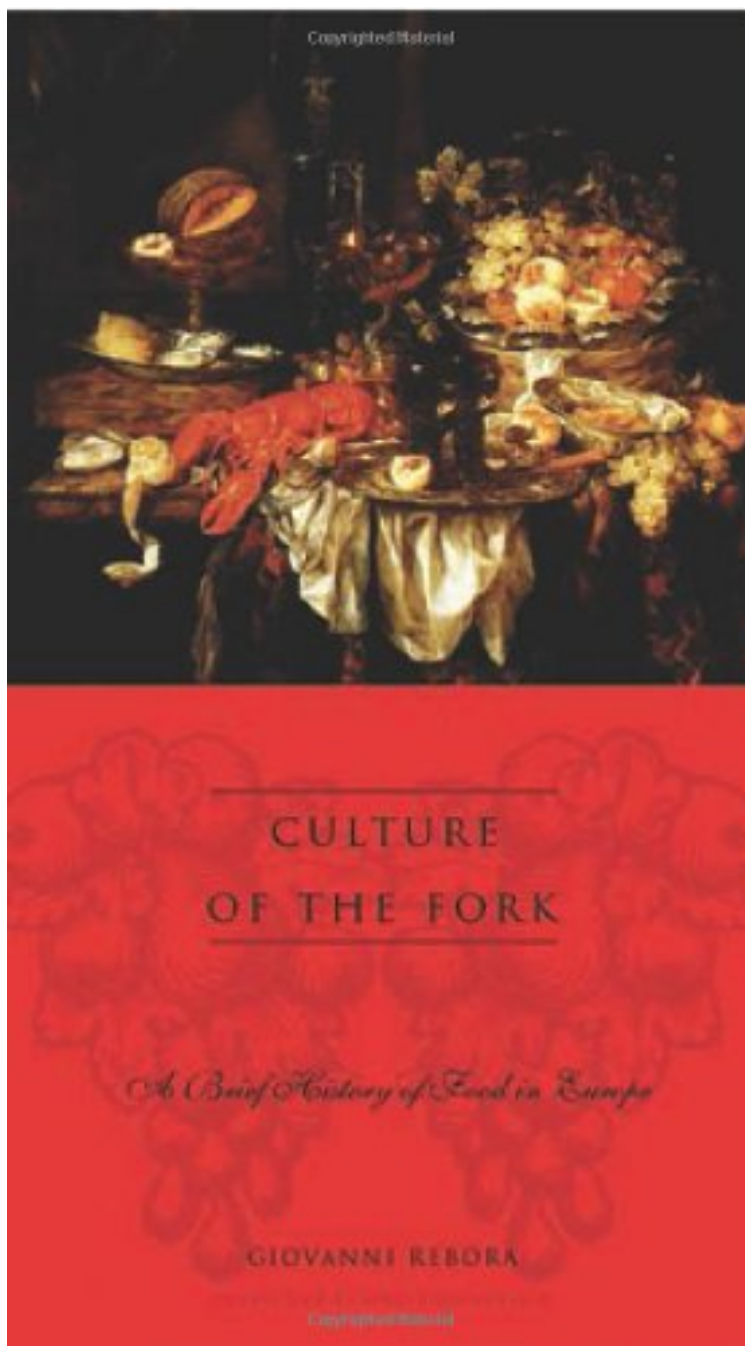


(Library ebook) Culture of the Fork

Culture of the Fork

Giovanni Rebora

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Giovanni Rebora : Culture of the Fork before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my

time, and all praised Culture of the Fork:

16 of 18 people found the following review helpful. Bad translation distracting -- but content is good
By Laura P. I would have given this book *five* stars, had it not been for the shoddy - literal translation from Italian to English. Being an Italian speaker, I sometimes had to re-read certain sentences with my "Italian" hat on to discern the meaning. This would have been an excellent book if the translation had been both literary and cultural but it is neither. This, unfortunately, detracts from the book a great deal as some references are not explained to the English-reading audience who may not be familiar with Italian history. Since Italians use a great many words to describe something that would only take a few in English- the literal translation makes them read like run-ons and often leaves the reader lost at the end. If you are able to overcome all these obstacles, the content of the book is enlightening and educational. I learned that industrial olive-growing in Greece was implemented when they were under Venetian rule and that the fork, was originally a small spear that eventually became the four-pronged utensil that we now know with the development of newer, longer, slippery pasta shapes.
5 of 8 people found the following review helpful. Let them use forks
By A Customer
Constantinople went Muslim on May 29, 1453. America went Spanish on October 12, 1492. Months before, Spaniards fired the last Islamic king. All three happenings jump-started new food trends. Another jump-start was new money- and power-holders. Bankers, mercenary captains, and merchants governed 15th-century Italy. They weren't from the traditionally Germanic nobility. They were open to new ways of doing things. So too were glass- and tablecloth-makers, potters and silversmiths. Making cooking- and dinner-ware brought money and power. It was gold and silver for the rich, pewter and fine pottery for the middle class, and ceramics and wood for the poor. Discoveries, politics, trade agreements and war also changed what people ate. Tradesmen swapped customs and ideas while dealing in goods and money. With enough savings, trades and palace cooks opened carry-outs, drinking houses, inns and taverns. There, the public found out the latest too. One thing new was the CULTURE OF THE FORK. It came into use with eating pasta. A cookbook from medieval Naples urged eating lasagna with a single-pronged wooden utensil. Known as punteruolo, it led into the fork. In Portuguese, when a poor man eats a chicken one of the two's sick. Selling the chicken meant the peasant could ape luxury-buying and use forks. This was possible when larger amounts of foods, such as spices, became easier to get. Prices went down. The elite stopped buying. Instead, the wealthy French switched to countryside herbs. Wealthy Spaniards took up hot chili peppers, new from America. In the Piedmont and Tuscany, cloves and pepper, respectively, went from elite to peasant use. Giovanni Reborasays that the subject needs more looking into. For example, are hunger, boring food and alcoholism recent problems? Other than rare famines, the poor had the basics. They generally didn't have luxuries. But the wealthy gave the poor good drinking and eating, on Carnival, Christmas, Easter, local saints' days, New Year and seasonal festivals. So, according to the author, hunger back then was nothing like those suffering concentration camps, gulags and slums in the 20th century.

