Introduction

A. François Pierre, Sieur de La Varenne

(i) La Varenne: his life

François Pierre was born probably in or near Chalon-sur-Saône around 1615. In all likelihood he concluded his professional initiation as a cook in the kitchens of the Marquis d'Uxelles in his new Château de Cormatin.[1] Wherever he began his oral instruction and practical training in the craft of cookery he progressed through his apprenticeship and was probably admitted to the grade of master cook in the early 1640s.[2] He would die in the capital of his native Burgundy, Dijon, in 1678, after a life in which his professional activities garnered him a respect and reputation second to none in France, and that reached into most of the aristocratic kitchens in Europe. His book, *Le Cuisinier françois*, earned such popularity that sales exhausted an astounding 30 editions in 75 years.[3]

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[1] The rebuilding of the Château de Cormatin was begun around 1616 by Antoine du Blé (1560–1616). Most of that structure still stands — though unfortunately not the south wing, collapsed in the nineteenth century, in whose basement the original kitchens were located. The Château at Uxelles had been poorly maintained and had become virtually uninhabitable by the second half of the sixteenth century; that property had been acquired by Pétrarque du Blé in 1560 along with the estate and title as part of an inheritance of his wife Catherine de Sercy. The fief of Cormatin had been in the Du Blé family since at least 1235.

[2] In his dedication at the beginning of the *Cuisinier françois* (1651) La Varenne writes that he has worked for the Marquis d'Uxelles for ten years and in that time learned the secrets of fine cookery.

[3] In their introduction to a recent reprint, *The French Cook, by François Pierre, La Varenne translated into English in 1653 by I.D.G.* (Lewes, East Sussex: Southover Press, 1999), Philip and Mary Hyman have counted "61 editions, the last of which was printed around 1754" (p. xii). On La Varenne the only biographic evidence, though it is perhaps none too firm, is quoted in the same place (p. xii): "Varenne, (Pierre) Châlonnais, vint s'établir à Dijon où il mourut en 1678 âgé de plus de 60 ans": Philippe Papillon, *Bibliothèque des auteurs de Bourgogne* (Dijon: P. Marteret, 1742), Vol. II, p. 342.

Furthermore La Varenne's book demonstrated its huge contemporary success by arousing, during those years of continual reprinting and long after its author's death, a degree of jealousy within the fraternity, along with repeated efforts on the part of competitors to dethrone the reigning culinary monarch. Over several generations the rivals, forever younger and forever more inventive, did eventually prove successful. Perhaps despite himself but indisputably, La Varenne was at the origin of a culinary awakening in France, a vigorous efflorescence of creativity unlike any that has been seen anywhere before or, even, since.

Who was this La Varenne, the man whose name became indelibly identified with French classical cooking?

In the kitchens of the great in France it had long been customary to dub the chief cook with a nickname. Some three centuries before, for instance, at the close of the Middle Ages the chief cook of King Charles V, one Guillaume Tirel, had acquired the name Taillevent or "Wind-Slicer": we can imagine him regularly impressing his underlings by cleaving the air with the swing of a huge chopping blade. In time that sobriquet displaced the great cook's own name — except on legal documents and on his tombstone, now hanging obscurely in the Museum of Saint-Germain-en-Laye; it is immortally fused into the name of the old recipe collection he adopted and refined: the *Viandier de Taillevent*.

At some stage in his own career, François Pierre was given or assumed a nickname which, within his profession, had already been rendered moderately famous a generation or two before him. Toward the end of the sixteenth century a certain Guillaume Fouquet (1560–1616) worked in the kitchens of the sister of Henry IV of France, Catherine, Duchess of Bar. Apart from those culinary duties Fouquet seems also to have served his employer's brother, the King, by bearing personal messages, along with the odd *billet doux* — all on behalf of his royal master. In faithfully fulfilling this secondary function the cook saw bestowed upon him the whimsical titles of cloak-bearer (*porte-manteau*), mail supervisor and, finally, Lord of the Game Preserve (or Wasteland: *Seigneur de la varenne*). This last title likely derived from Fouquet's frequent need to eschew highways while travelling from estate to estate, but rather to cross uncultivated land — called *la garenne* in Old French — directly in the performance

of his royal assignments.[4] King Henry's amorous liaisons earned *him* the qualification of the *Vert Galant*.

François Pierre, the chief cook of the Marquis d'Uxelles, also became known, and eventually much better known, by the nickname of "Sieur de La Varenne." That is the form, and the only form, by which he is named as author on the title page of the book that embodies his life's work. In the case of François Pierre the reason for this sobriquet is not recorded. He may have been a descendent of the earlier La Varenne, and facetiously have claimed the title by right of inheritance. It is conceivable also that the Marquis likewise engaged in covert activities of a nature similar to those ardent pastimes for which the former King was known. François Pierre may have been employed, on the rare occasions the Marquis was in residence, to transmit clandestine messages privily across "the wild land" between his master and various aristocratic neighbours. It is worth keeping in mind that in any noble household of this and earlier periods the person in whom the lord placed — had of necessity to have — the most absolute and unquestioning trust was invariably his cook. It is entirely natural that royalty and nobility sometimes elevated their chief cook either by means of an actual title, as was the case of Charles V's Taillevent, or by conferring upon him a secondary and intimately ambassadorial role. This was simply a different form of confidence in the person who held his master's very health and welfare in his competent hands.

We know little of the life of François Pierre. In all likelihood he learned his trade by working at it. Somewhere, either in the Uxelles kitchen at Cormatin or elsewhere, he trained in the culinary craft of the time. He may have begun to earn his keep in life by doing a scullion's chores, scrubbing, hauling, stirring, kindling, stoking. Under the guidance of a master cook, he himself would have trained in all the tricks of the profession, learned all the standard culinary repertoire of the day, become imbued with all the inherent sense of obligation and honour that defines a great cook of any age. In time, in the faithful service of of the Marquis d'Uxelles, François Pierre distinguished himself to such a degree as master

[4] According to Agrippa d'Aubigné, a militant protestant, the earlier La Varenne was nothing more or less than a procurer (*pourvoyeur*) of mistresses for the apostate Henry IV.

cook that he rose to the rank of kitchen clerk[5] in the Uxelles' *hôtel* or household, an executive position in which he exercised authority over all kitchen activities and purchases. There can be little doubt that more than just professional competence was responsible for this elevation in post. It is fair to assume that the personality of François Pierre played a large part in the respect in which his master held him.

Kitchen Clerk to the Marquis d'Uxelles was no mean position for an untitled bourgeois such as François Pierre to have attained. Louis Chalon du Blé (1619–1658), Marquis d'Uxelles, was in fact one of significant aristocrats in France at a time when the monarchy was determined to restrict the power of the nobility quite severely.[6] He belonged to one of the first families of Burgundy and bore titles to estates in several localities around modern-day Chalon-sur-Saône: Marquis d'Uxelles, Baron of Cormatin, Lord of Buxy and of Tenarre. His wife, Marie de Bailleul (1626–1712) whom he married in 1645 several years after La Varenne began working for him, was an exceptionally refined, social, beautiful and literate person and undoubtedly exercised a strong influence upon the household of this military man.[7] For several generations by royal appointment the civil function of Lieutenant General of Burgundy had been

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[5] La Varenne's title was *écuyer de cuisine*. Properly and originally an *escuyer* was a military term, identifying a warrior's "shield-bearer". By the seventeenth century, however, the sense of the word was no longer the English literal equivalent "squire" but rather "attendant" or "superintendent" (*préposé* in modern French). In his *Dictionarie of the French and English Tongues* (London, 1611) Cotgrave glosses the title *escuyer de cuisine* as "the clarke of a kitchin". That is how the contemporary English translator, I. D. G., handles La Varenne's qualifications on his own title page: "Monsieur De La Varenne, Clerk of the Kitchin to the Lord Marquesse of Uxelles" (see section D. ii (a), below).

[6] A very detailed biography of the Du Blé family as lords of Uxelles, and of Louis Chalon du Blé in particular, was established by Gabriel Jeanton and Jean Martin in "Le château d'Uxelles et ses seigneurs," *Annales de l'Académie de Mâcon. Société des arts, sciences, belles-lettres, agriculture et encouragement au bien de Saône-et-Loire*, 3rd series, vol. 12 (Mâcon: Protat, 1907), 157–392; the life of Louis Chalon is at pp. 291–298. In La Varenne's dedication of the *Cuisinier françois* his patron's name is typeset as "Messire Louis Chaalon du Bled". The family was native of a Mâconnais hamlet called Ublé: *villa Oblato* (canton of Cluny).

[7] Her father, Nicolas de Bailleul, was an outstanding figure in the capital himself: "Baron de Chaâteau Gontier, seigneur de Valtot, Soisy et Etiolles, il fut successivement conseiller au Parlement de Paris, maître des requestes, ambassadeur en Savoie, président au grand conseil, lieutenant civil en Paris, prévôt des marchands, chevalier

passed down from heir to heir in the Du Blé (or Du Bled) family, as well as the rank of military Lieutenant General and the position "Bailiff" of the nobility in Burgundy.[8] Locally he was (from 1629 at the age of 10!) appointed Governor of both the city of Chalon and its Citadel. Perhaps the greatest honour that Louis Chalon held was as a member of King Louis XIV's Privy State Council: *Conseiller du Roi*. He was a military man, very largely at the service of his king.[9] He maintained and commanded two regiments, of cavalry and of infantry, at the King's disposition. With them he travelled so constantly that his biography is filled with little more than dates and the places of battles and sieges, of captures and suppressions of revolts.[10] The Marquis d'Uxelles seems rarely to have had the leisure to enjoy his hearth, his family and a good meal at Cormatin.

