

CHAPTER FOUR

THE MEDIAEVAL CULINARY RENAISSANCE AND ITS TEXTS

From the point of view of cuisine, the town provided a favourable environment for a culinary renaissance but did not create it; it offered the kindling but not the torch. There were undoubtedly sparks of autochthonous inspiration, and in some places the ashes of classical Roman cuisine may have still been warm, but these alone were not enough to set alight a culinary renaissance. Not one Apician recipe survived long enough to be remembered by the composers of the mediaeval culinary texts, although some continuity of Roman tradition can be traced.¹

What happened, between the period of splendour of Apician cuisine and the revival of the culinary art in the later mediaeval centuries, illustrates perfectly Jacques Revel's cycle of elaboration, exaggeration and decay of a cuisine. Its social supports weakened, Roman 'cuisine savante' toppled from its dizzy heights, but the stable, earth-bound 'cuisine populaire' of oral tradition, less affected by political and economic chaos, could survive and provide a foundation for a new 'cuisine savante' to evolve through invention, experimentation and renewal. On

the other hand, such a cuisine may also evolve by borrowing from other cultures, both on an intellectual plane and at a practical level, and this is precisely what occurred with mediaeval cuisine, Arab cuisine providing the source. It will be argued that the Mediterranean borrowings from the Arab characterised its cuisine, and differentiated it from the cuisine of northern France.

It is possible that the Visigothic and Frankish invaders made a positive contribution to the evolution of mediaeval cuisine by introducing a new ingredient, a new technique, but if so, such a contribution has remained hidden. On the other hand, the glow of the brilliant Islamic civilisation offered an enticing and desirable model to a society which wanted to use its new wealth to cultivate and display the tastes considered appropriate to its self-image. Archibald Lewis explains the attraction as one of inferiors for superiors: "(early) Western European civilization was definitely inferior to Moslem civilization ... (This) helps to explain why, for centuries, western Europeans were eager to copy many facets of Moslem culture"²

THE ARAB INFLUENCE

In the tenth century, Arab Spain was "the most prosperous, populous, orderly and cultured country in western Europe".³ Cordoba welcomed travellers from all parts of the world; here Arabic, classical and Hebrew cultures intermingled and flourished and books were

traded, published and collected. Toledo became famous as a translating centre, where works in Arabic were changed (or returned) to Latin. Andalusia - and also southern Italy and Sicily - accepted and diffused new products, new techniques. Spinach, melons, aubergines, sugar cane, hard wheat and citrus trees were introduced from Iran, Syria and Egypt, and irrigation techniques developed for drier southern Mediterranean climates were successfully implemented in these similar environments. Cotton and silk industries were established by about the tenth century and soon after, the manufacture of paper commenced.

In general culture and taste, many of the values of the eastern Arab world also spread to other parts of the Islamic empire. The educated aristocrat or high-level official was required to have not only a knowledge of practical subjects, such as law and religion, but also an appreciation of poetry, music, cuisine and astronomy: "A perfect gentleman in the Abbasid court should demonstrate the same qualities of connoisseurship (in foods and wines, perfumes and music) as his Greek, Roman or Persian precursors."⁴ The gentleman of wealth and leisure expressed his taste through his clothes, his jewellery and his table. A prolific culinary literature was produced by well-educated and noble members of the Abbasid court, and the thirteenth-century Bagdad Cookery-Book testifies both to the art and sophistication of its cuisine, and to the high regard in which it was held; among the six classes of pleasure (food, drink, clothes, sex, scent and sound), "the noblest and most consequential is food".⁵ In the

west, at least two Hispano-Arab cookery books were written in the thirteenth century, and Lucie Bolens describes their authors as "erudite and perfectly acquainted with the application of the theory of the elements to the culinary art".⁶

Intermediaries between east and west, between classical and mediaeval, the Arab civilisations of southern Italy, Sicily and Spain ensured the continuity of cuisine. In these centres the books on medicine and diet, which provided a vehicle for borrowing in the intellectual sphere, were preserved and studied, then translated to become accessible to those who had all but forgotten the classical heritage. On a different level, some of the culinary refinement of the Arab cities and the prestige accorded the pleasures of the table might have been transmitted by merchants and travellers and by itinerant musicians and singers, who also borrowed in the musical domain.

In southern France, the flowering of troubadour songs in the vernacular in the twelfth century coincided with, and was encouraged by, the contemporaneous economic and cultural revival. The similarities between these songs and the vernacular poetry of Andalusia have long been recognised, and it is generally accepted that the troubadours adopted, consciously or unconsciously, at least some elements from their Arab counterparts, whether as a result of direct contact with the Arab world or of the gradual diffusion of the culture of southern Spain through the Mediterranean. They may also have helped

transmit the Arab culinary culture.

It is not unreasonable to suppose that the troubadour and the jongleur, travelling from castle to castle and from town to town around the Mediterranean, providing entertainment and bringing news, passed on social as well as political gossip. They may well have talked of how they were treated by this host, of the magnificence of that castle, of the feast enjoyed in a certain town. In at least one song, a veritable gastronomic paean, popular dishes are mentioned. The arrival of these itinerant musicians would itself have been reason enough for a special feast, but their contribution might also have been as the catalyst to culinary experimentation.

A cuisine can also evolve by borrowing in the practical sphere, where the appeal to the senses of a different flavour, different texture, different appearance stimulates experimentation. The experiences of a foreign cuisine by merchants and traders in Arab lands may well have inspired them to borrow an ingredient here, a technique there. While the general culinary renaissance of western Europe after the eleventh century owes something to Arab learning and culture, the specific borrowings from Arab cuisine, a result of direct sensual experience, are more in evidence in Mediterranean regions, since Mediterranean nationalities predominated among the merchants and traders who visited the ports of the Orient.

It not suggested that all developments in mediaeval cuisine proceeded from an Arab source, thereby denying the indigenous populations any creative or

innovative capacities. Rather, the experimental and creative processes which contributed to the evolution of cuisine were stimulated by contact with the Arab world. But although Arab cuisine undoubtedly influenced the developing cuisines of western Europe, Arab cookery books are unlikely to have inspired the burst of cookery books which, although often unrelated, appeared almost simultaneously in the countries of western Europe around the end of the thirteenth century and the start of the fourteenth. To the best of my knowledge, none of the mediaeval Arab cookery books was translated into Latin. On the other hand, Arab culture transmitted to western Europe a theoretical foundation, in the form of medicinal and dietetic writings in which culinary information was often incorporated, and inspiration for the specialised culinary texts is more likely to have derived from such works.

DIETETIC TEXTS: PRECURSORS OF COOKERY BOOKS

The most important writers on medicine in the period from the eighth to the thirteenth century belonged to the Islamic civilisation: Rhazes, Isaac Judeus, Avicenna, Maimonides and Averroes. They continued the Hippocratic tradition, with the modifications of Galen, perpetuating the theory of the four humours and elements and enshrining the ideal of harmony and balance. Their writings, together

with those of the earlier authorities, began to be diffused throughout western Europe around the eleventh century, in the form of Latin translations, usually emanating from southern Italy, Sicily or Spain.

Alongside these, and still in the tradition of classical medicine, developed a popular and practical genre of 'health handbooks' which set out a code of healthy living.⁷ Although similar in form to the herbals which - unlike the medical texts - had persisted in western Europe throughout the 'Dark Ages' and which were effectively professional pharmacopoeias, concerned primarily with therapeutic medicine, the 'health handbooks' seem to have been intended for domestic use, their advice related more to preventive medicine and home remedies. (One mediaeval manuscript, however, combines both herbal and 'health handbook'.⁸) The common theme of these popular dietetics was the harmonisation of the individual and his diet, taking into account season and personal variables.

Like the strictly medical texts, the 'health handbooks' issued directly from Arab culture. Two of the most widely circulated and transcribed texts, the Regimen Sanitatis Salernitanum (hereafter Regimen) and the Tacuinum Sanitatis, are translations and adaptations of Arab writings. The Regimen - the original poem of some 360 lines, not the commented version attributed to Arnaldus de Villanova - was probably written around the twelfth or thirteenth century, and is believed to be largely derived from the Arab Sirr al-asrar.⁹ This, in turn, is

thought to date from about the tenth century. It was first translated into Latin, as Secretum Secretorum, by Johannes Hispaniensis about the twelfth century, and again in the following century by Philippus Tripolitanus.¹⁰

The full title of the Arabic text is, in translation, 'The Book of the Science of Government, or the Good Ordering of Statecraft'.¹¹ In the form of purported letters from Aristotle to the young Alexander, it gives advice on a wide range of subjects considered pertinent to the ruler - religion, astrology and justice, the choice of counsellors and other staff, and the maintenance of good health, since the ruler rules by might and potency, and "potencie is not had but by helthe."¹² According to mediaeval theory, good health depended on a diet in accordance with one's age and temperament, and with the climate and season. Thus the book set forth the qualities of the various seasons, of different foods and drinks. Such guidance might, today, seem outside the scope of advice to a ruler but it was perfectly in accord with the culture of the Bagdad court.

