Forum on French Food History

An Introduction

W. Brian Newsome

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At the 2017 Annual Meeting of the Society for French Historical Studies, Willa Silverman and Kyri Claflin delivered presentations for a session entitled “Eating and Edifying: Perspectives on the Culinary History of the Third Republic.” Chaired by Janet Horne and with commentary by Paul Freedman, the panel offered innovative perspectives on French food history. Refined in response to Freedman’s suggestions, the contributions of Silverman and Claflin form the nucleus of the present forum. Michael Garval has joined Silverman and Claflin with an article of his own, and all three have benefited from the recommendations of two double-blind peer reviewers. The finished product—now two years in the making—is one that *Historical Reflections/Réflexions Historiques* is pleased to present to its readers. Covering a range of topics—the grueling labor of culinary apprentices, the intersection of catering with the Franco-Russian alliance, and problematic attempts to industrialize French slaughterhouses—the articles add to a growing corpus on French culinary history. With the publication of Samantha Presnal’s article “Art to Table” in the Winter of 2017, *HR/RH* has already contributed to this branch of scholarship. Presnal examined “the power of aesthetics in women’s cookbooks of the Belle Époque.” Focusing on subjects that range from the late nineteenth to the mid-twentieth century, the articles by Silverman, Claflin, and Garval provide a fitting complement to the one by Presnal. Collectively, the forum highlights the influence of culinary customs on and the manner in which they evolved in response to shifting social, economic, and political dynamics. *Bon appetit!*

W. Brian Newsome is Professor of History and Dean for Curriculum and Honors at Elizabethtown College. He serves as coeditor of *Historical Reflections/Réflexions Historiques* and is the author of numerous journal articles and two books. The most recent of the latter is a translation and annotated edition of *Invasion 14* (McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2016), French novelist Maxence Van der Meersch’s semi-autobiographical account of the German occupation of northern France during World War I. Email: newsomewb@etown.edu