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de la reine Anne d'Autriche, ministre d'Etat, surintendant des finances" (Jeanton and Martin, *op. cit.*, p. 227). Following the death of her husband in 1658 and that of the first of her two sons at the age of 20 in 1668, the Marquise d'Uxelles became an habituée of the Court in Paris and a close friend of Mme de Sévigné (1626–96). Like De Sévigné she is highly respected for her correspondence. She died 1712.

8 The function of a *bailli* in France was complex and powerful. Cotgrave explains: "*Bailli*. A Bailife (but of much more authoritie than ours) a Magistrat appointed within a Province, or precinct certaine, to execute justice, maintaine the peace, and preserve the people from oppression, vexation, and wrong: To which end he takes notice of treasons committed, false money coyned; robberies, and murthers done; rebellions, or seditions raised; unlawfull, or populer assemblies made; Armes borne, or souldiours levied, without warrant; Protections, or Sanctuaries violated; Pardons, and Charters abused; Faires, markets, freedomes, and other priviledges usurped, or unjustly stood on: He makes proclamations in his owne name; he calls the Ban, and Arriereban; leads those that he raised by it; and appoints th'ordinarie musters of his Province: hee determines Appeales from the sentences of Provosts, and other inferior judges, at Assises, whereof he is the principall Judge; and is thereby held the most proper Judge for Gentlemen, who have ever pretended that their causes must bee decided at Assises; and yet for all this, (and though hee may have a Lieutenant) he is but a Deputie, either unto the king, or unto some lord; every one whereof (unto the Chastellain) hath, or may have, a Bailli within his territories."

9 Louis XIV (1638–1715) was five years old at the death of his father in 1643. During his minority the queen mother, Anne of Austria, was regent but actual power was exercised by her minister, Cardinal Mazarin. Before, as well as during, the period of Louis's personal reign, the military might of France was a primary concern of the state.

10 For instance: 1638, Landrecies and La Capelle; 1639, in Lorraine; 1640, Turin; 1641, Sedan, Bapaume, Catalonia, Perpignan; 1642, Tarragona, Tortosa; 1643, Rosas; 1645, Lillers, Armentières and nine other battles in Picardy; 1646, Orbitello in Tuscany, Piombino, Porto Longone; 1647, Cremona; 1648, Tortosa in Catalo-

To work for such a personage of outstanding authority, power and dignity, who had the intimate confidence of the monarch and his governing council, to enjoy in turn the intimate confidence of that personnage by being assigned responsibility for his personal food service, must surely for François Pierre have represented the summit of all possible honour and glory. His master may not have been in continuous residence either at Cormatin or at the family's *hôtel* in Paris, but the Marquis could afford to ensure that the kitchens in both places had everything that La Varenne could wish for in terms of furnishings, personnel and victuals. Undoubtedly the nature of his master's life and the fact that he was away on campaign so often meant that La Varenne himself must occasionally have accompanied him, spending a good deal of time away from his home kitchens in Paris and in the new castle of Cormatin and having to make do with provisional arrangements and camp kitchens.[11] Working for such a socially and militarily prominent family as of the Marquis and Marquise d'Uxelles gave La Varenne a professional experience that was immeasurably broader than that of a cook who satisfied a more modest or reclusive master.

(ii) Historical circumstances: his daily professional work

François Pierre was almost certainly not of aristocratic birth. He would have been of a respectable bourgeois or middle-class family. As a young man he would have entered into the service of his lord, having perhaps been taken on even at the lowest level as scullery help in the Marquis's kitchen. There, while putting in very long hours scrubbing pots, hauling carcasses, replenishing coal bins, stoking fires and turning spits, he would have had plenty of opportunity to see the various phases of food preparation in a noble kitchen. In particular the work of the specialists, the baker

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nia, Ypres in Flanders, Lens, Furnes; 1649, Paris and Charenton; Valenciennes in Flanders, Cambrai; 1650, Seurre; 1652, Italy and Flanders, Etampes, Paris; 1653, Seurre, Rethel, Mouzon, Sainte-Menehould; 1654, Belfort, Arras, Quesnoy; 1655, Landrecies; 1656, Clermont, Valenciennes, La Capelle, Montmédy, Mardick; 1658, Trèves, Dunes, Gravelines. Louis Chalon du Blé received a mortal wound at this last siege; on his deathbed, on Mazarin's recommendation he was invested with the highest military rank, Marshal of France.

[11] In this regard see the rubric to the Table of Contents of Chapter V in the *Cuisinier françois*: *Table des entrées qui se peuvent faire dans les armées ou en la campagne*.

cum pastry chef, the confectioner, and the cook himself — who, in the Uxelles' establishment, would likely have functioned as the kitchen's butcher as well — would have attracted the young lad's attention. He would have begun his professional apprenticeship by the age of fourteen or sixteen as an assistant to one of those specialists, being promoted over the years as his seniors retired and as he acquired demonstrable understanding and expertise in the various areas.

The summit of the skilled, professional activities in such a kitchen as that of the Marquis d'Uxelles — the "technical" side of food preparation — was represented, as it had been since the late Middle Ages, by the Cook. In the largest households, that of a count, a duke, a queen[12] or a king, a chief cook might perhaps direct the work of several other cooks of lesser standing, as well as the specialized work of the butcher, roaster, sauce-maker, pottage-maker, fruiter and perhaps salad-maker. More modest households, both bourgeois and noble, managed with the services of a single cook. Through long years of hands-on work he had acquired sufficient professional experience to oversee effectively the whole broad range of activities in the kitchen. He ensured that all the kitchen's work progressed efficiently and with deliberate, careful co-ordination. Writing a generation after La Varenne, Audiger indicates that the annual remuneration of a cook in an affluent household should, depending on the cook's abilities and the master's means, by roughly 300 pounds. That amount is the same as should be paid to the master's secretary but is considerably less than the 500 pounds of the chief functionary in the household, the *maistre d'hostel*, although more than the 200 of the almoner or the *sommelier*.[13]

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[12] Some very large houses had separate households, separate staffs, facilities and accounting, for the lord and his lady. Most also distinguished in the kitchen between food for the lord, his family and guests, and food for the staff: a different cook and kitchen staff might be responsible for each. So in 1570 Bartolomeo Scappi was able to boast that he was the personal cook (*cuoco secreto*) of Pope Pius V.

[13] N. Audiger, *La maison reglée* (Amsterdam: Paul Marret, 1697 and 1700; originally published Paris: M. Brunet, 1692 and Paris: Nicolas le Gros, also 1692). See the modern French version of the work in *L'art de la cuisine française au XVIIe siècle* (Paris: Payot, 1995), 451. Interestingly the *Dictionnaire de biographie française* (Paris: Letouzey & Ané), Vol. 4 (1948), Col. 400, notes that Audiger was in Paris about 1660 and *contribua à vulgariser l'emploi des liqueurs, du thé, du café et du chocolat.*

What happened to an old cook? Did the chief merely expire one day, stooped from stirring endless cauldrons, labour-weary, eyes chronically inflamed, coughing from lungs impaired by decades in the fumes of wood and coal fires? In a more affluent French establishment a chief cook had one further rung on to which he might exceptionally be elevated: he could be appointed kitchen steward, *écuyer de cuisine*. At that point in the household hierarchy the kitchen steward had over him only the *maître d'hôtel*, the person responsible to the lord (or to the bourgeois wealthy enough to emulate the estate of a lord) for all the living arrangements of his house.[14] This last august retainer was remunerated at the top of the scale of all a household's employees, at a rate that normally ran about twice the salary of a master cook; the kitchen steward in turn would receive a pay packet somewhere between the other two rates. The dependable provision of good food was very important in a noble French house.

The person exercising the duties of kitchen steward had ultimate responsibility for the good operation of what today we might call the food services in a household. He was in part a book-keeper, maintaining records of the inventory in the larder, knowing in which foodstuffs the estate itself was or was not self-sufficient at every period in the year, knowing which of the various local suppliers were reliable, submitting budgets, seeking approval for expenses for both foodstuffs and kitchen equipment, keeping accounts of all expenditures within his domain, and justifying and rendering those accounts to the steward and the lord's accountant. He recommended new appointments in any of the offices under his jurisdiction. He was in part, too, a food professional, proposing interesting but feasible menus, proposing long-term victualling contracts, verifying the quality of what arrived at the kitchen door, demanding redress from provisioners whenever their goods were inadequate. He worked closely with the household's butler (*bouteiller*), or wine steward, ensuring that good supplies of potables and cooking liquors were on hand. In conjunction with the household's steward he ensured that service of meals to his lord's dining table was proper. In conjunction with both the steward and chief

[14] The *Maître d'hôtel*, almost invariably an aristocrat, was normally in charge of all his master's employed and appointed staff whether they worked with food, minded the stable, maintained living accommodations, watched accounts or kept game on the estate's reserves.

cook he determined any special grand *entremets* that a formal banquet might require.[15]

In short, an *écuyer de cuisine* occupied a middle-executive position. The person appointed to it furnished a vital connection between the lord, his palate, his purse and his kitchen.

Such a position of responsibility was normally reserved for individuals with some claim to gentry. That François Pierre, *dit de la Varenne*, should have been exalted to the rank of Kitchen Clerk to the Marquis d'Uxelles speaks to the high esteem in which both his technical and intellectual abilities were held by his lord. It also says a great deal for the Marquis' respect for La Varenne's personal integrity, to say nothing of his gastronomic taste. At the very least, La Varenne must have been a competent and trustworthy person.

The fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, respectively the end of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance in France, saw the aristocracy and nobility growing markedly in personal wealth — at least relative to the continuing indigence of the peasants who worked their land. In turn this increase in affluence encouraged an expansion in the opulence of lifestyle. In former feudal times an aristocrat earned and retained his position by his martial prowess and his ability to place armed troops at the service of his liege lord. Much of his life was spent away from his estates and the comfort of his hearth and home. With the end of the Hundred Years' War, though, and the sporadic engagements of the Wars of Religion, the aristocrat's domestic arrangements and mode of daily living reflected an increasing affluence. Furthermore French military incursions into Italy had revealed the truly amazing possibilities of craftsmanship and art at the service of wealth. French nobles began to be ashamed that Italians held them to be merely Frankish barbarians.

By the opening of the seventeenth century the aristocracy of France were conceiving ideas of luxury in architecture, furniture, tapestries and artistic accoutrements generally, dress and foods that their forefathers might have thought thoroughly decadent — if not beyond the realm of possibility. To be wealthy no longer meant merely possessing the means

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[15] See Appendix 2 for a contemporary definition of an *entremets*.

to raise and equip companies of knights and foot soldiers but rather being able to give oneself a magnificent style of life, to afford to immerse oneself in the material pleasures of modern life.

In this pursuit of grand pleasure, emulation played then as always an important role. As Kings Louis XIII and Louis XIV secured absolute authority in their kingdom and the role of arbiters of taste in all matters, so their court became the ultimate model for nobles who wished to assume, in small measure, at least the trappings of that authority. In the same way the parading of munificence in the grand style was more important than ever. If the definition of nobilty was manifest wealth, then it was largely through ostentation that each member of the aristocracy could affirm his membership in the class, and by vying to outdo his peers in magnificence that he could claim superior standing within that class.

From the earliest times the dining table has always been a means of demonstrating an exceptional refinement of taste that is directly related to an exceptional social position. Food is one of the basic tributes that a person can pay to his ego. The gift of food is also a highly effective way to impress and flatter a guest; hospitality, the sharing of hearth and board, is remarkably many-dimensioned in its benefits to donor and recipient.

From the end of the Middle Ages onward, the complexity of work in aristocratic kitchens continued to grow. The responsibilities of kitchen personnel multiplied as mounting demands were put on it to create dishes suitable for the ever-swelling grandeur of the master's name. Within the kitchen of an aristocratic household perfection in traditional work was not the only requirement; the grandeur of the master's name could also be enhanced by exceptional creations. The preparation of food for daily meals and banquets in such kitchens became more onerous.

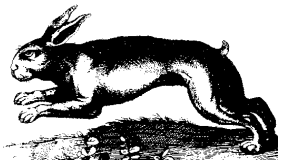
Traditionally the cook's craft was learned orally, by observation and by practice. Apart from what was copied in a few manuscripts, that craft was transmitted by apprenticeship and retained over the generations only in the memories of a succession of cooks. The craft tended to be highly traditional and limited to each individual's personal experience.

The printed book gradually changed that, of course. The printed recipe book might threaten the exclusivity of access the professional master cook enjoyed to an accumulated body of culinary knowledge, oral and idiosyncratic though it might tend to be. But it allowed a professional

cook (and others) to broaden his repertoire and to improve his skills. With a printed recipe book a professional cook had a solid means to be a conventionally good cook.

Such practical talents as culinary skill honed by experience and imagination were not enough, though. In order to succeed at his craft a cook had to possess other qualities than strictly culinary competence. Of those, trustworthiness was perhaps uppermost. The trust that his master might eventually have in him had to be earned, and earned with an incessant effort to allay the suspicions under which eternally cooks have laboured. A household cook had in a real way to identify himself with the fortunes of the house itself. He could, of course, never let the kitchen for which he was responsible imperil the health or well-being of his master or his master's family or guests — even though the risks inherent in food preparation were certainly no less common four centuries ago than today.

He had to cook well, and safely, for his master, but he had an obligation also to do it in a way that was said to be "honourable". By that term was meant that what he did confirmed the lustre of his master's reputation and, if at all possible, exalted it. The good cook had to understand gastronomic taste, not only that of his master but that of his time as well, and of his master's social circle. He had to understand the obligation that bore upon his master to show himself worthy of the social rank he occupied. In providing "honourable" food and meals, the good cook was in a real sense an instrument, often an indispensible instrument, to ensure the enduring grandeur and glory of his master's very name.



B. The Nature of the Three Works

Reflective, perhaps, of François Pierre's hubris, the name of his principal cookbook bears a play on his own name: *Le cuisinier François* — that is, "François's (or Francis's) Cookery Manual" or even "François the Cook". In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries the word *cuisinier* had primarily the meaning of "cookbook" or "cookery manual". The word for "cook" remained still the very old term *queu* or *queux*,[16] although it was gradually being replaced by another word, *cuisinier*, properly an adjective: one would say, *un serviteur cuisinier* or, commonly, with the adjective preceding the noun, *un cuisinier serviteur*. This word order of adjective-noun was normal in French up until the seventeenth century, and even then in ordinary speech remained common in roughly half the cases of a noun qualfied by a single adjective.

By the middle of the sixteenth century, the earliest printed cookbooks, bearing such titles as *Livre de cuysine, Livre fort excellent de cuysine, La Fleur de toute cuysine*, and later *Le grand cuisinier* and *Le grand cuisinier de toute cuisine*, all offered relatively slight variations on much the same contents.[17] To a remarkable extent, all those early cookbooks derived more or less directly from the *Viandier* which in manuscript copies had established itself the French culinary authority and survived for a couple of centuries at the end of the Middle Ages. The word *viandier* itself, a common noun, was in fact the term for a cookbook, until displaced in the Renaissance period by the word *cuisinier*. By the mid-seventeenth century, the use of the word *cuisinier* in the sense of "cookbook" in fact

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[16] This word has nothing to do with a "tail", a feminine word, but derived directly from the Latin for "cook", *coquus*. As final *e*s became mute in standard modern French, the similarity between *queu* and *queue* may have contributed to the demise of the first word.

[17] On the monopolistic reign of these manuals over noble French kitchens right up into the seventeenth century see Philip Hyman and Mary Hyman, "Les livres de cuisine et le commerce des recettes en France aux XVe et XVIe siècles," *Du manuscrit à la table*, ed. Carole Lambert (Montréal and Paris: Université de Montréal and Champion-Slatkine, 1992), 59–68.

was archaic.[18] Semantically it was coming to designate the "person who cooked" rather than a manual on cooking.

Because the qualification *françois* identifies the author and is in fact a proper noun, it should properly be capitalized. Early printers used capital letters throughout the first words of a title, so that the ambiguity between "Francis" and "French" remained entirely possible — as was the identification of adjective and noun in the phrase: "The Cook Francis" or "Francis the Cook," or "Francis's Cookbook". Universally, however, since the time of the book's earlier editions, French printers and bibliographers have used a minuscule on the name, thereby ensuring that *françois* be understood as an adjective. In the *Catalogue général des livres imprimés de la Bibliothèque nationale* every edition of our cookbook, from the very first of P. David, Paris, 1651, is unfortunately lettered *Le Cuisinier françois*.[19] Likewise translators have universally read, and translated, *françois* solely as "French": for instance, *The French Cook*,[20] *Il cuoco francese*,[21] and *Der frantzösische Koch*.[22]

When the *Pastissier françois* was translated the play on the author's name was similarly lost: *The Perfect Cook* and *Der frantzösische Becker* (?).[23]

In every case of the books known to be by François Pierre de La Varenne or attributed to him, we should properly understand: *Francis the Cook* (or, with a slight archaic flair, *Francis's Cookbook*), *Francis the Pastry Chef*, and *Francis the Confectioner*. The author's double pun on his own name is a fine instance of clever hubris.

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[18] See A. Hatzfeld, A. Darmesteter and A. Thomas, *Dictionnaire général de la langue française*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1892–1900; 8th edn., Paris: Delagrave, 1926), 1: 607; and *Trésor de la langue française*, 16 vols. (Paris: Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique; Gallimard, 1971–94), 6: 587b.

[19] Volume 90, column 630. It is curious, however, that the *General Catalogue of Printed Books* of the British Museum (Volume 131, column 650) consistently and correctly shows *Le Cuisinier François*.

[20] London: Charles Adams, 1653; etc.

[21] And not *Francesco*: Bologna: Longhi, [1670?]. Other Italian editions using this name followed in 1695, 1728, etc.

[22] Hamburg, 1665.

[23] London, 1656 and Hamburg, 1665, respectively. Also bound with this latter translation were the German translations *Der frantzösischer Confitirer* and the *Koch* mentioned above. (See later the important *caveat* concerning the *Frantzösische Koch*).

For our titles in this translation we have chosen unboldly to do as everyone else has done.

Each of these three works aims to be exhaustive in the subject area it treats. The first, the largest, deals with general cookery, presenting some 800 recipes intended to guide a professional cook in a wealthy household on the preparation of dishes for various courses in meals served on days that were or were not designated by religious custom as days of so-called fasting. The second assembled all that La Varenne knew about pastry and batter and the wide assortment of dishes they entered into — or at least all that he thought it might be useful to set down for the guidance of a professional cook, such as himself, working in a relatively affluent household. Similarly the third book, the shortest and least attributable to La Varenne, presents a survey of ways in which a number of foodstuffs can be treated with sugar syrups, both to preserve them and to enhance their savour. Appended to this last work is a curious and apparently unrelated little treatise on the folding of table napkins.

(i) *The French Cook*

The dedication printed on the first page of the *Cuisinier françois* makes full use of the impressive list of titles to which La Varenne's master had a right.