The Regimen, suggests Patricia Cummins, was based on passages from the medical/health sections of this book, and the references to the medical school of Salerno may simply have been self-advertising, since it was common practice for authors to seek rich patrons for their works.¹³ Circulated in over 100 manuscript versions, the poem was clearly a mediaeval best-seller. Late in the fifteenth century numerous editions were published, in Latin, French and German, containing both the poem and a

commentary attributed to Arnaldus de Villanova, which elaborated the original poem by including the opinions and recommendations of the earlier authorities, such as Rhazes and Avicenna. The poem itself was reprinted in other books, such as Ficino's De Triplici Vita.

Also derived from the Sirr al-asrar, via the Johannes Hispaniensis translation, is a Provençal poem of 456 lines written in the early years of the thirteenth century and known simply as 'Une diététique provençale'.¹⁴ The expressed intention of both this poem and the Regimen is to outline the rules for a healthy lifestyle, but the Tacuinum Sanitatis concentrates on food and diet, detailing the characteristics and properties of a wide variety of ingredients and dishes, from fruits and vegetables to fresh and roast meats and different types of bread.

The Tacuinum Sanitatis has been attributed to Ibn Botlân, an eleventh century Arab physician who studied in Bagdad and practised in Syria.¹⁵ Some time before the thirteenth century, his Arabic text was translated into Latin, probably in Sicily, from where it spread throughout Europe; several French library inventories of the fifteenth century record copies.¹⁶ A series of beautifully illuminated manuscripts copied in northern Italy about the end of the fourteenth century forms the basis of a modern edition of the work.¹⁷

The basic tenets of Hippocratic medicine, which prevailed in western Europe until the seventeenth century, applied equally to dietetics, and mediaeval medicine and

dietetics inevitably converged; dietetics, in turn, led into cuisine. The Tacuinum Sanitatis prescribes, for each ingredient, its nature (according to the basic binary combinations of hot/cold, dry/moist); its optimum condition or variety; its useful and harmful properties, and the means of avoiding or counteracting the latter. It is only natural that the advice should extend to culinary matters. Thus garlic should be eaten with vinegar and oil, fresh cheese with walnuts; chestnuts should be cooked in water and served with a good wine.¹⁸ Similar tidbits of culinary advice are included in the Regimen ("from sage, salt with wine, pepper, garlic and parsley/ Make a sauce") but its recommendations are more strictly therapeutic (sage calms the nerves, mint expels worms, raisins are bad for the spleen but good for a cough and for the kidneys).¹⁹

The theoretical foundation of all these works is the principle of harmony between the individual and his environment. In particular, this principle was translated into harmony between diet and season. The Provençal poem recommends that in summer, one should eat fish and meat seasoned with verjuice or unripe grapes; in autumn, poultry with a good sauce flavoured with ginger or saffron; in winter, roast meats with spices, especially pepper.²⁰ The English translations of the Secretum Secretorum suggest similar seasonal combinations.

These rules are not yet recipes, although they identify the culinary practices and traditions which were later incorporated into written recipes. The step from

dietetic precept to recipe is but a short one; many of the 'recipes' in the early fourteenth century Enseignements are written in a similarly concise, abbreviated style which presupposes thorough familiarity with the practice ("Capons and hens are good roast, with a sauce of wine in summer, in winter with 'aillie' sauce made with garlic, cinnamon and ginger, blended with almond milk or sheep's milk.")²¹ Dietetic and therapeutic recommendations are incorporated into some of the early recipes and almost all mediaeval culinary texts include a selection of recipes for 'restorative' dishes. Indeed, the link between dietetic text and recipe book is epitomised by the book of sauce recipes by the fourteenth-century physician, Maino de' Maineri, which is directly related to the expanded version of the Regimen attributed to Arnaldus de Villanova.²²

The specific link between Arab dietetic text and western Europe recipe has been elucidated by Maxime Rodinson in his investigation into the origins of certain mediaeval dishes (romania, lomonia, etc.), the names of which had posed an etymological mystery.²³ Rodinson identified their source in Arab cuisine, and traced the passage of the recipes through an Arab dietetic text to its Latin translation, the Liber de ferculis (written, incidentally, in a style parallel to that of the Tacuinum Sanitatis) which is contained in the same codex as the two early Latin culinary texts, the Tractatus and Liber. The Latin Liber includes recipes for these particular Arab-derived dishes with an -ia suffix, which subsequently

appeared in other mediaeval texts. It cannot be proven that the recipes in the Liber were copied directly from the Liber de ferculis, but - presuming that the experience of the dish preceded the recording of the recipe - a connection between the two is virtually certain.

The antecedents of the mediaeval culinary texts are thus firmly established in the tradition of medical and dietetic texts which came to western Europe via the Arab culture. Dietetic writing not only influenced the form of the earliest written recipes but also provided some of the content - entire recipes, albeit modified, and recommendations as to the appropriate technique of preparation or suitable accompanying ingredients, which might subsequently be incorporated into culinary practice and thence recipes. In this context, it is worth noting the advice contained in the Tacuinum Sanitatis: to counteract the possible harmful effect of almonds on the intestine, eat sugar and poppyseed.²⁴ It will be shown later that almonds and sugar were used together very frequently in Arab cuisine, and that this practice was also adopted in the Mediterranean regions of western Europe.

Mediaeval cookery books should also be seen as part of the general upsurge in transmission of the written word of the fourteenth century. Since "there is always an interval between economic success and the intellectual or artistic activity which it makes possible", one can assume that the practice predated the recipe, and the cookery book merely codified earlier culinary developments.²⁵

Indeed, although it might be suggested that "geniuses come in clusters" in both science and the arts, it is the cultural setting into which they are born that allows or prevents the realisation of their gifts, and the simultaneous appearance of culinary texts, in the vernacular, in many western European countries, is indicative rather of a ferment in culinary activity, evidence that cuisine was in a vigorous stage of evolution.²⁶ As Freeman has noted, "A cuisine does not develop out of the cooking traditions of a single region. Ingredients are apt to be too limited, cooks and eaters too conservative. A cuisine historically has derived from no single tradition but, rather, amalgamates, selects, and organises the best of several traditions."²⁷

MEDIAEVAL COOKERY BOOKS - AN HISTORICAL SURVEY

In the years between the compilation of the ten books of Apicius and the additional Exerpts collected by Vinidarius in the fifth century, and the reappearance of written recipe books in western Europe, its culinary slate remained virtually blank. The first known cookery books of mediaeval western Europe have been dated to the end of the thirteenth or the early years of the fourteenth century. In the next two hundred years, at least a dozen collections of recipes were compiled in France, Italy, Catalonia, England. In today's ocean these would be a mere drop, but in mediaeval times, and compared to the previous centuries, they represented a veritable flood.

These texts differed from their classical predecessors in one very important respect: if not anonymous (perhaps because copied by scribes) they were usually (allegedly) written by cooks. The authors or compilers of the ancient works were generally well-educated and often wealthy men who were proud to put their names to their works; in eighth-to-tenth century Bagdad, they included royal princes, poets, musicians, astronomers, high court officials, grammarians and historians.²⁸ M.Gabius Apicius, if indeed he was the one who assembled the collection of recipes known by his name, is said to have endowed a school for the teaching of cookery and the promotion of culinary ideas; Athenaeus was an historian and grammarian.

The style of the earliest mediaeval recipes was terse and abbreviated, and this, too, contrasted with the style of Apicius and an Arab text of the thirteenth century, the Kitab al-Tabikh (translated by Arberry as A Bagdad Cookery-Book). The first western European cookery books were basically lists of instructions and advice and, as noted earlier, similar to dietetic texts in style. The Enseignements begins: "Here are the instructions which teach how to prepare all sorts of meats and fish".²⁹ Recipes were short and direct: "Brouet de canelle. Cook poultry, or whatever meat desired, in wine or water; quarter; fry, take dried unpeeled almonds and a lot of cinnamon; pound them, sieve, mix with stock; boil with the meat, plus verjuice; also ginger, clove, grain of paradise; and it should be thick."³⁰ This style of

writing, in 'kitchen Latin' or 'kitchen old-French' can be compared with the 'telegraphic' style of writing used by twentieth-century cooks and comprehensible only to the initiated. To follow a recipe in such basic outline presumes a certain skill and experience on the part of the cook although, on the other hand, such an outline may have been all that was needed by a kitchen supervisor or household manager to whom the cookery book might have been destined.

