those who have preserved our fathers' blessed custom of eating dinner at midday or at one o'clock, I should like to recall the ancient maxim: *Post prandium stabis et post cenam ambulabis* (After dinner you stand, after supper you walk). And I should like to remind

everyone that digestion first takes place in the mouth; therefore I could never recommend too strongly that you preserve your teeth, for suitably chopping and grinding your food. For with the help of saliva, well-chewed food is much more easily digested than foods chopped and pounded in the kitchen, which require little mastication and sit heavy on the stomach, as though the organ took offense at having had part of its task taken away. Indeed, many foods considered difficult to digest can actually be better digested and enjoyed by vigorous chewing.

If, with these rules as your guide, you are able to regulate your stomach well, you shall make it strong, if it was weak; and if it was strong by nature, you shall keep it so without recourse to medicines. Stay away from laxatives, which are disastrous if used frequently; they should be taken very rarely, and only when absolutely necessary. Oftentimes animals, with their natural instincts, and perhaps even with their powers of reasoning, teach us how to behave: whenever my very dear friend Sibillone⁴ used to suffer from indigestion, he would go a day or two without eating and work it off on the rooftops. We should therefore deplore those pitiful mothers who, in an excess of maternal sentiment, keep a forever watchful eye over the health of their little ones, and the instant they see them a bit listless or not evacuating with regularity—obsessed as they are with the silly notion of worms, which most often are only in their imagination—immediately resort to medications, to enemas, instead of letting nature take her course, since at that florid, exuberant stage of life, nature, when left to herself, can work miracles.

The use of liquors, if one is not careful, can quickly turn to abuse. All health experts disapprove of them, for the irreparable damage they wreak in the human organism. The only exception might be made for a light punch of cognac (even with a hint of rum) on cold winter evenings. This helps you to digest at night, and you wake up the following morning with a freer stomach and a fresher mouth.

⁴ This was the name of Artusi's cat.

Those who give themselves over to wine also do a very, very bad thing. Little by little, they begin to feel nauseated by food and nourish themselves on wine alone. After which they deteriorate before the eyes of the world, becoming ridiculous, dangerous, and beastly. There was once a merchant who, upon arriving in a city, used to stop at a street corner and observe the people passing by; when at last he saw one with a red nose, he would ask him where he could buy some good wine. Even if we overlook the mark of intemperance that this vice stamps on the human face, and certain scenes that inspire only hilarity—such as the story of the cook who, as his masters were waiting at the dinner table, held the frying pan over the sink, furiously blowing below it—still there is no doubt that whenever you see such heavy drinkers, who with their glassy eyes and their slurred r's often say and do embarrassing things, you feel your heart sink in the fear that it might come to blows, and then someone might even draw a knife, as often happens. And if one persists in this brutish vice, whose demands grow greater with each day, one becomes an incorrigible drunkard, all of whom come to wretched ends.

Neither should we praise those who seek to spur their appetites with stimulants, for if you accustom your ventricle to needing external agents to help it digest, you will end up sapping its vitality, and the production of gastric juices will become defective. As for sleep and rest, these functions are entirely relative and should conform to the needs of the individual, since we are not all made the same way. It sometimes happens that someone will feel a general, undefinable malaise without knowing the cause, when in fact it derives from nothing more than a lack of restorative repose.

I now close this series of precepts—jotted down as they came to me, simply and without pretensions—with the following two proverbs, drawn from foreign literatures:

ENGLISH PROVERB

*Early to bed, early to rise
Makes a man healthy, wealthy and wise.*

FRENCH PROVERB

*Se lever à six, déjeuner à dix,
Dîner à six, se coucher à six,
Fait vivre l'homme dix fois dix.*

(Up at six, lunch at ten,

Dinner at six, in bed at ten,

Makes a man live ten times ten.)

And with this I wish the readers happiness and a long life.

* * *

A letter from the poet Lorenzo Secchetti (Olindo Guerrini) to whom I sent a copy of the third edition of my cookbook as a gift:⁵

Bologna

December 19, 1896

My dear Sir,

You cannot imagine what a pleasant surprise it was to receive your volume, in which you were good enough to remember me! I have long been, and forever remain, one of the most fervent followers of your work, which I find to be the finest, most practical and best, not only of all such works in Italian, which are a real disgrace, but even of foreign ones. Do you remember Viaiardi,⁶ considered the standard in Piedmont?

⁵ Later editions of Artusi's book included, in a kind of appendix to the introductory chapters, the following letters from enthusiastic readers and the stories associated with them.

⁶ Giovanni Viaiardi, head chef of Charles Albert and Victor Emmanuel II (House of Savoy, royal family of Italy from 1861–1946), wrote a *Treatise on Cuisine*, published in 1834. Like the imaginary quote that follows, it was full of Gallicisms typical of the Piedmontese dialect.

“GRILL BRAISÉ—The poultry should be singed, not pour boiled, while the filet, piqué with truffles and jambon, should be roulladed like a little valise in a brazier with butter. Humect often with graisse, then degorge and blanch some sweetbreads, making a farci as for quenelles the thickness of a cork, to be placed beside the filet. When cooked, degustate for salt, paint with tomato sauce cooked down to a glaze, and make as garniture a macedonia of chopped melonette and courgette and serve hot en terrine.”

You won't find that in the book, but the terminology is all there.

As for other Kings and Queens of Cooks and other culinary majesties, all we have are translations from the French and incoherent compilations. To find a sensible recipe fit for a family one had to grope about, try to guess, and blunder. Thank God for Artusi!