We know where he went, what he wrote, and even what he wore, but what in the world did Christopher Columbus eat? The Renaissance and the age of discovery introduced Europeans to exotic cultures, mores, manners, and ideas. Along with the cross-cultural exchange of Old and New World, East and West, came new foodstuffs, preparations, and flavors. That kitchen revolution led to the development of new utensils and table manners. Some of the impact is still felt and tasted today. Giovanni Reborahas crafted an elegant and accessible history filled with fascinating information and illustrations. He discusses the availability of resources, how people kept from starving in the winter, how they farmed, how tastes developed and changed, what the lower classes ate, and what the aristocracy enjoyed. The book is divided into brief chapters covering the history of bread, soups, stuffed pastas, the use of salt, cheese, meat, fish, fruits and vegetables, the arrival of butter, the quest for sugar, new world foods, setting the table, and beverages, including wine and tea. A special appendix, "A Meal with Columbus," includes a mini-anthology of recipes from the countries where he lived: Italy, Portugal, Spain, and England. Entertaining and enlightening, Culture of the Fork will interest scholars of history and gastronomy and everyone who eats.

From Publishers Weekly
In 1492, Columbus knew nothing of ragout. But perhaps he did enjoy the occasional sliced eel or roasted partridge, according to Reboras investigation of food habits in Europe, from about 1400 to 1700. A professor of economic history at the University of Genoa, Reboratakes a scholarly approach and a learned tone in considering the impact of peasantry, population booms and modes of transport on the evolution of meals, drinks and, of course, spices. His is a quirky effort, though: no particular topic is treated in any great depth, resulting more in a pocket guide through the fourth dimension than a cultural treatise. This will be a disappointment to those who feel they haven't learned enough about the history of olive oil in four pages. Still, for those seeking the perfect dinner party conversation topic, the book is a godsend. Divided into 18 chapters, each on a different food type ("Stuffed Pasta") or trade passage ("The Sugar Route"), it offers countless delicious factual tidbits. The fork first appeared in Europe during the Middle Ages as a "single-pronged wooden utensil" used for eating lasagna, for instance, while 15th-century France had no plates diners used mensa, rounded disks of bread. Sonnenfeld offers a workmanlike translation despite the difficulties of, say, 60 different Italian words for various types of sausage. Etchings and woodcuts of ancient

cheese graters and soup spoons, frying pans and coffee pots enliven the text, and a thorough bibliography refers readers to such Italian works as *The Pleasures of Gluttony and Primitive Bread*. Copyright 2001 Cahners Business Information, Inc. From Booklist Translated from Italian, this highly personalized history of European food and cooking makes delightful reading. Assuming a bit of knowledge from his readers, Rebera sets out to debunk some myths. At the beginning of the Renaissance, food abounded in Europe. As the author points out, a skilled mason couldn't climb scaffolding to lay the stones of a cathedral if he was half starved. Surprisingly, meat was readily available and cheap due to the abundance of land for grazing cattle. Artichokes cost more than pork or beef; vegetables and fruits were poor man's fare, but peasants generally ate well. Religious opinion on fasting led to some strains in the market as fish prices soared, making a fast day's protein actually more expensive than meat. The rare luxury was the new boiled pasta, and a man's wealth could be assessed by the number of times a week his family dined on lasagna. The slippery noodles demanded a new eating implement, and the modified fork couldn't have appeared at a better time. Mark Knoblach Copyright American Library Association. All rights reserved [Rebera's] short history of European food... is filled with plenty of oddities to chew on. (Playboy) Thought-provoking theories make this... more than just another collection of past culinary oddities. (The Economist) Offers countless delicious factual tidbits. (Publishers Weekly) [An] intriguing new culinary history of early modern Europe... challenges a lot of previously accepted wisdom.... Rebera's highly readable, lively book is bursting with provocative arguments and fascinating new information. (Gastronomica) This highly personalized history of European food and cooking makes delightful reading. (Booklist)