> To the High and Mighty Lord, My Lord Louis Chaalon du Bled, Counsellor of the King in his Privy State Councils, Knight of his Orders, Baron of Tenar, Marquis of Uxelles and of Cormartin [*sic*], Field Master of a Regiment of Cavalry maintained in the Service of His Majesty, one of his Lieutenant Governors in Burgundy, Baillif of the Nobility of that Province, Governor of the City and Citadel of Chalon-sur-Saône, and Lieutenant General of his Armies, etc.[24] My Lord, although my condition does not endow me with the capacity for a heroic heart, it does nevertheless

[24] *A haut et puissant seigneur Messire Louis Chaalon du Bled, Conseiller du Roy en ses Conseils d'Estat & Privé, Chevalier de ses Ordres, Baron de Tenar, Marquis d'Uxelles & de Cormartin, Mestre de Camp d'un Regiment d'Infanterie entretenu pour le service de Sa Majesté, l'un de ses Lieutenans generaux en Bourgongne, Bailly de la Noblesse en ladite Province, Gouverneur des Ville & Citadelle de Chaalons sur Saone; & Lieutenant general de ses Armées, &c.* If he was involved in the proof-reading of his dedicatory epistle La Varenne seems not to have noticed the error of the second *r* of Cormatin. A later printer further misread the first syllable of

give me enough sensitivity not to forget my duty. During my employment over ten full years in your household I have found the secret of preparing foods finely.[25] I dare say that I have exercised my profession with the strong approval of Princes, Marshals of France, and countless persons of quality who have highly esteemed your Table both in Paris and in the field,[26] where you have compelled Fortune to accord to your virtue Offices worthy of your Courage. It seems to me that the public ought to benefit from my experience, so that it might owe to you all of the usefulness it will derive from it. I have, therefore, set out in writing what I have for so long practised in the honour of your service, and of this have made a little Book which bears the title of Clerk of your Kitchen. But, given that what it contains is but a Lesson which the desire to please you has taught me, it seemed to me that it ought to be honoured by your Name; and that, without sinning against my duty, I could seek for it no stronger support that yours. This is but a token of the ardour that I have always rendered, and shall all my life render, to your service.

For that reason, My Lord, I beg you to call upon your customary generosity: do not despise this book, though it may be unworthy of you. Bear in mind that it is a depository of the sauces whose flavours have pleased you from time to time; and that, all told, it is the life's handiwork of him who will be, all his life, My Lord, Your most humble, most obedient and most grateful Servant, François Pierre, *called* La Varenne.

Both the author and the publisher affixed prefaces to the *Cuisinier françois*. First La Varenne spoke to his reader, this person clearly being conceived to be a member of the confrerie within the profession.

Dear Reader:[27]

I thought it proper in all modesty to provide you with some idea of the purpose and use of this Book, whose author I am. My purpose is neither to shock nor offend anyone, although I have no doubt that certain malevolent or envious individuals will talk

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the placename and thereafter *Caumartin* was typeset. See also I. D. G.'s translation of this dedication which I have reproduced below in the Bibliography, D (ii) (a).

25 Cotgrave: "*Délicatement*. Neatly and daintily"

26 *& dans les Armées*.

27 *Amy Lecteur.*

immoderately about it. Rather the book's purpose is to provide help and service to any who may need it, of whom some, lacking experience or a ready memory, are unwilling or too timid to become involved in learning what they do not know, partly out of pride and partly too for some other reason. Some of them think they demean themselves by getting advice in a matter that they ought perhaps to be knowledgeable; others, being unfamiliar with any persons who might instruct them, are ashamed to approach them empty-handed, their sometimes poorly-lined purse leaving them without the means to express their gratitude. That is why, holding as I do my fellows in the profession in particular affection, I have deemed that I owe it to them to set forth what little I know about it, and to deliver them from their embarrassment.

To facilitate the use of this material, I have arranged it for you in four courses;[28] at the head of each one you will find a Table of its contents and then the text afterwards.[29] I have divided them according to the various sorts of meals that are made for meat days and lean days, during Lent, and particularly on Good Friday.

I have added many other things of a general sort, whose Tables and texts you will see. Into it all I have stirred a Table on ways to make Pastries, depending on the time of year, and other little household hints, useful for anyone. Should you find some items in a Table that are not in the text, do not blame me: I have not forgotten them — rather they are simply too commonplace, and I have put them into the Table merely as a reminder.

Finally, dear Reader, in recompense all that I would ask of you is that my book be for you as pleasurable as it is useful.

Following this very modest preface a certain Guitonneau receives a page on which it is declared that Pierre David, *Marchand Libraire à Paris*, has been granted the royal privilege of printing *Le Cuisinier françois* of *le sieur de la Varenne, Escuyer de Cuisine de Monsieur le Marquis d'Uxelles*, along with what amounted to copyright on the book's

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[28] *quatre services*: "four services". See below the comment on La Varenne's servings or courses.

[29] The various Tables that precede the recipes proper in each chapter have been done away with in this translation. The recipe names of all three books can be found in alphabetical arrangement in the Appendices, below.

publication for a period of ten years. That priviledge is dated 17 July 1651.

La Varenne's publisher, Pierre David, does not pass up the chance to insert preface of his own. This amounts to a relatively long screed, the modern equivalent of which, though much abbreviated because of space, would appear on the back of a book's dust jacket.

> Dear Reader,
> Though this book, whose subject and title may seem novel in Paris, nothing similar ever having yet been printed here, you will nevertheless, I think, not find it entirely fruitless. Many have been seen and well received that have dealt with remedies and cures for illnesses, cheaply had and without having to turn to pharmacists, such as *The Charitable Doctor*,[30] and the like. But this book, which aims only at keeping and maintaining a good, well-balanced state of health, to teaching how to correct the vicious nature of foodstuffs by means of various opposite seasonings; which tends, I say, only to give a man food that is solid and well prepared and answers his appetite — this latter being in many the determining factor of their life and fitness — should not, it seems to me, be considered any the less since it is much more pleasant to put out decent, reasonable funds according to one's means for ragouts and food delicacies in order to preserve life and health than to use up enormous sums on drugs, herbal remedies, medicines and other bothersome cures in order to recover them.
>
> So I was resolved, after many appeals from my friends, to publish it, and to do so in this great city which accepts everything, rejects nothing and where what is unavailing to some is useful to others. In his Preface its author has set out the usefulness and benefit it can furnish you. I shall make bold to enlarge upon that by saying that not only is the book useful but, further, it is necessary, in that its author, not content with explaining

[30] Philibert Guybert, *Le Médecin charitable* was first published by Gui Patin in Paris, 1625 and remained in strong demand: its twelfth edition is dated 1627 and it was reprinted until 1680. Henri-Jean Martin (*Livre, pouvoirs et société à Paris au XVIIe siècle*, Geneva: Droz, 1969, p. 233) attributes the exceptional success of this book, and other ones similarly devoted to popular, do-it-yourself alternative medicine, to a widespread suspicion that professional pharmacists had "sacrified too much to the gods of chemistry."

the finest, most refined ways of preparing dishes, pastries and other things that are served on the tables of the Great, gives you instructions on the most common and ordinary things that are handled in household food, that represent only a controlled, moderate expense, and in whose preparation many people sin by intemperance or by frugality. He teaches you how to handle a thousand sorts of vegetables and other foodstuffs that are found in abundance in the country, where most people are ignorant of how to dress them decently and satisfyingly. Therefore it will be seen that I was fully justified in rendering this service to the public, for not only its refinement but its needfulness.

To that may be added that our France, among all the world's nations, first in honour, in civility, in courtliness, in propriety in all sorts of relations, is not any less esteemed for her decent, refined style of living. And the City of Paris is eminently in first place above all the provinces in the Kingdom, of which she is the metropolitan centre, the capital and the seat of our Kings. Undeniably her subordinates will form the same admiration as she does for it. And that gives me hope that, offering her these first-fruits, she will welcome them and the provinces likewise after her. Following that, the other nations may well be bitten by the desire to fall into line with that one which, excelling in every one of life's events, must surely know how to keep it happy and peaceful by the use of those things that maintain it and make it endure.

I can assure you that for my part I have applied all imaginable care to present it to its best advantage and to enhance a little its subject, which may perhaps seem to a few critics quite unworthy of serious treatment. But the more judicious readers may well think otherwise, and consider that all books, both ancient and modern, being primarily for the nourishing of the mind, it was entirely reasonable that the human body, without whose good condition the mind cannot function well, should be represented among them, and principally concerning something so necessary for its conservation.

Enjoy it then, Dear Reader, while I turn my attention to publishing for you something worthy of your more lofty and substantial study.

The *French Cook* presents a broad survey of its author's culinary reper-

toire. The heterogeneous nature of the body of recipes that such a seventeenth-century professional cook was master of demanded some system of organization if he were ever to take them from his memory and write them down. The principle that La Varenne chose for his life's masterwork derived from a major element in his work as kitchen clerk to the Marquis d'Uxelles, his regular responsibility to determining interesting and varied menus for his master's meals. As he tells his reader in his preface, the recipes have been arranged according to the courses of a meal and according to the succession of those courses.

Such an organization of culinary recipes is by no means novel in a cookbook. Late-medieval collections tended to prefer to group dishes according either to principal foodstuff being prepared or to the nature of the finished dish.[31] An alternative procedure was alphabetical.[32] By the fifteenth century, however, to provide the structural outline for his cookery manual Maître Chiquart made use of four archetypal meals: dinners and suppers for meat days and fast (lean) days.[33] In each section of his work the choice of dishes for which his recipes are given follows the accepted progress of the particular meal in question. To all those recipes he appended a standard subsidiary section of food recipes for the sick or invalid. In sixteenth-century Italy Bartolomeo Scappi divides the cookery portion of his *Opera*[34] into chapters on meats and fowl, fish and pastry; in Part Four of his work he indicates summarily the generic preparations that might appropriately compose a meal on various days throughout an ecclesiastical year.

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[31] Such remains the basic organization in the various avatars and titles under which the *Viandier* was still read in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. See some of these works in Section D. (III), below.