In contrast, the recipes of De Re Coquinaria, even if they were written in kitchen Latin, are more detailed, and more attention is given to the flavour and appearance of the finished dish. Likewise, the recipes of A Bagdad Cookery-Book display a meticulousness in accord with the refinement of the dishes. The author's concern with a high quality of workmanship is shown in his preface, in which he lists the desirable qualities of the cook, and of his utensils and ingredients, and gives details of certain techniques.

The style of mediaeval recipes evolved in parallel with cuisine; as cuisine became more sophisticated, so the recipes became more detailed. Techniques were explained at greater length, specific decorations described and quantities and proportions were given. These changes, which echo developments in mediaeval society (the rise of a wealthy and powerful bourgeois-merchant class) and in mediaeval literature and drama, possibly indicate a change in the purpose of the cookery book and in its destination.

In all probability, the texts which have survived to the present day do not represent the total output of the mediaeval period. Nor does each necessarily represent the first of a series. Sometimes, as in the case of the Sent Sovi, a hypothetical antecedent can be envisaged, but even when there is no apparent ancestor it is difficult to imagine the collection of recipes as the spontaneous creation of a single cook. Rather, the cookery book should be seen as corresponding to "the written elaboration of a tradition, for the culinary art is a collective creation".³¹

The works described below are those which have provided the basic data for this study, which is concerned with the mediaeval cuisine of France and its Mediterranean neighbours. The texts consulted do not necessarily represent all extant mediaeval culinary texts; for example, the fragmentary Italian texts edited by Guerrini and Morpurgo, in 1887 and 1890 respectively, were not available. Their absence, however, is not critical since they are not complete texts and, in any case, they are apparently related to the Libro per Cuoco (Anonimo Veneziano). Nor was it possible to consult another Italian manuscript, dated to the fifteenth century, 'Trattato de Buone e Dilicate Viaunde'; a glimpse at its table of contents indicates similarities with other Italian fifteenth-century texts, although the recipes themselves might not corroborate this.³² The family of early thirteenth-century northern European texts which, in the opinion of Rudolf Grewe, represent a cuisine native to

the Languedoc-Provence-Catalonia area, has not been included in this study because the origin of the text cannot be verified, and because modifications may have been made during the course of transcriptions.³³

The texts are listed in roughly chronological order, without segregation by nationality (which, for some manuscripts, is conjectural).

1) Traité de Cuisine écrit vers 1300 (as entitled by Pichon and Vicaire, and reprinted in their edition of Le Viandier). A corrected version, under the title of Enseignements, was published by Lozinski as Appendix 1 to his critical edition of the poem, La Bataille de Caresme et de Charnage (1933); in this study it is referred to as 'Enseignements'.³⁴

The text is contained in Latin ms.7131 of the Bibliothèque Nationale, and is thought to have been composed about the end of the thirteenth century.

2) Tractatus de modi preparandi et condiendi omni cibaria (hereafter Tractatus).

3) Liber de Coquina (hereafter Liber)

In the same manuscript volume as the Enseignements, and immediately preceding it, are two texts in Latin; these same two texts are also contained in another manuscript in the Bibliothèque Nationale, ms.9328, and have been published by Marianne Mulon as "Deux traités inédits d'art culinaire médiéval".³⁵ The script of these two texts dates them to the end of the thirteenth or start of the fourteenth century; Mulon suggests, and her

suggestion appears to have won general acceptance, that they were written at the instigation of one of the Angevine kings of Naples, either Charles II (who ruled from 1285 to 1309) or Robert (ruled from 1309 to 1343). They are often described loosely as Italian texts, although the more prudent researchers suggest a possible Neapolitan origin for the Liber, while the Tractatus presents a cuisine closer to that of northern France.³⁶ Marianne Mulon has pointed out that the use of French terms in the Tractatus supposes either a French-speaking readership or authorship, or both, which would accord with a presumed origin in the Angevine court.

4) Sion manuscript of Le Viandier (hereafter Sion ms).

This is the first known manuscript of Le Viandier, the script of which dates it to the second half of the thirteenth century or soon after. It was edited in 1953 by Aebischer, who believes that it is anterior to the Enseignements.³⁷ The title and the first few recipes of this manuscript are missing, but the order of the recipes and the details of the recipes themselves - in spite of the modifications of either careless or well-intentioned copyists - prove it to be almost identical to the four other manuscript editions of Le Viandier.

Aebischer suggests that amongst the early French recipe collections can be distinguished three series, and that the series of which the Sion manuscript is the oldest representative was the most successful. "The five

manuscripts (of Le Viandier) are the last representaives of a series which was surely much larger, a series of which almost all the representatives have disappeared." 38

5) Le Viandier de Taillevent (hereafter Le Viandier, LeV)

The various manuscripts of Le Viandier were edited in 1892 by Pichon and Vicaire, who included in their edition a copy of the printed Viandier, probably published in the last decade of the fifteenth century.³⁹

During the fourteenth century a certain Guillaume Tirel, also known as Taillevent, rose from kitchen boy in the kitchen of Charles le Bel in 1326 to 'queu du roi' for Philippe de Valois in 1346, to 'écuyer de cuisine' by 1381 and 'le premier des écuyers' in the king's household in 1392, by which time he was probably in his seventies. At some time during his long career, an edition of Le Viandier was prepared and prefaced with these words:

"Cy commence le viandier tailleuent ma||istre queux du Roy nostres (ire)"

(Here begins the Viandier of Taillevent, master cook to the King our lord)

A manuscript copy of Le Viandier, presently held in the Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris, changed hands in Paris at the end of the fourteenth century. A certain Pierre Buffaut has inscribed that he bought it in 1392 for the sum of 6 sols. As Aebischer has shown, Taillevent did no more than put his name to an edited, modified and expanded version of an earlier manuscript, the Sion manuscript.

(Whether Taillevent personally made the modifications is debatable.)

Pichon and Vicaire, assuming that the Guillaume Tirel described above was indeed the author, believe that the work was compiled between 1373 and 1381, when Taillevent was in the service of Charles V. Such a hypothesis is credible, though unfortunately not verifiable. One can, however, safely assume a date of late fourteenth century, and also assume a relatively wide circulation. A copy was included in the library of a ecclesiastic in late fifteenth-century Arles.⁴⁰ A price of 6 sols indicates a cheap copy, not necessarily new, and doubtless not one intended for display in a library; the Duke of Berry paid 200 gold ecus, almost a hundred times as much, for a large, leather-covered volume containing Le Viandier and a dozen or so other texts in 1404.⁴¹

Other manuscript copies of Taillevent's Le Viandier were made in the fifteenth century; those still available are known as the Vatican manuscript, the Mazarin manuscript, and the manuscript of the Archives de la Manche. Between about 1490 and 1604, fifteen printed editions of the work were published. Copyists' and printers' modifications have resulted in a series of slightly differing editions, which can be the cause of some confusion. Unless otherwise specified, the version referred to will be the fourteenth century Bibliothèque Nationale manuscript.

6) Libro della Cucina, or Anonimo Toscano (hereafter Anonimo Toscano, AT)

7) Libro per Cuoco or Anonimo Veneziano (hereafter Anonimo Veneziano, AV)

These two anonymous Italian texts, both reproduced in Arte della Cucina, have been cautiously dated to the fourteenth century or, for the former, the early years of the subsequent century.⁴² Faccioli considers that they present the oldest and most systematic evidence of Italian gastronomic literature, although both works probably represent a synthesis and refinement of earlier works, "The methodical arrangement of the material (of Anonimo Toscano) is certainly a refinement of expression which would lead one to believe that this is a technical and literary elaboration based on earlier works which today cannot be authenticated, but which are substantiated by the presence of other, albeit fragmentary, treatises." ⁴³

8) Le Menagier de Paris (hereafter Le Menagier, MP)

About the time Pierre Buffaut bought his copy of Le Viandier an anonymous Parisian gentleman was compiling, for his new, young, wife, a book of instruction, moral and practical, with advice on gardening, hawking, choosing servants and general household management, including advice on culinary matters.⁴⁴

The recipes collected and copied by this unknown Parisian were clearly derived from several sources, although the critical asides and modifications seem to have come from the gentleman himself. One of his sources was obviously an edition of Le Viandier, since the recipes are arranged in the same order and are sometimes

duplicates of recipes from this text. Other sources are unknown, although a "vanished common source" drawn upon both by the author of Le Menagier and by Pierre Pidoulx, putative author of La Fleur de Toute Cuisine, has been proposed.⁴⁵

Although the work is undated, 'internal evidence' indicates that the book was written in about 1394. The critical edition of Brereton and Ferrier is based on a manuscript originally in the library of the Dukes of Burgundy and mentioned in the inventories of 1467 and 1487, which itself was probably derived from the original text through an unknown intermediary.