This chorus of tribute hails from Romagna, where I have preached your volume with true enthusiasm. Praises are coming from every quarter. One dear relation of mine wrote to me: “At last we have a cookbook without the usual cannibalism, for the others always tell you: Take your liver, cut it into slices, and so on,” and expressed heartfelt thanks.

I myself had been thinking about writing a cookbook for the Hoepli's series of manuals. I would have liked to write a book of vulgarization, as such works are sometime called; but lack of time as well as budget considerations⁷ made the experimental part of it very difficult. Then your book came along, and this discouraged me utterly. I stopped thinking about it, but I was left with a pretty good collection of cookbooks that makes a handsome display in the dining-room bookcase. The first edition of your book, newly bound, interleaved and augmented by many recipes, has the place of honor there. The second edition is for everyday consultation, while the third will now steal the place of honor from the first because it boasts the Author's autograph.

So as you can see, I have long known, admired and recommended your work. You can now appreciate how keen was my delight at receiving the copy you so kindly sent to me. At first only my stomach

⁷ This is a lie (Artusi's note).

felt due gratitude toward you, but it is now joined by my whole spirit. For this reason, most distinguished Sir, in expressing my heartfelt thanks for your gift and courtesy, I am honored to humble myself with due recognition and esteem.

Your devoted admirer,
O. Guerrini

* * *

To my great surprise, the contessa Maria Fantoni, wife of the illustrious professor Paolo Mantegazza, honored me with the following letter, which I cherish as a welcome reward for my humble efforts:

San Terenzo (Golfo della Spezia)
November 14, 1897

Dear Mr. Artusi,

Please excuse my boldness, but I truly have to tell you how useful and precious your book has been to me. Yes, precious, for not a single one of the dishes I have made has turned out *not so well* and, indeed, some have been so perfect as to win high praise. Since the credit is *yours*, I wish to tell you this as a way of expressing my heartfelt thanks.

I have made *your* quince jelly, and it is now on its way to America: I sent it to my stepson in Buenos Aires, and I am sure it will be appreciated as it deserves. You write and describe things so clearly that executing your recipes is a true pleasure and brings me real satisfaction.

I wanted to tell you all this, and thus I took the liberty of writing you this letter.

My husband sends his affectionate regards.

And I shake your hand with sincere gratitude.

Maria Mantegazza

* * *

The dramas of the kitchen, or the despair of poor cooks when their employers invite friends to dinner (a true story; only the names have been changed):

The master says to his cook:

“Mind you, Francesco, Signora Carli doesn’t eat fish, be it fresh or cured, and won’t tolerate even the smell of its derivatives. And you already know that the Marquis Gandi cannot stand the smell of vanilla. Take care to avoid nutmeg and spices, since Judge Cesari hates them. In the desserts, be sure not to put in any bitter almonds, because Donna Matilde d’Alcantara won’t eat them. You already know that my good friend Moscardi never uses ham, lard, bacon or salt pork in his kitchen, since those things give him gas; so don’t put any in this dinner, or he might get sick.”

Francesco, who has been listening to the master with his mouth agape, finally exclaims:

“Anything else you would like to leave out, *my lord?*”

“Actually, knowing my guests’ tastes as I do, there are a few other things I ought to warn you about. I know that a few of them take exception to mutton and say it tastes like tallow, and others find lamb difficult to digest. A number of them have also maintained, speaking of these matters in theory, that when they eat cabbage or potatoes they suffer from tympanitis, that is, their bodies swell up in the night and they have bad dreams. But these last ones we need not worry about.”

“All right, I know what to do,” adds the cook, muttering to himself as he leaves. “To satisfy all these people and ward off tympanitis, I think I’ll go see Marco (the house donkey) and ask him for his learned opinion and a platter of his products, without the related condiments!”

THE NUTRITIONAL VALUE OF MEATS

Before beginning this book, it seems appropriate to list here—without pretensions of scientific exactitude—the meat of different animals in diminishing order of nutritional value.

1. *feathered game*
2. *beef*
3. *veal*
4. *poultry*
5. *milk-fed veal*
6. *mutton*
7. *furred game*
8. *lamb*
9. *pork*
10. *fish*

This ordering could give rise to many objections, given that the animals’ age, the environment in which they live, and their diet, can all appreciably alter the quality of the meat among individuals of the same species, and even invalidate the distinctions drawn between the various species themselves.

A mature hen, for example, makes a better broth than beef does. And the ram, which grazes on the aromatic herbs found in high mountain valleys, can yield a meat more flavorful and nourishing than that of milk-fed veal. Among fish there are several species—including the Lake Garda carp (a relative of the trout)—which are more nourishing to eat than four-footed animals.

ADMONITION

The hypocritical world gives scant importance to eating. Nevertheless, we can never celebrate a religious or civil holiday without unfurling the tablecloth, the better to gorge ourselves.

In the words of the poet Pananti:

*Tutte le società, tutte le feste
Cominciano e finiscono in pappate
E prima che s'accomodin le teste
Vogliono essere le pance accomodate.*

*I preti che non son dei meno accorti,
Fan dieci miglia per un desinare.
O che si faccia l'uffizio dei morti,
O la festa del santo titolare,
Se non v'è dopo la sua pappatoria
Il salmo non finisce con la gloria.*

*(Every social gathering and holiday
is with a feast begun and terminated;
and before our heads can have their say
our bellies must be fully sated.*

*Priests, who are said to know a thing or two,
will walk ten miles for a meal.
Whether giving last rites with little ado
or calling on the local saint to heal,
if food and drink don't close the story,
they cannot end the psalm in glory.)*