[32] This arrangement might appeal to the reader, perhaps a more experienced member of the cookery profession, who might wish to consult a recipe collection in order to jog his memory about a particular dish. An instance of an alphabetical ordering of recipes can be seen in the so-called *Libro per cuoco*, the extant manuscript of which dates from the end of the fifteenth century although the material is older, ed. Ludovico Frati, *Libro di cucina del secolo XIV* (Livorno, 1899); and Emilio Faccioli, *Arte della cucina*, 2 vols. (Milan: Il Polifilo, 1966), I, 61–105.

[33] "*Du fait de cuisine* par Maistre Chiquart 1420," edited by Terence Scully and published in the periodical of the Archives du Valais, Switzerland, *Vallesia*, 40 (Sion, 1985), pp. 101–231.

[34] Bartolomeo Scappi, *Opera* (Venice: Michele Tramezino, 1570).

Several advantages of each variety of structure are evident: there is some sort of recognizable logic behind it which will assist in its composition and in the consultation of it; for the author there are fewer chances of overlooking a dish or procedure; for the reader seeking details of a specific recipe he has a better initial idea of where to find it. In the case specifically of the "meal" outline, used by Chiquart and chosen by La Varenne, a further advantage is offered to a reader. If he is uncertain about the name or (perhaps even) the fundamental nature of a dish, or (most importantly) if he wishes to survey the possible options for any given course in any given day's meal, a work organized in such a way is more immediately useful.

La Varenne's major subdivisions for his recipes are three in number: dishes for meat days, those for lean days and those for Lent. For each sort of meal he clearly conceives four courses, without actually naming them. Among *The French Cook*'s thirty-one divisions,[35] we can readily identify the four courses set out in three distinct series as follows:

– for serving on meat days: Pottages (Chapters III and IV), Entrées (Chapter V), the Second Course (roasts, Chapter VI), Entremets (Chapter VIII);

– for serving on lean days: Pottages (Chapter XV), Entrées (Chapters XVI and XVII), the Second Course (Chapter XVIII), Entremets (Chapter XIX);

– for serving during Lent: Pottages (Chapter XXV), Entrées (Chapter XXVI), the Second Course (Chapter XXVII), Entremets (Chapter XXVIII).

There are, furthermore, two chapters devoted to dishes appropriate for serving in two courses on Good Friday: Pottages (Chapter XXIX), Entrées (Chapter XXX). Missing from the dining table on Good Friday were the third and fourth servings — that is, a Second Course and an Entremets.

The organization of this collection of recipes and bits of culinary advice is clear and apparently complete. However, what curiously is

[35] I call them chapters although La Varenne does not designate them as such. The term he uses to refer to each section of recipes in his book is *discours*. He does not number them, either, which I have done (with Roman numerals) in order to make reference to each of them easier.

missing in *The French Cook* is any distinction between "dinner" and "supper".[36] Nowhere does La Varenne identify a meal or a dish that might be suitable for one or the other of these daily meals. In only one place does he refer to either.[37]

Clearly an important role was played in a cook's menus by the Christian identification of days on which the faithful should "fast" or abstain from certain sorts of food. These lean or fish days, as opposed to fat or meat days, were generally three in every week of the year: Wednesdays, Fridays and Saturdays. The whole period of Lent, the forty days preceding Easter, was likewise designated as a penitential time during which only lean foods could be eaten. A cook in a Christian house accepted the obligation — more or less strict depending on the devoutness of his master or mistress — always to have a gastronomically interesting assortment of dishes available for those many days of the year on which red meat and animal oils (along with fowl and eggs in some places) were taboo.[38] Frequently, as in the *French Cook*, the clever cook could have recourse to pairs of possible dishes in his repertoire: for a particular dish one version would consist of a set of ingredients for meat days while the other version would substitute a variation of the set suitable for lean days. Throughout medieval and modern times the competent cook preparing food in a Christian milieu had religious strictures as part of a range of restrictions governing what he might like to do.

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[36] Furetière distinguishes clearly between the two meals: "*Disner. Repas qu'on prend vers le milieu du jour. Souper. Repas du soir*." Antoine Furetière, *Dictionaire universel* (La Haye and Rotterdam: Leers, 1690). His illustration of the latter gloss suggests that the late-seventeenth-century *souper* was relatively substantial: "*Ce n'est pas un souper par ordre, ce n'est qu'une collation*." Richelet comments: "Congregations, communities and religious houses sup at six o'clock, but Parisian bourgeois rarely sup before eight or nine; at court they sup even later." Pierre Richelet, *Dictionnaire françois* (Geneva: Widerhold, 1680; repr. Geneva: Slatkine, 1970).

[37] In Recipe V,69 of the *Cuisinier françois* he directs that a piglet be mounted on a spit for roasting *une heure & demye avant diner*. The word *diner* in this case may well be verbal: "an hour and a half before eating." In any case contemporary dictionaries state that in proper usage the verb *dîner* means "*manger du bouilli & autre viande sur le milieu du jour*" (Richelet).

[38] For instance *The French Pastry Chef* describes three types of Pastry Chef's Cream, normally made with milk and eggs; in the third variety — Recipe IV,3, for *Lenten Cream* — the eggs are replaced by butter and saffron.

Besides the recipes for courses in meals throughout the year, *The French Cook* incorporates a wide variety of subsidiary material organized in chapters that are inserted at places that must have seemed reasonable either to La Varenne or to his publisher, Pierre David. This latter, in his preface To the Reader, claims for himself some credit for having imposed a degree of order in the author's subject matter. Since La Varenne identifies the essential organizing principle of his recipes as being the four courses prepared for several types of day in the week and the year, we can classify the other material as ancillary or merely secondary.

Of the chapters devoted to such accessory preparations, two describe the making of bouillons, for meat-day pottages (Chapter II) and for Lenten pottages (Chapter XXIV) and several others deal with thickeners, stocks and garnishes (for meat-day preparations, Chapters X, XI, XII). A brief mention of meat stocks suitable for the sick or sickly (Chapter XIII) is a particular extension of the same general sort of material, and a pale survivor of the quite extensive assortment of dishes that could be prepared for the sick or convalescent according to medieval recipe collections. One further chapter is concerned exclusively with sauces (Chapter VII), although again there are surprisingly few of them here, the chapter's rubric confirming this by stating, "A Few Sauces." Two sections (Chapters XX and XXII) group listing of local produce and the use of roots, herbs and suchlike.

Three chapters deal with the practical concerns of the availability of foodstuffs, particularly meats: when various animals and fowl are "in season" (Chapter 1); how to preserve a few general-purpose foodstuffs (Chapter XXIII, on artichokes, beef palates, butter and so forth); and how to prepare one traditionally important foodstuff for keeping (Chapter IX, on ham).

La Varenne's assortment of subject matter for his *Cuisinier françois* is in a sense supplemented and completed by chapters of recipes falling into two significant areas: pastry preparations (for meat days, Chapter XIV; for lean days, Chapter XXI), and the appended chapter on Confections.[39]

[39] That chapter on confections appears originally in the second edition (1652) of the *Cuisinier*. The *Table Générale* which concludes the book is in three separately alphabetised segments: *Viandes grasses* (dishes, including pastries, for meat days), *Viandes maigres* (lean dishes, including pastries, egg and vegetable preparations), and *Confitures*.

Those are significant components in his work in part because of the amount of space given over to each (respectively seventy-seven and thirty-one recipes), and in even larger measure because entire books in French will be devoted to each subject a few years after the appearance of the *Cuisinier françois*. There is, furthermore, an extensive and close overlapping of those recipes in the three chapters with those in the *Pastissier françois* and the *Confiturier françois*. La Varenne is believed to be the author of the first of these subsequent books; given the parallels with material in the second, he is almost certainly either the author of or the inspiration for the second — or, alternatively, a plagiarist of it while it was as yet unpublished. Since we offer translations of the other two books as well as the three chapters in question in the *French Cook*, the reader may decide which is the most likely explanation.

In looking at such a question what should be borne in mind is that among the professional cooks of La Varenne's day — to say nothing of before or after his time — traditional and conventional practice had a lot to do with the forming of a useful repertoire. Among those professional cooks working for wealthy bourgeois households or the aristocracy right across France in 1650 a large number of pies and tarts, tourtes and flans, fruit conserves and marzipans were prepared in identical fashion, with or without reference to a written recipe. As La Varenne says in the preface to his "Dear Reader," he is writing in order to help colleagues whose memory may not be wholly dependable but who have no close professional mentors to whom they can turn without embarrassment for help. The book will serve as a "memory-jogger" — *pour en faire souvenir*, he says. He implies that there exists a large body of standard culinary processes and preparations, though often these have many possible variations and substitutions. Experience is the most dependable teacher, but there are times when those with more experience can offer to help others who run into the odd difficulty in their work. These others are "the fellow practitioners of my profession" whom he holds "in particular affection." Apparent in this work is not only the pride that La Varenne has in his own highly competent abilities as a professional cook but his deep devotion to the profession itself and respect for those colleagues of his who also want to do their best by their exacting profession.

The publisher's preface "To the Reader" is longer than the author's. It is also less modest and, understandably, much more hortative, an almost

breathless spiel of a salesman who is set on laying out the irresistible benefits of his wares. His sales pitch for the *Cuisinier françois* invokes a number of themes: the scientific basis of the subject matter, national jingoism, Parisian hubris, above all a defence of cookery as a subject worth *his* attention (as a publisher) and therefore worthy in turn of the Dear Reader's attention. The arguments he presents are worthy of at least a little of our attention.