9) Sent Sovi (hereafter Sent Sovi, SS)

The two extant manuscripts of this Catalan text, edited by Rudolf Grewe in 1979, have been dated to the fifteenth century, but the original and basic source (the 'primitive Sent Sovi') appears to have been written in 1324, and the Sent Sovi is more properly considered a fourteenth century text.⁴⁶ The preface to one of the manuscripts gives a date of MCCCXXIIII, and the other the date 'mil e XXIIII', which is assumed to be an error for mil CCC XXIIII. The compiler of the more extensive Barcelona manuscript obviously had recourse to other sources, such as a treatise on the art of carving, a catalogue of fish and, probably, another collection of recipes.⁴⁷

10) Du Fait de Cuisine, by Maistre Chiquart.

This manuscript, edited by Terence Scully in 1985, is one of the few mediaeval texts of which the authorship,

and circumstances of writing, can reasonably be assured.⁴⁸ It is the work of Maistre Chiquart, chief cook to Amédée VIII, Count of Savoy, and was written, according to Chiquart, in 1420, at the request of Amédée himself.⁴⁹

Only one manuscript copy of this work is known; it is possible that it was never reproduced, given the circumstances of its composition. Chiquart had no written precedent ("car je n'ay nuls livres ouz escriptz faysans de ceci nencion ne memoyre") but his recipes are often remarkably close to others presumed to be of earlier origin, in particular those of Le Viandier and Le Menagier.⁵⁰

Unlike the two French works, Du Fait de Cuisine is not comprehensive. It does not offer instructions for every type of meat, game and fish, nor does it include many of the simple vegetable 'potages'. Rather, the author is passing on the fruits of his experience in the organisation of, and catering for, royal feasts and receptions on a very grand scale - requiring, in the way of butchers' meat, a hundred oxen and three hundred sheep, and a hundred small pigs daily. (Chiquart proudly states that the feasts in honour of the Duke of Burgundy, in about 1400, were his responsibility.⁵¹) Thus the selection of recipes is based on two days' menus for dinner and for supper, at which a selection of both meat and fish dishes was presented, plus restorative or invalid dishes.

11) Libro de Arte Coquinaria, by Maestro Martino

(hereafter Martino, MM)

Martino's work is included in the collection of early Italian texts edited by Faccioli.⁵² Like Chiquart, Martino is one of the few cook-authors about whom some details are known. Faccioli has identified him as a native of Como, and Martino describes himself as having been cook to the Patriarch of Aquileia.⁵³ This was most likely Cardinal Ludovico Trevisan, whose "displays of wealth, including, according to a contemporary, the maintenance of a 'table for sybarites, costing more than 20 ducats daily' won for him the not entirely admiring title of 'Cardinal Lucullus'".⁵⁴

This text demonstrates a noticeable progress compared with the fourteenth-century Italian treatises, and has a more methodical arrangement of recipes. The recipes themselves are given in more detail and with greater precision, to the extent of specifying quantities of ingredients for certain dishes. Some of the dishes might be considered the equivalent of Carême's pièces montées, cooks' show-off pieces to demonstrate their technical virtuosity, but the general approach is almost scientific in its methodology.

12) Libre del Coch, by Mestre Robert (Ruperto de Nola)
(hereafter Mestre Robert, MR)⁵⁵

This Catalan book, first known as an edition printed in Barcelona in 1520, should by rights be outside the scope of this study. It seems certain, however, that it was compiled late in the fifteenth-century, since the author describes himself as the cook to 'don Ferrando, Rey

de Napols', who can almost certainly be identified as Ferrante I, King of Naples from 1458 to 1494.

13) Cuoco Napolitano (CN)⁵⁶

This is a late fifteenth-century manuscript of apparently Neapolitan origin, which has not yet been edited. Most of its recipes are practically identical to those of Martino, and have almost certainly been taken from that source. However, not all of Martino's recipes have been reproduced - those omitted include, notably, recipes for freshwater fish - and additional recipes have been included; these foreshadow the sixteenth-century banquet dishes of Messisbugo. However, there are also Catalan borrowings, apparently from the Sent Sovi or a derivative; since Naples at that time was part of the Kingdom of Aragon, one might assume it to have been the centre of culinary interchange.

Possibly the most valuable feature of this text is the series of menus for elaborate and lavish feasts and dinners, following on the recipes. Again, these menus hint at the developments of the late fifteenth-century which were adopted and refined into an art of the banquet by Messisbugo.

14) Anonimo Meridionale (AM/A, AM/B)

These two manuscripts, belonging to a private collection in Stockholm, were edited in 1985 by Ingemar Boström.⁵⁷ They are simply identified as of southern Italian origin and dated to the first half of the fifteenth-century. Although written in the same hand, they may have been copied at different times.

Both texts are clearly derived from a variety of sources and use both Latin and the vernacular (although not in the same recipe). Anonimo Meridionale/B shows two distinct styles of recipe writing, recipes 1-56 written in a rather personal style ('Se voy fare ...' or 'Chi vole ...') and the succeeding recipes in a prescriptive, more detailed manner ('Questa magnare se chiama ...').

Boström has identified many similarities between the recipes of Anonimo Meridionale/A and both the Latin Liber and Anonimo Toscano, particularly in the recipes written in the vernacular. The final group of recipes, in Latin, may well have been taken from a medicinal or dietetic work, since all have a therapeutic purpose. The second text is rather fragmentary, but shares some similarities with Anonimo Veneziano. Because of these features, the two manuscripts of Anonimo Meridionale are only supplementary sources for the present work.

15) Bibliothèque de Cessole MS. 226 (Nice ms)

An edition of this manuscript is being prepared by Professo Massimo Quaimi, whose transcription has been sighted.⁵⁸ It is a collection of 54 recipes, apparently from two separate fragments, combined into a single text. It has been dated to the fifteenth century, and is probably of Tuscan origin.

The selection of recipes, which show some similarities to those of Anonimo Veneziano, is highly individual and, as indicated by the titles ("...per xx ricchi gentile homini", "... per xii ricchi giucti"), represents a very refined and sophisticated cuisine.

16) BN ms. Latin 6707

The collection of 48 recipes included in ms. 6767 was edited by Carole Lambert in 1983.⁵⁹ It was probably composed around the middle of the fifteenth-century, although many recipes are written in the succinct style typical of the early fourteenth-century. Lambert has identified counterparts to all but six of the recipes of ms. 6707 in one or several of Le Viandier, Le Menagier, Enseignements, Tractatus and Liber; three of these six, however, can be traced to Chiquart, and therefore this text offers little originality although it does tend to confirm the character of northern French cuisine.

17) De Honesta Voluptate et Valitudine, by Bartolomeo Sacchi, known as Platina (hereafter Platina)⁶⁰

As a book of recipes, this is little more than a copy of Martino (including about 240 of its 250 recipes) with additional recipes apparently derived from Apicius.⁶¹

De Honesta Voluptate is, however, more properly considered a book of gastronomy, and Platina the father of Renaissance gastronomy. It is a synthesis of earlier influences, combining the dietetic tradition transmitted by the Arabs with the anecdotal style of Athenaeus and the practical, purely culinary content of cookery books to promulgate a "scheme for living".⁶²

The guiding role of the dietetic tradition is obvious from Book I; it is as though Platina had before him, throughout the months of writing, the introduction to the Tacuinum Sanitatis ("The Physician speaks ... about the six things that are necessary for every man in the daily

preservation of his health").⁶³ Echoes of earlier dietetic texts, such as Aldebrandin's Le Régime du Corps, are scattered throughout the work. The carefully composed catalogues of ingredients (Books II - V) follow the scholarly and encyclopaedic tradition of earlier mediaeval writers, interweaving dietetic and medicinal detail with agronomic information. Platina does not simply copy from his predecessors but critically assesses their judgments, at the same time enhancing the personal character of his book by adding snippets of folkloric trivia and the incidental contributions of his contemporaries in the manner of Athenaeus.⁶⁴

The recipes of Books VI - X are almost identical to, and arranged in the same sequence as, those of Martino, who is acknowledged in the recipe for 'Cibaria alba' ("what cook can surpass my Martin, from whom I have learned nearly all of which I write?").⁶⁵ He also acknowledges "Novicomensus (?), a master and prince of chefs in our day, from whom I have learned a great deal about the preparation of food".⁶⁶ When Platina's recipe diverges from that of his mentor, it is in the direction of simplicity, and the recipes omitted are often of the 'pâté of larks' tongues' genre (for example, mock dairy products for Lent). To almost every recipe Platina adds comments about the medicinal value of the dish, or his or friends' appreciation of it. He does not hesitate to assert his own preferences (poached eggs are better without Martino's suggested sprinkling of grated cheese) nor to temper the culinary hyperbole of Martino ("Eggs on

a spit ... is a stupid invention and foolish behavior and sport of cooks").⁶⁷

The influence of Platina's philosophy and his outline of a harmonious and healthy lifestyle will be discussed in a later chapter. The principal value of the culinary component of his book lies in the comments incorporated into the recipes, which help provide an understanding of mediaeval culinary systems and techniques.

