A crisp, concise, eloquent new historiographical approach to old stories

Rachel Laudan
Cuisine and Empire: Cooking in World History
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At some point in the past decade, it became possible to feel that one might not need another global food history for the foreseeable future. Beginning with Rey Tannahill’s path-breaking Food in History (1973), the corpus has been held by Maggi Boot, Tournant, Samat’s amply girdled Histoire Naturelle et Morale de la Nourriture (Englished in 1993 as A History of Food), Polk’s Fernando Amore’s broad-brush Food: A History (2001, published as Near A Thousand Tables in North America), and the relentlessly cheerful Cuisine and Culture: A History of Food and People (2005), and Tom Standage’s Indian. Laudan’s contribution to the field is one of the most significant in recent years. It is a work of tireless scholarship, rigorous thought, and clarity of argument that will be discussed for years to come.

Laudan’s book is a comprehensive survey of the history of food and cooking, from Paleolithic antiquity to the late twentieth century. It is divided into four parts: “Cooking as a laboring craft,” “Cooking as an aesthetic sensibility,” “Cooking as a labor of love,” and “Cooking as a labor of war.” Each part is further divided into chapters that focus on specific themes, such as cooking in a particular region or time period.

The book is richly illustrated with maps, diagrams, and photographs, and includes numerous tables and charts. It is written in a clear and engaging style, making it accessible to both specialists and general readers.

Laudan’s approach is innovative and original. He argues that the history of food should be seen as a story of human ingenuity and creativity, rather than simply a matter of survival. He shows how cooking has always been a labor of love, and how it has been used as a tool for social and political control.

In the book, Laudan traces the history of cooking from its earliest origins to the present day. He shows how cooking has been used to shape the world around us, from the development of agriculture to the rise of industrial capitalism. He also discusses the role of cooking in shaping human behavior, from the development of language to the rise of modern science.

Laudan’s book is a must-read for anyone interested in the history of food and cooking. It is a landmark work that will be discussed for years to come.