The publisher assimilates food to medicine. Since the earliest Greek treatises on medical theory down to early modern Europe such an assimilation had been customary. Because Greek, Arabic and medieval medicine considered an individual's good health to be a matter of not disturbing a natural physiological equilibrium, which "dis-ease" would lead to a state of bad health, a physician's primary concern, and usually greater success, lay with maintaining good health rather than with curing sickness. In medicine questions of regimen always included considerations of food and its preparation. Although La Varenne's publisher may initially apologize for the novelty of his handling such a mean thing as a lowly cookbook, he immediately argues that food, after all, is a sort of medicine, and a relatively cheap one at that. It should, therefore, be to everyone's interest to have such a book at hand for home consultation and to keep the money-grubbing druggists at bay.

It is further remarkable that the publisher is still familiar with the argument that was a foundation of much medieval cookery, that most foodstuffs were unsuitable for human consumption unless and until they were treated in ways — by cooking, by combining with other foodstuffs, or by skillful saucing — designed to correct their harmful humoral natures. As an argument to sell a cookbook to a home market, it is admirably clever. Furthermore it appeals to the seventeenth-century French affection for logic and utility.

The author, Pierre David goes on to say, can offer you more than just good, wholesome food. With his many recipes he can explain how to go about preparing the latest, most fashionable dishes. And he can show you how to do it economically, with neither parsimony nor waste. Again, the information in this book is *practical* and *useful*.

Then, having already mentioned the contemporary Paris book scene, the publisher launches into what he may have felt was his clinching argument. It appeals directly to the potential buyer's national pride. By any

measure, but particularly intellectual and civil, France is the admired centre of the world; Paris is the undisputed centre of France, in part because it dares to examine new things; *ergo* this book is going to participate in all that is boldly innovative and admired in Paris and in France. The alert reader should not be hesitant: it may be assumed — "hoped" is the term Pierre David uses — that any book published in Paris will inevitably make its way and have influence not only out in the provinces but throughout the civilised world as well.

His curious last sentence seems to undermine much of the solidity Pierre David has just claimed for La Varenne's book. Pierre David may have realized that he had a reputation to uphold. He was unwilling to put it wholly at risk for the sake of a provincial cook who, when all was said and done, wouldn't really be likely to persuade those Parisians with spare cash to part with much of it.

Pierre David, and La Varenne himself too, may have been surprised at the success of the *Cuisinier françois*. Like the *Viandier* some three centuries before it, it became a best-seller of its age. Because of the numerous editions that various publishers produced of it over the succeeding century — there were something like forty-eight French editions during that time, an average of one every other year! — the name La Varenne became synonymous with proper cookery, a sort of Bible for French kitchen clerks and cooks. Neither the author nor the original publisher could have hoped for a better reception.

(ii) *The French Pastry Chef*

Pastry had been an integral part of French cookery since the earliest times. In the late Middle Ages, though, when French cooks made up dough for a pie or flan it was of a very heavy consistency, a plain, glutinous mixture of flour and water similar to school-room glue-paste today. This pastry dough was used as a container for the filling rather than as an edible part of the preparation. Its primary function was to hold a foodstuff, whether that was a large solid such as a fish or a moderately viscous mixture of smaller particles, while that foodstuff was cooking in an oven; only incidentally was some flavour of the pastry shell imparted to the filling.

The same thick dough is still occasionally called for in La Varenne's day, one and two inches thick around a standing pie; but over the years

pastry-making had developed in the direction of refinement and delicacy, essentially toward edibility. The making of a so-called "fine" or "fat" pastry,[40] that usually depended upon butter for its characteristic nature, and thin "leaved" or flaky pastry that entailed the inter-layering of dough and butter, were by then, too, relatively common practices in the craft. The batter genres of the waffles and fritters, known and described in the Middle Ages, had also developed a little in the direction of lightness.

Traditionally, pastry- and bread-making were distinct trades. In 1420 the chief cook of the Duke of Savoy stipulated that, ideally, "fine, large" pastry quarters, containing two "fine, large" ovens, should be set up as close as possible to the kitchen. From this domain of the pastry chef would issue "meat and fish pies, tarts, flans and talmouses, ratons and everything else that cookery needs."[41] Whether a household engaged the services of a pastry specialist, though, and granted him space in which to produce his pies and flans depended largely upon the relative size, wealth and gastronomic interest of that household. The author of the *The French Cook* assumes that his reader may well occupy the same modest sort of situation as he himself apparently did, where the cook had to be his own pastry chef and was required to direct the making of any dish that involved a dough or a batter. Two of that work's chapters (XIV and XXI) deal expressly with varieties of pastry and batter preparations.

The book entitled *Le Pastissier françois* (Paris: J. Gaillard, 1653) is devoted primarily to the making of pastry dishes. In the preface to the reader printed by Jean Gaillard at the head of the book, much the same arguments are made for the *Pastissier* as for the *Cuisinier*: the book

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[40] *Paste fine* or *paste grasse*. See the *Cuisinier françois*, Recipe XXI,0, where fine dough calls for a combination of flour and butter in a ratio of eight to three (with water), and Recipe XIV,37; and the *Pastissier françois*, Recipe I,2. In Recipe VII,4 of the latter work the reader is advised that with a half-bushel of flour two pounds of butter will produce a fine dough, and that for a very fine dough the amount of butter should be raised to between two and a half and three pounds. Dough for a frangipane pie is made with egg whites and is thin enough to be transparent.

[41] *. . . pastelz de chars et de poissons, tartres, flons et talmoses, ratons et toutes autres chouses que sunt necessaires pour le fait de la cuisine.* The most detailed cookery manual of the late Middle Ages is the *Du fait de cuisine* by Maître Chiquart (ed. cit.); the passage quoted is on p. 136. This work is translated as *Chiquart's "On Cookery." A Fifteenth-Century Savoyard Culinary Treatise* (New York: Peter Lang, 1986).

presents French usage (and should be therefore of consuming interest to foreigners), the book's contents are wholly novel, of easy, practical and inexpensive utility, and promote good health.[42] Of these arguments for the reader's attention the most significant one from an historical point of view is that which makes the claim of novelty for the subject matter. As we have seen, La Varenne writes of pastry-making and pastry dishes, covering the topic to the extent that such coverage was required by his general outline of dishes for various sorts of meals. In essence *The French Cook* does little more or less than medieval French authors and their subsequent adaptors and printers had done with regard to pies and tourtes. He transmitted recipes for the normal, "everyday," useful pastry preparations that should be in every professional cook's repertoire. However, the writer of the preface to *The French Pastry Chef* laments the widespread ignorance of pastry-making in his society, blaming a determined effort on the part of what he calls court cooks in Paris to stifle knowledge about the art. *The French Pastry Chef* is an original undertaking in its aim to give a broad and detailed exposition solely of the craft of pastry-making. As with *The French Cook* much of the contemporary success of the book must also have been due to the clarity of its instructions.

Of further inherent interest is the author's plan to encompass as many genres of pasty as possible, including those that, in the daily work of an ordinary cook, might occupy only a very secondary place. The baked goods presented in the treatise range from the standard pies and tourtes to waffles, fritters and biscuits through to macaroon and marzipan. The traditional old preparations of flans, rattoons, darioles and talmouses, presented in fourteenth- and fifteenth-century texts, are examined but the contemporary cook (or pastry chef) can also find explanations of newer sorts of pasties: the feuillantine, the *flamiche*, the *poupelain*. Matters apparently of secondary importance but of just as great concern for a pastry

[42] The publisher's confidence in the usefulness of the book was not hyperbole. In "Imprimer la cuisine: les livres de cuisine en France entre le XVe et le XIXe siècle" (*Histoire de l'alimentation*, ed. Jean-Louis Flandrin and Massimo Montanari, Paris: Fayard, 1996, 650; in English, *Food. A Culinary History from Antiquity to the Present*, New York: Columbia, 1999, 307) Philip and Mary Hyman consider that *Le Pastissier françois* was the only book devoted solely to pastry published in France between the middle of the seventeenth century and the end of the eighteenth. See a contemporary English version of this preface "The French Epistle to the Reader, Translated," which we reproduce in the Bibliography, (ii) (a), below.

chef are treated as fundamentals preliminary to the main subject and with the same care as the survey of pastry genres: pastry chefs' spice mixtures (Chapter II), pastry chefs' gilding (Chapter III), pastry chef's cream (Chapter IV).

A *gasteau* is not really a modern cake. The *Pastry Chef*'s *gasteau* (Chapter XV) is, however, recognizable in the etymological, generic sense of the word "cake": something caked.[43] It is a traditional sort of bread which, prepared variously with fine flour, butter, eggs, cream and cheese, warrants the qualification found in several of the recipes, *mollet* or "soft".

The compilation of the comprehensive index at the book's end would also very likely have enhanced the book's appeal for a contemporary reader, whether he was professional or lay, from a noble or bourgeois house.

Two features of the work may be of interest to a modern reader. In a brief outline of weights and measures the author advises the contemporary reader about the values that are intended for particular units found in those pages (Chapter VI). Remarkably, too, the author appends to his work a final six chapters of recipes for egg dishes (Chapters XXIX–XXXIV).

(iii) *The French Confectioner*

While the *Pastissier françois* is unique in being the first book to be devoted wholly to the making of baked pastry goods, the *Confiturier françois* takes its place in a short line of works that had already presented the craft of using sugar and honey to candy and preserve foodstuffs. Any claims to originality that might be made for the book would be that it is among the first *French* works to deal exclusively and broadly with this subject.[44] In Italy, Magninus Mediolanensis (d. *c.* 1364) had composed a

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[43] See the note at the beginning of Chapter XV in *The French Pastry Chef*.