The earliest manuscript of De Honesta Voluptate, now in the Biblioteca Trivulziana, Milan, was dedicated to the Cardinal of Ravenna about 1468. The book is widely regarded as the first printed cookery book (editio princeps Rome (undated) or Venice 1475) and appeared in many editions, including Italian, French, and German, in the sixteenth-century.⁶⁸

RELATIONSHIPS

"It would be difficult, not to say imprudent, to try to establish a filiation between all these (mediaeval) works."⁶⁹ Nevertheless, relationships have been sought; similarities between texts have been identified, antecedents postulated, and some of the unruly strands unravelled. In spite of their conjectural nature, possible links between texts should remain part of the background to a comparison of cuisines. (Some of the more obvious relationships are identified in Appendix I.)

The 'creation' of a recipe is implicated in the

question of authorship, which will be considered subsequently. For some mediaeval texts, the compiler has unashamedly plundered other works - with acknowledgment, by Platina; without, by the author of Le Menagier. Coincidentally, of all the known mediaeval cookery book authors, these two are the only educated non-cooks, which might suggest that other texts were the product of practising cooks, drawing on their own experiences. Often, however, the similarities between texts are such that their originality must be suspect. Copying was a highly organised and respectable activity in the mediaeval period (it had not yet earned the tag of plagiarisation), and there can be little doubt that recipes were copied, albeit modified in the process. Such modifications provide evidence of culinary evolution, while filiations between texts can testify to the localisation of a cuisine.

Among early French texts, Aebischer differentiated three different families - or rather, three different works.⁷⁰ The first includes the Latin Tractatus and the Enseignements (both contained in the same codex), the second comprises all the manuscripts of Le Viandier, including the Sion manuscript, and the third includes a hypothetical ancestor of Le Menagier.

It has also been shown, however, that the recipes in the Tractatus relating to the storage of wine have counterparts in the additional second part of the Vatican manuscript of Le Viandier, probably composed in the first half of the fifteenth century.⁷¹ Taillevent was dead before the end of the fourteenth century but Pichon and

Vicaire believe that he could have compiled this additional section at an earlier date, although their hypothesis is somewhat implausible.⁷² Nevertheless, a relationship between the Tractatus and the Vatican Viandier is undeniable. Further, some of the material in the second part of the Vatican Viandier seems to have been known to the author of Le Menagier, which leads Brereton and Ferrer to propose, as the 'vanished common source', a collection of recipes ascribed to Taillevent but larger and more detailed again than the Vatican manuscript.⁷³ The distinctions between the three 'families' become progressively more hazy as sources become more hypothetical, but the network of interrelationships is an assurance of the validity of the texts as reflections of northern French cuisine.

Although Chiquart claimed that his work was totally original and that he did not borrow from any written text, his recipes indicate that the style of cuisine was very close to that of northern France, although the lavish use of sugar might also hint at a familiarity with Mediterranean practices. Other characteristics of Mediterranean cuisine can be discerned, and it is likely that the Court of Savoy represented a culinary crossroads where both northern French and Mediterranean cuisines were present. The dominant style, however, appears to have been northern French.

Amongst the three principal Italian works of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, no direct links have been demonstrated. In each, the ordering of recipes is

different. The Anonimo Veneziano follows a simple alphabetic order, three recipes for 'gelatina' following four for 'fritelle', although at the end of the text this system falters and the last recipes are arranged haphazardly, as if an afterthought or added by a second copyist. This suggests the use of at least two sources, which can probably be assigned to the same never-never land as Le Menagier's 'vanished common source'. Anonimo Toscano follows an elementary classification, beginning with recipes for vegetable dishes, then 'made dishes' or brouets, roasts and pies, and ending with recipes for invalid fare. Martino's work is organised into chapters according to type of dish, and the recipes in each respect his classification.

On the other hand, there are many similarities between Anonimo Toscano, the Liber (of possibly Neapolitan origin), and Anonimo Meridionale/A, which shares 52 of its 146 recipes with the Liber and 62 with Anonimo Toscano; many of the recipes are common to all three texts. Marianne Mulon has already remarked on the relationship between the Liber and Anonimo Toscano, suggesting a slightly later date of composition for the latter text.⁷⁴ The Latin, rather than the Italian, text appears to be a more likely source for Anonimo Meridionale/A which has used a different dialect (or borrowed some Catalan-isms?) for its translation - 'sartagine', where Anonimo Toscano uses 'padella', 'olla' in place of 'pentola', 'suffrigere' in place of 'frigere'.

Anonimo Meridionale/A also includes, towards the end, a small group of recipes which have some affiliation with recipes in Anonimo Veneziano; as with the French, there are cross-links between the Italian families of texts. Anonimo Veneziano is, however, more appropriately considered the prototype of a different and loosely related family which includes Anonimo Meridionale/B and the Nice manuscript, in which 14 of the 54 recipes are practically identical with Anonimo Veneziano recipes and a further four related to Anonimo Meridionale/B. The latter text is fragmentary, its contents not upholding the promise of the index, as though the copyist had imposed his own standards or grown weary of the task, particularly at the end where a different text appears to have been substituted.

It is unfortunate that so few of the recipes listed in the index, the titles of which are often totally unfamiliar ("laudo", "eucabam"), were transcribed, since they would have contributed to a better knowledge of Italian mediaeval cuisine. Rodinson has hinted at a lost text, supposed to have been composed by the cook to the 'brigata spendereccia', a group of young aristocrats of thirteenth-century Sienna whose pleasure-seeking lifestyle and quest for culinary innovation may have led them to seek inspiration in Arab cuisine.⁷⁵ This group may have introduced or popularised Arab dishes, the recipes for which may have been included in the vanished text. It is not suggested that this text, if indeed it existed, is the one partially reproduced in Anonimo Meridionale/B, but

such gaps indicate that many more culinary texts circulated in the mediaeval period than are extant today.

Martino is the head of the third Italian family of texts. It is sometimes thought to follow in the steps of Anonimo Toscano, but the similarities between the two are few, even taking into account the sophistication of Martino. This text is by far the most advanced of the mediaeval period, and includes many 'new' recipes of Catalan origin ('Mirrause catalano'; 'Per conciar starne al modo catalano'; 'Bianco mangiare a la catelana'; 'Carabaze a la catalana') which are almost identical to recipes in the Sent Sovi. Martino may have been familiar with a version of this text or, in view of the Catalan presence in Italy in the second half of the fifteenth-century, may simply have been describing new dishes which had been adopted into the Italian repertoire.

It is easy to imagine a tumult of gastronomic interchange in the Mediterranean in the heady years of its apogee towards the end of the mediaeval period. Italian merchants and bankers were established in southern France, Catalans in Italy; in the Mediterranean seaports, Genoese, Venetian, Catalan and southern French sailors and traders intermingled. The traffic was not only east-west, across the Mediterranean; northern French recipes were sometimes adopted into the Italian texts, and vice versa, but this exchange was far less important than the trans-Mediterranean one. Thus as Martino borrowed Catalan recipes, the author of the Libre del Coch absorbed Italian influences, presumably during his years at Naples in the

service of Ferrante I. This Catalan text includes many of the same recipes as the Sent Sovi but among the additional recipes, Italian connections or antecedents can often be identified.

This cross-fertilisation is one of the arguments for the hypothesis that the cuisines of Mediterranean Europe shared many features in common, and that they were distinctly different from that of northern Europe. The individuality of Italian and Catalan cuisines is not denied; nor should the likelihood of regional differences, for example between northern and southern Italy, be ignored. At a different level, however, there were fundamental similarities between Italian, Catalan and, it is suggested, southern French cuisines, and these similarities probably facilitated the borrowing and acceptance of recipes in the Mediterranean region.

The links with Arab texts have already been discussed. Synoptic recipes from dietetic texts, translated and fleshed out, passed directly to the culinary text. The specific recipes in which this process apparently occurred ('romania', 'sommachia' and 'lomonía') are found in Italian and Catalan texts, but do not appear to have travelled to northern France; to the best of my knowledge, they are not included in any of the French texts (Enseignements, Le Viandier series, Le Menagier), nor Du Fait de Cuisine, nor any fourteenth-century English collection. Although there were some signs of Arab influence in northern French cuisine, it was slight and secondary, manifest in a garnish like the fried almonds

and pomegranate seeds on brouet blanc.⁷⁶ The relevance of the dietetic text to the transmission of recipes is emphasised by Flandrin and Redon, who conclude that mediaeval French texts are, in comparison with Italian texts, more detached from the medical, or dietetic, tradition.⁷⁷

To draw together all the threads, including those disappearing into imaginary sources, into a tidy pattern representing the relationships between all the mediaeval culinary texts of western Europe would be as difficult and as futile as a quest for the Holy Grail. Nevertheless, loosely-related families can be segregated, thus supporting the hypothesis that a Mediterranean cuisine can be differentiated from a northern French one.

READERS AND AUTHORS

The generalisation that mediaeval cookery books present the 'higher' cuisine of the nobles and wealthy is supported by the texts themselves. In its preface, the fifteenth-century Mazarin Viandier promises to instruct all ranks of the nobility plus "bourgeois merchans & gens donneur"; and the Valencia manuscript of the Sent Sovi is directed to the "scuders qui son stats ab los senyors grans, e ab los bons homens".⁷⁸ The authors, in so far as they are known, worked for, or belonged to, such an elite. The Viandier is attributed to a royal cook; Martino was cook to the Patriarch of Aquileia; Chiquart was chief cook to the court of Savoy; the author of Le

Menagier was a prosperous bourgeois; Mestre Robert was cook to King Ferrante I; and the author of the Sent Sovi declares himself to have been cook to the king of England, although this could be merely literary licence.⁷⁹

Many of the mediaeval recipe books available to today's scholars began their lives in the private libraries of the rich. Of the three known manuscripts of Le Menagier, two belonged to the library of the Dukes of Burgundy in the fifteenth century, the third probably belonged to the wife of one of the staff of the duke's household.⁸⁰ The Duke of Berry ("the greatest bibliophile of his day") had in his library a copy of Le Viandier, according to the 1416 inventory, and also the volume containing the two Latin treatises on cooking, now BN ms. 9328.⁸¹ In the fifteenth century, manuscript copies of De Honesta Voluptate were in the libraries of Cardinal Roverella, to whom the book was dedicated, and Leonardo da Vinci, as well as in other private Italian libraries.⁸² In France, copies were listed in the library inventories of Louis XI and the abbey library of Saint Germain-des-Près.⁸³

It does not necessarily follow, however, that mediaeval cookery books were exclusively found in noble and aristocratic households. Even as a 'higher' cuisine, mediaeval cuisine was not composed solely of costly and ornately embellished display pieces, but also included relatively simple dishes, and this variety was reproduced in the collections of recipes. The more diverse the recipes in any collection, the broader its social base.

The same text might be shelved by both the noble, with unlimited resources, and the moderately well-off merchant, but the noble might enjoy more of the rich, elaborate dishes and the merchant, more of the modest dishes appropriate to his social status. The vagueness of mediaeval recipes is perhaps deliberate, to give full liberty to the cook or the controller of the spice stores, to use whatever combinations and quantities of spices might be appropriate to the occasion and to the household.

It is possible that ordinary bourgeois households had cheaper, shorter-lived copies - more perishable through more frequent use - of cookery books. The fourteenth-century manuscript copy of Le Viandier purchased in 1392 by Pierre Buffaut for six sols was not a luxury; six sols was only the equivalent of three capons, or two young geese, or two ounces of saffron, and a carpenter in Poitiers could earn 5 sols a day in 1422.⁸⁴ In Paris the book trade was in the hands of the licensed booksellers and scribes, but there were also unlicensed booksellers, who were allowed to sell the cheaper books, not exceeding 10 sols in price. It is quite possible that cheap, ephemeral editions of cookery books were used and then worn out or discarded in the households of the lesser bourgeois, while the deluxe editions in the magnificent libraries of the wealthy, rarely glanced at, survived to delight and puzzle today's readers.⁸⁵ As an example of the cost differential, the Duke of Orleans paid 60 sols for two small, leather-covered picture books

he had had made for his children, at about the same time as Pierre Buffaut made his modest purchase.⁸⁶

It should not be assumed that cookery books were to be found, as a matter of course, in any respectable mediaeval library, among the requisite tomes on theology and philosophy and the lives of the saints. Mentions of cookery books in the inventories of mediaeval libraries are infrequent, although there were usually herbals, books on medicine, dietetics and agriculture, and books relating to the accepted leisure activities of the well-born rich - hunting, chess and other games, and music.⁸⁷

Cookery books, then, were important neither for moral nor intellectual instruction, nor for the pleasant diversion of those to whom the cuisine was presented. With few exceptions, they were written in the popular language instead of the scholar's Latin. They were essentially practical works, technical manuals for the craftsman, in an age when technique was hierarchically separated from science. They can be classified with other books often excluded from the library, such as customaries. The obvious place for cookery books was in or near the kitchen, which raises the question: by whom were they read?

Unfortunately, cooks were not of a class to have left details of their lives. Nor is much known of the schooling and the literacy of the artisan class in the Middle Ages. If a boy started school at seven years and was apprenticed at the age of twelve, five years of education should have permitted the acquisition of reading and writing skills,

but possibly at a very basic level.⁸⁸ Articulate, intelligent, creative cooks like Chiquart and Taillevent were probably exceptional.

More likely, recipes were consulted less by the cook, watching over his spits and casseroles, than by someone who had a supervisory role. This may have been the mistress of the house in a comfortably bourgeois household like that of Le Menagier's author, whose treatise on cookery was written specifically for the benefit of his young wife, so that she would know how to give orders and directions for the organisation of dinners and suppers to 'Maistre Jehan', and decide on the dishes to be served. In another household it may have been intended for Maistre Jehan's counterpart, whose position in the domestic hierarchy was somewhere between the kitchen and the dining hall. 'Maistre Jehan', variously called 'le despensier' and 'maistre d'ostel', can be considered the household manager or steward, whose duties included the purchase of ingredients (he was sent to the butcher); checking provisions of wines, oils, grains, and other staple ingredients once a week, and presumably ordering more supplies as required; keeping records of domestic staff; and directing, under the orders of the mistress of the household, the domestic staff, which included 'Richard de la cuisine'.⁸⁹ The household manager would obviously be required to have a good knowledge of cuisine - which ingredients were necessary for which dishes, the basic techniques of preparation; in brief, a host of details which could be found in a book of recipes.

At a different level of mediaeval society, the same responsibilities were shared among several employees. Tradition decreed four separate domestic offices: kitchen, bakery, cellar, cavalry. At the papal court of Avignon, the kitchen of Jean XXII had two chief cooks ('maistres queux'); a scribe, who bought and distributed provisions; and a buyer or kitchen manager ('acheteur', also called 'administrator coquine',) who directed all operations. The accounts were entrusted to the kitchen scribe, who also kept an eye on the stores. Later, in about 1342, was added a 'maistre de la cuisine', who supervised the kitchen hands and watched over the presentation of dishes.⁹⁰ In 1428, the court of Savoy also had a 'mestre de la cuisine', Henri de la Fleschiere, who decided on the quantities of ingredients and held final responsibility for catering for the duke's household.⁹¹

The royal kitchen of Charles VI was similarly organised. Financial control was in the hands of the 'maitre de la chambre aux deniers', the 'contrerouleur' and their 'clercs'. The kitchen staff included, in addition to the numerous cooks, roast-cooks, vegetable-cooks and kitchen boys, thirteen 'maistres d'ostel' and ten 'escuiers de cuisine'. The 'maistres d'ostel' were all well-born, well-educated court personnel, including Gilles Malet, royal librarian; their title appears to have been honorific, and their task was to serve at the king's tables. The 'escuiers' were not necessarily of noble birth, and their position in the hierarchy was intermediate; their main role was to bring the dishes from

the kitchen to the serving tables of the 'maistres d'ostel'. In 1392, one of these 'escuiers' was Taillevent, at that time also in charge of the stores.⁹²

The presence in the kitchen of a 'clerc', an educated man who could read and write (probably in Latin as well as in the vernacular) is significant. It suggests a division of labour; those who did the manual work, including perhaps the cooks, were not necessarily expected to be literate. This is not to deny their literacy, but there was probably little need for them to consult the recipe each time they cooked a particular dish. Any self-respecting professional cook knows by heart the recipes of his repertoire - and indeed, the fourteenth-century Enseignements concludes with the words: "Whoever wants to serve in a good house should keep in his heart all that is written on this roll; he who does not cannot satisfy the desires of his master."⁹³ The cook learned his skills in the kitchen, as he progressed from kitchen boy to vegetable cook to roast cook to head cook; only in rare instances would he learn from a book.