[44] At the end of the Middle Ages a number of paragraphs here and there in the *Menagier de Paris* show that candying fruits and nuts was a relatively common practice. In the category of a monograph on confectionery, the *Confiturier françois* has only one known antecedent in French: as a relatively brief treatise on the same topic, called *Le Confiturier de la cour*, the work was incorporated by Pierre David into his *Le Maistre d'hostel* in 1659. This treatise underwent some revision before appearing independently from the press of Jean Gaillard the following year as our *Confiturier françois*. Abroad Michael Nostradamus had published his *Vray et parfaict embellissement de la face . . . & la façon et maniere de faire toutes confitures* (Antwerp:

chapter for his *Regimen sanitatis* which was given over to the practice of candying: *De confectionibus*.[45] In the fifteenth century Platina still sang the praises of foods candied with honey or sugar: "Summer honey," he wrote, " does not allow bodies to decay, is considered best in preserving apples, gourds, citron, and nuts, and creates mouth-watering appeal in many foods" (II, 14); "No kind of food is made more tasteless by adding sugar. By melting it, we make almonds (softened and cleaned in water), pine nuts, hazelnuts, coriander, anise, cinnamon, and many other things into sweets. The quality of sugar then almost crosses over into the qualities of those things to which it clings in the preparation" (II, 15). In Spain, most immediately influenced by the Moorish use of sugar and long a home of candied fruits, nuts and vegetables, the fifteenth-century *Libre de totes maneres de confits* affords a fine survey of the possibilities developed by Catalan confectioners.[46] The craft of confectionery may not have lapsed wholly in France, but considering the production of printed texts that craft was no more vigorously alive than other branches of food preparation.

Of the three manuals translated here, whose origins all date within the same decade of the 1650s and which have at one time or another been attributed to La Varenne, the *Confiturier françois* is the one where serious doubts have been raised about its authorship. According to Vicaire,[47] however, the 1667 edition of this work bears a *privilege* which grants

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Christophe Plantin, 1557; repr. Paris: Gutemberg-Reprint, 1979). In 1667 a *Parfaict confiturier* appeared (Paris: Jean Ribou) which Philip and Mary Hyman attribute to La Varenne : "Imprimer la cuisine: les livres de cuisine en France entre le XVe et le XIXe siècle," *Histoire de l'alimentation*, ed. Flandrin and Montanari, 655; in the English translation, 401.

[45] Part 2, Chapter 3, Paragraph 26. *Sciendum . . . que meliores confectiones que sunt in usu, et magis delectabiles, sunt hec: zinziber conditum, zinzibriatum cum zuccara vel cum melle, et pineatum, et pisticatum, et avelane condite, et anisum conditum, et coriandrum conditum, et dragea grossa, et dragea in tabula, et zuccarum rosatum in tabula, et dyaciminum, et confectio que nominatur marcepen* [marzipan], *et nuces confecte cum zuccara vel cum melle, et avelane condite cum zuccara, et dactili.* The *Regimen* was one of the first medieval works to be printed, in Louvain by Johannes de Westfalia in 1482; it was reprinted at least three times even before the end of that century.

[46] Luis Farraudo de Saint-Germain, "Un tratado manual cuatrocentista de arte de dulcería," *Boletín de la Academia de Buenas Letras de Barcelona*, 19 (1946), 97–134.

[47] Georges Vicaire, *Bibliographie gastronomique* (Paris: Rougette, 1890; repr. Geneva: Slatkine, 1993).

permission to the Parisian printer Jean Ribou to publish *Le parfaict confiturier françois* composed by *le sieur de La Varenne*.[48] There are only very tenuous grounds for suggesting that the book ever had anything at all to do with La Varenne.

Several peculiarities mark the introductory matter of the *Confiturier françois*. The dedication at the head of the book is directed to a certain Monsieur de Maridat, Junior, a person for whose father the writer (the author? printer? publisher?) expresses a great deal of respect and devotion. Nowhere in any edition other than the 1667 one, on the title page or in a preface or dedication, does the name La Varenne appear, as it did several times in the *Cuisinier*. The dedication in the *Confiturier* is in fact modestly signed with the initials *I. G.*. Furthermore the prose style of this prefatory material is exceptionally elegant, rhythmical, Latinate and scholarly, quite unlike what either La Varenne or Pierre David had written in the *Cuisinier*. In its three paragraphs it contains textual quotations of no fewer than four Latin passages identified by the learned I. G. as from Virgil, Horace and Solomon.

TO MONSIEUR DE MARIDAT, THE SON

Sir,

The person bearing confections is always welcome with children. But when I consider that you have never been a child, and that your bent as well as your merit have always outstripped your age, I have reason to fear that you may well blame me for daring to offer you so slight a thing. Nevertheless you know that in times past God promised His people a land of milk and honey (in those days confections weren't yet made with sugar). You know also that Virgil, pointing toward a happy age, used to say,

Et duræ quercus laudabunt roseida mella.

So I could say that presenting you my *Confectioner* is not to deal with you as a child, and that the sweetness of your good nature invited me to give you the sweetest goods that could come

[48] This attribution may very well have been a publisher's ploy to capitalize on a name that had acquired a relative celebrity and that had proven its consistent ability to sell other books on cookery. Without hesitation, perhaps on the authority of Vicaire, the *National Union Catalog* (Volume 319, page 9 c) attributes this work to La Varenne, François Pierre de. Another edition of the *Confiturier*, printed by Jean Gaillard in Paris, is of disputable date: the title page clearly shows M.DC.L (1650), though some bibliographers believe that this must be in error for M.DC.LX (1660).

from my shop. I gladly admit that, having nothing better at the moment, I ought to put it off until I had something worthy of you, were it not that, unable to hope for anything becoming your worth, I thought I should hasten to achieve at least the advantage of being the first to dedicate a book to you. I have no doubt that the day your ability becomes known authors will seek you out to become their patron and you will be offered the finest things in this field, continuing to hold for your person the same respect and esteem as they bear for your Father. Then I shall be satisfied to see your virtue recognized as it ought to be, and I shall be content to echo them.

At tibi prima puer nullo munuscula cultu.

At least I shall have been the first to tender this sort of gift to you. Being unable to acknowledge the obligations I bear to your Father, I address you in order to give expression to my feelings, and to offer you a part of the service that I owe to your whole house, giving you a slight intimation as a token of my affection.

Quamius & voce paternæ
Fingeris ad rectum, & per te sapis, hoc tibi dictum
Tolle memor. Horace

Although you have a precocious wisdom, although you have been raised by a most worthy father, yet my *Confectioner* will be bold and remind you of a counsel which Solomon offered in his proverbs:

Comede me [sic] *fili mi, quia bonum est.*

Eat honey because it is good — that is, always keep that sweetness of nature that God gave you; He doesn't give that gift to everyone. And there is no better attitude to help you grow from virtue to virtue, and from understanding to understanding, which is the desire and the warmest wish

SIR,

of your very humble and very obedient servant,

I.G.

In any case it is likely that the initials by which the writer of the dedication signed his name are those not of the book's author but of its "original" Paris publisher: Jean Gaillard. The dedication and those initials I. G. appear even in the Troyes, 1690 edition by Febvre,[49] sold in Paris by

[49] "Febvre?": *Catalogue of the British Museum*.

Antoine de Raffle, printer and bookseller. We have seen in the *Cuisinier françois* how the publisher Pierre David was bold enough to insert a preface three times as extensive — and twice as polished — as the one that La Varenne himself provided with obligatory formal humility. That the *Confiturier*'s publisher should compose a flowery dedication to a patron, and probably protector, should not surprise us, particularly as immediately after it we find an *Avertissement au lecteur* that the anonymous author has certainly written. The contents of this foreword consist entirely of practical information and advice relating to the recipes in the book, and its style is concrete and unadorned.

The book itself was first published at Paris (probably in 1660) by the same publisher, Jean Gaillard, as was entrusted with the *editio princeps* of the *Pastissier françois* (1653). Another link, a textual one, also exists between those two works besides their sharing of the same publisher. In the latter book, in Recipe XVI,1 for Plain Marzipan, there is a reference to the *Pastissier françois*: "Marzipans and biscuits are described in the *French Pastry Chef*." Either the author assumes that the reader will already own a copy of the earlier book, and should have it at his elbow ready for consultation, or else the enterprising publisher, Jean Gaillard, saw no harm in publicizing this reference to his earlier book.

The intertextual references in the *Confiturier françois* that are most intriguing, however, are the implied ones. As with recipes in the *Pastissier françois* that closely echo certain material already printed in the *Cuisinier françois*, the *Confiturier* repeats a good deal of the material about preserves written and published nine years earlier by La Varenne in Chapter XXXI of his *Cuisinier*. The *Confiturier* amplifies upon it, of course. In the *Cuisinier* the subject of confections occupies an addendum: the second edition (1662) is not only *reveu* and *corrigé* (extremely important considerations for the potential purchaser of any cookbook) but is *augmenté d'un Traitté de Confitures seiches & liquides, & autres delicatesses de bouche*.

La Varenne may or may not have distilled the information in his Chapter XXXI from his own experience. He may simply have cribbed it from another — probably foreign[50] — book on the subject. The author

[50] As the fourteenth-century *Menagier de Paris* proves, questions of preserves and pre-

of the *Confiturier* may or may not have got his material directly from the *Cuisinier* — instead of drawing upon the printed source or sources that La Varenne had used eight years earlier.

What we may observe is that the *Confiturier* understandably enlarges to an important extent upon what the *Cuisinier françois* had made available in the way of confections. In technical details, such as the vessels and utensils to be used by a confectioner, and the various degrees to be recognized in the cooking of sugar, the later treatise aims to be an exhaustive treatment of the subject, rather than merely to furnish enough information to satisfy the requirements of a one-cook kitchen. As with the volume on *pâtisserie*, which was likely intended as a handbook for a professional *pâtissier* or pastry chef, the *Confiturier* presupposes a reader who is a specialist, nowadays a *confiseur* or confectioner. Each of the two works is simply more comprehensive in its special subject than the *Cuisinier*.

In glancing through such a work as the *French Confectioner* a modern reader may well think of candies and jams. These recipes for candied foods, syrups, stewed fruits, marzipans, sugary drinks and so forth seem to fall somewhere under a slightly archaic rubric of "sweetmeats", or perhaps just "treats". For the seventeenth century, each of these so-called confections were undoubtedly valued for the heightened pleasure that the sugar in them afforded the palate. We should be aware, though, that historically over many centuries across Europe this sort of confecting or confectioning functioned — in very extensive practice that was founded upon a thoroughly studied body of "scientific" theory — as a means to preserve foodstuffs. Throughout the millennia before electric refrigerators, or even efficient ice-boxes, ensured fresh foods long past the date on which

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serving had had a place in general cookery books for a long time in France. However, Catalan and Spanish readers — with their more ready access to products, including sugar, imported from Moorish lands — had themselves been familiar with treatises devoted wholly to such matters. From Catalonia in the fourteenth century, for instance, we can read the *Libre de totes maneres de confits*, ed. by Luís Faraudo de Saint-Germain in "Un tratado manual cuatrocentista de arte de dulcería," *Boletín de la Real Academia de Buenas Letras de Barcelona*, XIX (1946), 97–134. Furthermore, a recent English book, Hugh Platt's *Delights for Ladies* (London, 1600), dealt extensively with sugar confections and garnered a certain popularity on the market. Of the three French books presently translated, the *Confiturier* alone did not seem marketable to contemporary English printers.

they were harvested, the grocer, householder and cook depended on a very limited group of treatments to extend the life of a foodstuff. At least the treatments pushed back the food's "best before" date for a valuable length of time, and held actual putrefaction at bay. Honey or sugar, vinegar, salt, desiccation and smoke offered the primary means. Foodstuffs so treated became, literally, conserves. The last three procedures, salting, drying and smoking, had been practised and relied upon since time immemorial and involved relatively simple techniques.

The first means of preserving, by the use of a sweetener in the form of honey, was known and so employed for as far back in Mediterranean civilisations as records exist.[51] Honey played a necessarily minor role as a preservative, however, because of the relatively small quantities of it available to the average household. In Europe sweet-preserving really came into its own only from the time, from the later Crusades of the thirteenth century onward, that raw cane sugar was imported from Islamic lands into Europe. At first its novelty and limited availability restricted sugar to strictly medicinal use; it was dispensed from the stores of the apothecary along with myriad other esoteric simples and compound drugs. Over time a vigorously expanding Mediterranean commerce ensured ever larger amounts of sugar in local markets, at affordable prices, most of it refined for culinary use. By the end of the Middle Ages its common use in preserving fruits and some vegetables is evident in "noble" recipe collections across Europe.

Although salt was produced just about everywhere in Europe, either from evaporated sea-water or from mined salt beds, its price remained relatively high. In large part this pricing was determined by a stable, strong, broadly based demand for salt; this demand in turn encouraged authorities to tax its sale correspondingly — but never enough to hurt either the salt trade or to diminish state revenues from it. Salting was the universal, popular means of preserving. Sugar, on the other hand, was the

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[51] Some of the earliest printed books are devoted to the techniques of confectioning. In France, for example, the *Petit traicté contenant la maniere pour faire toutes confitures, compostes, vins saulces, muscadetz & autres breuvages, parfunctz savons, muscadz pouldres, moutardes, & plusieurs autres bonnes recettes* . . . (Paris: Jehan Longis, 1545) was reprinted as *Manière de faire toutes confitures* (Paris: Jean Bonfons, n.d.) and as *Pratique de faire toutes confitures* (Paris: B. Rigaud, 1558 and 1590). Initially such books seem intended as apothecaries' manuals.

precious aristocrat of rather unique foodstuffs, forever an exotic product whose mystical qualities quickly ignited in the upper classes a delectation that refused to accept a use limited to medically prescribed lozenges and theriacs.

Sugar swept through aristocratic kitchens across fifteenth-century Europe. While salt remained a "common" substance, used everywhere by everyone, sugar could never be anything but fundamentally exotic, its full enjoyment known best by the well-to-do in society. Yet despite a constantly growing demand, supply kept pace. As a culinary ingredient sugar came to displace most other spices in late-medieval cookery. As a preservative in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries it was a tool that was experimented with in the kitchens of wealthy bourgeois and aristocrats — and more and more enjoyed even if the foodstuffs so candied or conserved never had much of a stay in the larder or the cellar. By the seventeenth century, candies, jams, sweet marzipans and fruit pastes had ready and enthusiastic consumers among the populace at large. Printers clearly believed that such sugar confections were well within the reach of a good segment of the reading public.

What clearly had happened between the late Middle Ages and the seventeenth century was that in the use of sugar the vital need to preserve foods bulked less large, became less important a consideration than the creation of sugar-coated and sugar-permeated foods themselves, for their own sake, for the pleasure they could offer the palate. To such an extent is this so that in the *French Confectioner* (Chapter XIII b) so-called "counterfeit" recipes instruct how to replace fruits that are seasonally unavailable. When cherries, raspberries and red currants are not in season, apples can be mashed, coloured red and sweetened; the person eating them can experience the same pleasure. The same process can be followed but a colourant introduced to create ersatz, but just as delectable, apricots or plums. In such a way the confectioner can continue throughout the year to produce a full range of sweetmeats to indulge his clients' cravings.

The final chapter in the *French Confectioner* is of particular interest. At first sight this chapter of 23 "recipes" seems inexplicably foreign to the content of the book as a whole. As the book's title page makes clear, this chapter is indeed an addendum: "*The French Confectioner* . . . Along with / the Way of Folding Table Linen, and of Making all Sorts of Shapes

with It." A mini-treatise on napkin folding seems quite irrelevant to sugar boiling and confection making. We might even think of these pages as a sort of publisher's gimmick, bold and singularly mercantile, thrown in as an unexpected, "free" supplement and intended to appeal to the frugality of the casual book buyer.

Historically, though, there was a relationship between sugar, preserves and linens. The link was, indirectly, in bread. Since the Middle Ages, in a household large enough to have defined narrowly specialized responsibilities, the pantler had one essential function, the provision of bread. His work, along with that of the butler or wine steward, reflected the age-old fundamentals of any meal whether the table on which it was set out was a peasant's board or an aristocrat's dining table: bread and wine. In early times the office of pantler came to include among the duties allocated to it the care of all table linens — perhaps because fine bread for the master's table was wrapped and presented in fine white linen.

The responsibilities of each function changed over time. The provision of bread became a specialized trade, carried on outside most households; the kitchen clerk could assume the responsibility of ensuring that quantities of the proper sorts of bread were delivered fresh as needed. This traditional part of the pantler's job declined in importance.

Contrarily, with the growth of varieties of wine, beer, ale, and a burgeoning new array of distilled and flavoured liquors, the office of the wine steward (*sommelier*) or butler (*bouteillier*) took on a much increased importance. To the extent that sugar and spices were deemed integral to the making of variously flavoured liquors, the wine steward's responsibilities covered the making and keeping of tasty confections as well. Furthermore, spiced candies were traditionally associated with spiced wines, particularly as digestives at the conclusion of a meal. To the office of wine steward was normally also passed the responsibility for maintaining the stores of table linens.

In 1659 the same Pierre David who printed the earliest editions of the *Cuisinier françois* also published a volume whose full title reads: *Le Maistre d'hostel. Qui apprend l'ordre de bien servir sur table et d'y ranger les services. Ensemble le Sommelier qui enseigne la manière de bien plier le linge en plusieurs figures. Et à faire toutes sortes de Confitures, tant seiches que liquides.* … Combined in this volume are two

works, in the second of which, *Le Sommelier*, the anonymous author sets out expressly that person's responsibility for folding table linen. Subsequent to instruction in that matter is a body of information about the making of "all sorts of confections, dry as well as moist."

When the outline on napkin folding appeared in the *Confiturier françois*, the subject matter of the supplement was not novel. In particular wealthy Italian households, of which in the sixteenth century there were many, had paid particular attention to the proprieties and decencies of formal dining. The regular use of the dainty dining fork (as distinct from the larger implement long known in the kitchen) originated in dignified aristocratic Italy. The conventionally correct way of laying a dining table and arranging individual place settings was studied and published there. Specifically there was the dainty and whimsical matter of using table linen to delight the master and mistress, along with his or her guest, at mealtime. By the seventeenth century in noble and wealthy circles across Europe, linen folding had become a more or less standard discipline in which stewards and housekeepers had to have at least some skill.

The Parisian printer of the *Confiturier françois*, Jean Gaillard, may have been publishing the original work of some anonymous author who submitted it to him, or he may have been copying or adapting a version of the material already circulating in printed form in one language or another. A remarkable treatment of the subject had been published at about the time that La Varenne assumed his duties as chief cook in the Uxelles' kitchens. This had been compiled by a German named Giegher, was in Italian, and bore the seriously formal title of *Treatise on Linen Folding*.[52]

Eventually in France following the marriage in 1533 of Catherine de' Medici (1519–89) with Henry of Valois, Duke of Orléans and future Henry II — and even more, with the marriage in 1600 of Marie de' Medici (1573–1642) to Henry IV and with her later regency (1610–1617) in the midst of her Italian favourites — a marked Italian influence came to determine much of the French court's taste and manners. Proper, elegant dining required that a high degree of attention be paid not only to prepared

[52] Messer Mattia Giegher, *Trattato delle piegature*. The work was probably first written in the 1620s, but was made most readily available to the public when it was published with two other "treatises" of the same author, on meat carving and on a steward's duties: *Li tre trattati* (Padua: P. Frambotto, 1639).

dishes but also to the table and its setting. The art of linen folding played a significant role in laying out a table that would delight a seventeenth-century diner. With it the art of the confectioner offered a further valued contribution to the pleasures of refined society in La Varenne's France.