Significantly, several of the mediaeval recipe books also include 'recipes' for the treatment of 'sick' wines. In Le Menagier, these recipes follow directly on the instruction that 'maistre Jehan' is to make weekly checks of the wines and the stores. Similar remedies are contained in the Tractatus and the Vatican Viandier. Such recipes would be a logical inclusion in a book destined for the household manager or for the 'escuier'. Even in the seventeenth century, the cookery book was more

accurately described as "a treatise on domestic economy and a code of table manners", and as such directed towards the maitre d'hotel, at the summit of the domestic hierarchy, as well as the cook, carver, the 'chef d'office' and others.⁹⁴

The suggestion that mediaeval recipe books were normally destined for cooks, since recipes often conclude with instructions for serving or for adapting the flavourings to suit the master's tastes, must therefore be modified. The cook rarely presented the dish in the dining hall; this was the responsibility of the 'maistre d'ostel' or the 'escuier', whose duties may also have included carving. The preface to the Valencia manuscript of the Sent Sovi (which does not contain the section on carving which precedes the recipes in the Barcelona manuscript) specifically states that the book is for the use of 'scuders', who can learn from it how to prepare "los bons menjars ne les bones viandes".⁹⁵

More likely, the educated readers of cookery books were kitchen or household managers and the staff of the dining hall. It would have been the household manager who transformed a command from the master or mistress ('four-service dinner for twenty on Friday') into a plan of action, ordering the necessary ingredients and instructing the kitchen staff, and for this he might well have needed to consult a book of recipes. The cook, too, may have read the recipes, or had them read to him, to refresh his memory, but it is doubtful that he used a cookery book as a working manual.

If the texts were not written for cooks, were they written by cooks? The evidence is obscure, but the style often indicates that they were based on personal experience and/or observation. Chiquart proudly admits to his position as cook ('cuisinier'), which is verified in documents relating to the court of Savoy; in 1416 he was 'chef de cuisine'.⁹⁶ Mestre Robert describes himself as the cook to the king of Naples ("coch del serenissimo senyor don Ferrando, rey de Napols"); Martino as, at one time, the cook to "Reverendissimo Monsignor Camorlengo". Taillevent almost certainly made the modifications and additions to an earlier text to produce the fourteenth-century Viandier attributed to him.

The cook, however, did not actually sit down and write out his repertoire of recipes. Rather, they were dictated to a 'clerc', possibly one of the kitchen staff who was already familiar with the subject. Jehan de Dudens announces himself as the 'clerc' who wrote out Chiquart's recipes.⁹⁷ Among known authors, only the author of Le Menagier and Platina are likely to have personally written the texts, and both based their works on previously written texts.

The assumption that most mediaeval cookery texts were composed by practising cooks (or master cooks) and dictated to a scribe is verified by way in which the recipe is written, often in the second person ("If you want to make ..."; "Take ..."; "Make sure that ..."; "If you prefer ..."), and by the inclusion of helpful hints, the fruit of years of experience. Indeed, the motive for

the composition of Du Fait de la Cuisine was the desire to record and pass on Chiquart's knowledge and expertise. The cook may well have had his culinary brethren in mind as he dictated his recipes, imagining the stages of preparation in the kitchen, and it might seem anomalous to propose the non-kitchen staff as the principal beneficiaries. However, excluding the few exceptional cooks like Taillevent and Chiquart, most mediaeval cooks would rarely have bothered with written manuals.

COOKERY BOOKS AS SOURCES OF DATA

Despite the renewed interest in mediaeval cuisine and intensified study of cookery books, there is no recommended standard method of analysing their data. One favoured method makes use of computers and a modified concordance program to analyse groups of recipes according to the prevalence of particular ingredients or cooking techniques. The advantages of this method are in the facility and rapidity with which numerical results are obtained. For comparisons between cookery books, the computer saves a great deal of labour and should give more accurate results. Different cookery books can be compared on the basis of the frequencies of mentions of spices, for example:

Comparison of three fourteenth-century texts⁹⁸

Percentage of recipes using various spices

	Anon. Tosc.	Viandier	Forme of Cury
Saffron	45.5	19.5	39.6
Pepper/long pepper	21.2	9.4	9.9
Ginger	3.0	18.1	27.6
Cinnamon	3.6	14.1	12.0
Cloves	4.8	12.1	6.8
Spices(unspecified)	49.0	8.7	44.8

Similarly, the computer can provide data allowing a comparison of the use of various fats - pork fat, butter, oil. The analysis can be applied to the whole collection of recipes or to a particular category - sauces, or fish dishes, for example. It can examine methods of cooking, and produce data of the number or proportion of dishes boiled, roasted, grilled, fried, fried then cooked in liquid, etc.

Given the imprecisions of mediaeval recipes, the results of such analyses should be interpreted with caution. Mediaeval recipes were not written with computer analysts in mind. Instructions such as "Puis mettez du sain sur le feu en une petite paelle de fer, ou moictie sain ou moictie beurre fraiz" or "los hous sien debatuts ab vinagre o ab agras ... E si sap massa al vinagre o a l'agras matets-hi un poc de mel o de rop" must be encoded in such a way as to take account of

the alternatives - pork fat or a mixture of pork fat and butter in the first example, vinegar or verjuice in the second, plus the optional ingredients of honey or syrup.⁹⁹ The recording of both pork fat and butter may lead to bias in the results; the inclusion of a third category, 'pork fat or butter' is tedious but more accurate. On the other hand, this exactitude may create more problems that it solves, in that the number of categories of ingredients and techniques may become so large that the results of the analysis are almost worthless.

Philip and Mary Hyman, who pioneered the computer analysis of cookery books, have identified 65 different culinary operations or combinations of operations in mediaeval recipes, which illustrates the complexity of the procedure. Roasting, for example, is subdivided into three categories of spit-roast, oven-roast, spit- or oven-roast. Similarly, in the general section of Ingredients-Poultry they have itemised 41 categories in order to properly encode all recipes (for example, there are five categories for capons: capon; capon/partridge, capon/chicken; capon/chicken/veal; capon/young chicken.)¹⁰⁰ The results of this type of research are undoubtedly valuable - from an analysis of sixteenth century recipes, they were able to conclude that 'butcher's meats' were never fried or grilled but rather boiled, roast, stewed or braised; fish was more likely to be fried, grilled or cooked in the oven.¹⁰¹ Such analysis, to the same degree of precision, would be impossible - or, at least, extremely

arduous - without a computer, but it is questionable whether this precision is relevant to mediaeval recipes, and whether an insistence on detail might not obscure more general features. Further, to say that 45.5% of recipes in a given text call for saffron is meaningless without supplementary information about the uses of saffron, about the types of recipes which use saffron and the role of saffron in cuisine.

A similar method of analysis was adopted by Boström, who established a system of eleven categories of IC ("ingrediente culinario"), from mammals through to minerals and water. (An IC represented both a UC (culinary unity, for example pig, hen, grapes) and a CC (culinary component, for example meat or lard from the pig, broth or eggs from the hen, raisins or wine from grapes).¹⁰²) He then recorded the number of times each IC was mentioned in a given text (no more than once for each recipe), counting each ingredient when alternatives were suggested, and compared the results of this analysis with the image of mediaeval cuisine - a rather simplified and panoramic vision - offered by Fernand Braudel in Les Structures du Quotidien.

The method was applied to both texts of Anonimo Meridionale, the Liber and the three mediaeval texts edited by Faccioli. In the summarized results can be seen a surprising similarity between these Italian texts: Category I ingredients (mammals), accounted for 14-15% of all IC in three unrelated texts (overall range 11-18%); herbs and spices 34-34% in three other, unrelated texts

(overall range 29-39%). The analysis permitted Boström to speculate that Anonimo Veneziano and Martino represented a northern Italian cuisine and Anonimo Meridionale/A, Liber and Anonimo Toscano a southern Italian cuisine, on the basis of higher frequencies of butter and verjuice in the first two texts and of oil, wine and citrus juices in the latter three. Finally, he concluded that - at least in the domain of cuisine - Braudel's representation of the mediaeval era should be viewed with some scepticism.¹⁰³

Useful though they be (one can see at a glance the pre-eminence of domestic animals over game), these comprehensive tables contribute little to an understanding of the recipes or of the cuisine. As stated earlier, the degree of precision of the analysis is not consistent with the recipes. Further, the miscellany of recipes which constitutes each text introduces an element of bias. One text might have a large section of recipes for vegetables and few sauce recipes, another might have dozens of sauce recipes and very few for vegetables; since the ingredients associated with vegetables are usually different to those associated with sauces, the comparison is invalidated.

The intention of the present study is not to analyse and compare mediaeval cookery books but to look behind the recipes at the cuisines which they portray. The procedure is always to proceed from the general to the particular, to determine first the common features of a certain genre - sauces for roast meats, fritters, pies - and subsequently to identify the particular characteristics

which separate styles, either regional or social. In some categories, a social hierarchy may dominate, to the exclusion of regional identity; in others, regional characteristics may be more clearly seen when the same social milieux are being compared. Although mediaeval cuisine has been assumed to be a 'higher' cuisine, it was not necessarily uniform, including at one extreme the gold leaf-covered roast peacock and at the other, the simple bowl of 'pois au lart'.

The principal clues to mediaeval cuisine in general, and to specific genres, are naturally to be found in the mediaeval recipe collections; supplementary evidence allows them to be substantiated and amplified. These texts, however, should be approached in a manner more sympathetic to their mediaeval origins, not analysed according to a modern taxonomy. Mediaeval compilers and composers clearly saw distinct categories of recipes, even if, to today's eyes, these categories seem illogical, and even if their results did not always match their visions. (Le Menagier has a chapter entitled "Potages communs sans espices et non lyans" but it includes a recipe for "Puree a jour de poisson" which definitely contains spices and is thickened.) Fish recipes were separated from meat recipes, recipes for sauces and for fritters were not juxtaposed. (The notable exception is Anonimo Veneziano, where recipes are arranged alphabetically.)

Thus, for the purposes of this study, recipes have been categorised according to a system which facilitates the identification of basic characteristics and which, at

the same time, would appear relatively logical to a re-born Taillevent or Martino. The major divisions have generally been determined by the main ingredient: meat, poultry and game; fish; vegetables (green and leguminous); and cereals (grains); but recipes for meat, poultry and game are further subdivided into categories of roast, boiled, sauce, brouet. Appendix I lists the recipes of each text and the category to which each recipe has been assigned. The common characteristics of each category - if not self-evident - are discussed in the appropriate chapter.

The system of categorisation adopted can also be justified with reference to eating habits and meal patterns. The small, fried morsels which have been classed as 'fritters' almost always came at the end of a meal. Boiled meats were not usually served in the same course as roast meats. The segregation of meat recipes and fish recipes follows the natural pattern of the mediaeval period, when the Church decreed certain days 'fast days', when fish could be eaten but not meat. 'Meat' included poultry and game, and an additional reason for grouping these is the difficulty imposed by recipes which begin with the instruction. "Take rabbits, hares, mutton, veal or goat ...".

The advantages of grouping recipes into reasonably homogeneous categories is that similarities and differences, either in specific ingredients or in techniques, are readily discernible. Further, ingredients and techniques are seen in the context of the whole

recipe, not as isolated units of information. The reduction of recipes to formulae takes no account of the incidental asides which offer an insight into mediaeval culinary practice, for example, by confirming that the function of the piece of salt pork added when meats are boiled is to contribute its saltiness (and flavour) to both the broth and the meat.

This approach to the study of cookery books accords with the interpretation of cuisine introduced earlier: cuisine is the totality of the operations of selecting the ingredients, preparing and serving the finished dish, and is the reflection of a set of preferences. Recipes provide the framework on which to construct the shape of the cuisine.

OTHER SOURCES OF INFORMATION

How reliable are cookery books as indicators of cuisine? Can it be assumed that the dishes they described were actually served? Platina's comment on the recipe for 'Eggs on the spit' suggests that the dish existed only in Martino's imagination, unless it was an expression of his sense of humour.¹⁰⁴ And how typical were these dishes of the place, the period and the milieu?

Each collection of recipes represents an individual selection from a hypothetical 'recipe bank'; even when one text is clearly copied from another, some recipes are omitted, others modified. The mediaeval texts are not necessarily, nor do they pretend to be, comprehensive.

Maino de Maineri mentions several sauces in his chapter on sauces, but adds that there are many more, "as the cooks of the lords know".¹⁰⁵ The author of Le Menagier remarks that he will not include a recipe for 'Poules farcies', because it is inappropriate to a bourgeois household, and the compiler of Anonimo Toscano adds he will not say anything about fried, roast and scrambled eggs because the recipes are so well known. Further, the recipes themselves probably reflect the tastes of an individual - the person who wrote or compiled the recipes, or the lord whose preferences ruled the kitchen. The modifications to a recipe copied from one text to another might simply be indication of individual taste preferences.

If so, cookery books can, at best, provide only limited evidence of a more generalised cuisine. On the other hand, however, the prefaces to a number of mediaeval texts make it clear that the cuisine represented by the recipes is, in fact, typical of a certain milieu, since the author intends that his text will be used by, and will be of benefit to, those of similar rank in similar circumstances ("Taillevant maistre queux du roy de france, icy enseigne || a toutes gens pour apparouillier a maingier en cusine de roy, || duc conte marquis ... bourgeois merchans & gens donneur.")¹⁰⁶ Thus the preferences can be assumed to have been shared by a larger and representative group, and to have typified the tastes of a certain social and/or regional population. Further, the recipes are not totally prescriptive, usually allowing

some discretion in the quantities of spices and other flavourings. In any case, this study is concerned with the broader image of mediaeval cuisines, and minor particularities which may be indicative of purely personal preferences, such as the substitution of cinnamon for cloves in one variation of a recipe, are insignificant. One can assume that the recipes can give a reasonably close approximation to the tastes of a certain class in mediaeval society, in a certain geographic region.

Cookery books, however, present an idealised image and their evidence should, as far as possible, be substantiated by factual information. Lorna Sass refers to the probable disparity between recipes and meals, and advises that cookery books be supplemented by "period literature and diaries which describe the actual cooking and eating habits of the society in the age under scrutiny". (Significantly, she agrees that "It is also essential to consider cuisine as one among many of the cultural arts."¹⁰⁷)

Such ancillary sources can provide corroborative evidence, confirming that certain dishes for which recipes are included in cookery books were in fact prepared and presented (in accord with the recipe, one presumes). Archival documents such as kitchen accounts, household inventories, market statutes and legal contracts uncover valuable detail relating to the availability of ingredients, kitchen purchases, culinary techniques and ingredient status. Dietaries give detail of ingredients and how they were prepared, and their recommendations as

to an appropriate diet can be related to eating habits. Mediaeval romances and poetry present a rather barren field as far as cuisine is concerned, their allusions to meals and feasts usually more revelatory of manners and customs, of 'la vie courtoise', than of material actuality, in accord with the accepted ritual of the noble classes. On the other hand, the 'fabliaux' of northern France and the Italian 'novelle' depict the conditions of everyday life, typically town life, more revealingly, although it is possible that the symbolic value of a dish is exaggerated to enhance the effect of the story.

Mediaeval manuscripts offer useful iconographic evidence which, however, is subject to the same limitations as that of cookery books; the fidelity of the image to the actuality is unknowable. In theory, art may have been supposed to imitate Nature, but the artist who drew the ostrich and elephant in a manuscript of the Tacuinum Sanitatis had obviously never seen such creatures; the ostrich is depicted as a giant duck and the elephant as a mastiff with tusks pointed heavenwards.¹⁰⁸ At the more mundane level of household routine, the view of the artist is probably more reliable, but again it should be remembered that the artist may have been in the employ of a rich patron whose favours he wanted to ensure by depicting the scene as the patron would have wished to remember it.

In the present work, evidence from a diversity of sources will be presented to complement that from the primary source of information, the series of mediaeval

cookery books. For southern France, these secondary sources assume greater importance, since they are required to compensate for the absence of any book of recipes.

THE BLACK HOLE

At the centre of this thesis is a black hole. It not only represents a mysterious domain whose contents can only be guessed at, but also poses the limits beyond which the cuisine of mediaeval southern France can be pursued no further.

Were there ever recipe books, written in the language of southern France, which described the cuisine typical of the region? None has yet been uncovered, nor has any reference to such works been located. Grewe's hypothesis that the Danish text may be a translation of a collection of recipes emanating from southern France or Catalonia in the thirteenth century cannot be substantiated.¹⁰⁹

The existence of a characteristic cuisine in mediaeval southern France can be persuasively argued, but it is doubtful whether it was ever formalised and documented as written recipes. At the time that the earliest mediaeval cookery books were being composed in northern France, Catalonia and Italy, the Languedoc was ravaged by Simon de Montfort and his troops; whole towns were destroyed, libraries burnt. After the northern French annexure of this part of southern France, it is unlikely that affirmations of regional identity, in the form of a

written record of cuisine, would have been encouraged. Further, the disruptions caused by the Hundred Years War would hardly have favoured the production of cookery books in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.

On the eastern side of the Rhone life and culture flourished, despite a degree of political uncertainty. Yet, as far as is known, cookery books were neither composed nor circulated, as they were in the Parisian region, for example. Under the Avignon Popes a valuable library was collected, but the emphasis was on religion, philosophy and law; perhaps it would have been considered unseemly for the Pope to request his cook to set down in writing the recipes for the most popular dishes of the court, as did Amédée VIII.

The trade in manuscript books had long been centred on Paris and its university, and in the smaller towns of Provence demand for books was probably limited, even in centres of commerce and study like Avignon. Nor do there seem to have been in the south of France rich patrons of the arts, bibliophiles like the Duke of Berry, who might have commissioned manuscript copies.

One can only conclude that the combination of circumstances which promoted the production and dissemination of recipe books in other parts of western Europe was absent from southern France. Its society may have been more conservative, content to transmit culinary traditions through practice, in which case there would have been little demand for written texts. The student of mediaeval cuisine therefore faces a more

difficult task in attempting to discover the face and form of the cuisine of Mediterranean France. But it is not an impossible task, as the succeeding chapters will demonstrate.