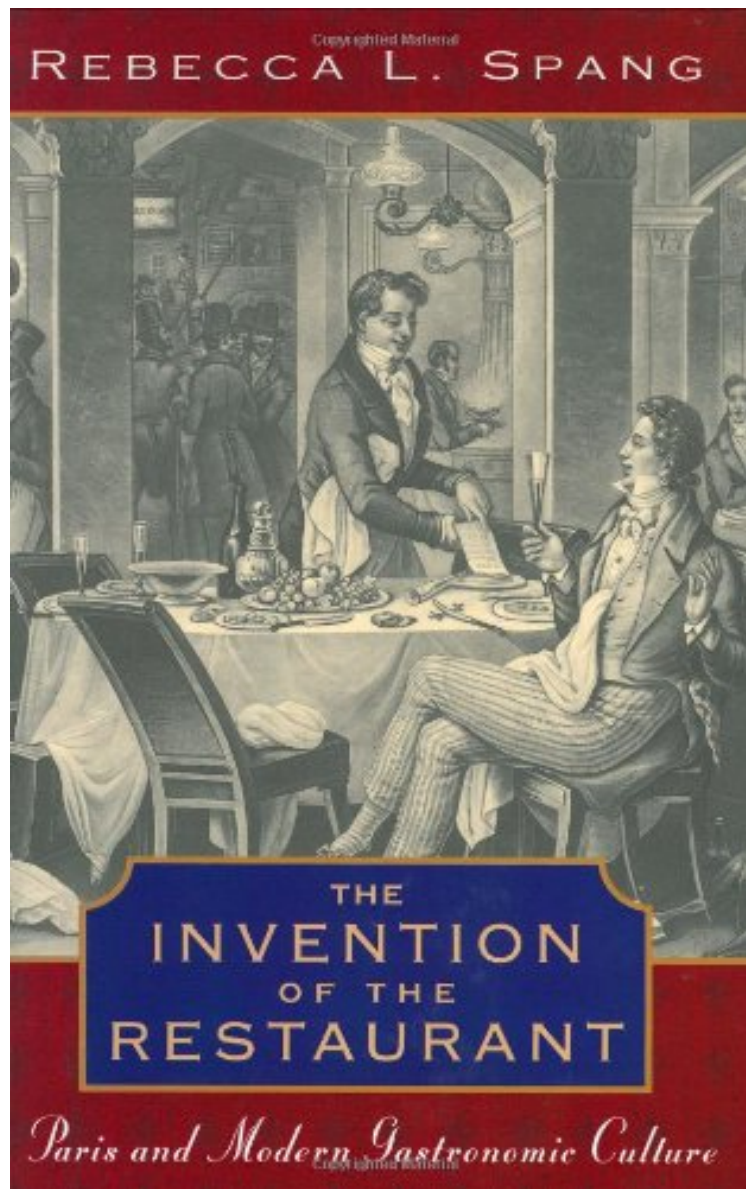


(Read free) The Invention of the Restaurant: Paris and Modern Gastronomic Culture (Harvard Historical Studies (Hardcover))

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Rebecca L. Spang

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#432753 in Books Harvard University Press 2000-03-30 Original language: English PDF # 1 9.57 x 1.27 x 6.46l, 1.24 #File Name: 0674000641384 pages | File size: 69.Mb

Rebecca L. Spang : The Invention of the Restaurant: Paris and Modern Gastronomic Culture (Harvard Historical Studies (Hardcover)) before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Invention of the Restaurant: Paris and Modern Gastronomic Culture (Harvard Historical Studies

(Hardcover)):

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Well-researched, informative and entertaining
By Diana Wilder
I purchased this book (and some others) as sourcebooks for some stories set in pre-Napoleon III Paris. The action does involve meals taken at restaurants, and while I was aware that the sidewalk caf was a fairly recent invention, and it would be highly unlikely that the party that set out to dine at a restaurant would be given a number and told that their waitperson would seat them when a table came open. The organization, running, substance and practice of restaurants escaped me, and I needed to understand them. The credentials of the author, who lectures about modern European history at University College, London, and the publisher, Harvard University Press, indicated that the information was likely to be accurate and useful. The samples that I read made it fairly clear that Ms. Spang could write an entertaining and informative account. The material is comprehensive and useful. There is a lot of information there, and concepts are illustrated by contemporary accounts (such as the trial of some enterprising butchers who represented as rabbits what turned out to be cats. The case caused an uproar). For my own purposes, I learned that a caf was a place that sold primarily beverages while a restaurant sold a wider array of edibles. You could eat in a common room at a restaurant, or hire a private room (and some of those private rooms were hired for somewhat risqué purposes). The book is illustrated with contemporary engravings and pictures, properly identified. I did not, myself, find much in the way of typos or poor layout. The only complaint that I might have about this book is that the print is rather smaller than I generally like, the better to get a lot of information into a not-so-large package. I did not find it annoying enough to downgrade the book. This is an excellent sourcebook and an often enjoyable read, if you enjoy research. It is certainly not dry. I would recommend this to anyone interested in the subject, or in the greater subject of the evolution of European, and specifically Parisian, society in the seventeenth through nineteenth centuries.... I must see if it is available in hardcover.
0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. A surely restorative reading.
By Customer
This book is very interesting to read for those who like both history and cooking. An award-winning research, it helps you travel through time and space on the issue of the creation of the restaurant as it is today, in France and around the world as well. Some questions, though, remain unanswered by this research. The first one is the amount of different food-selling houses there has been and their names and functions. Nowadays, to my recollection there are still several, apart from restaurants themselves. In order to help readers, the author should have had listed all of them, such as brasserie, charcuterie, patisserie, boulangerie, bar, bistrot etc, along with their formal menus, that were commanded by the State. It lacks a little information on the economic value of the restaurant - graphs containing meal prices through time should have helped us get a glimpse of its importance within the social public space of NINETEENTH Century France. It makes us wonder why the author states that the restaurant lost its political value as a public space at the end of the 1800's, was it a comparison with its fashionable wave during the French Revolution as she makes us believe? She surely forgot the role of the famous Maxim's Restaurant on the future of European rulers and nobleman at the turn of the XXth Century. Although a good research, there are still more research left to do about this issue, and surely people like me who would love to read them through, trying to find thorough answers about the past. Although it is a surely good research, and easy to read
8 of 8 people found the following review helpful. An Historical Tour de Force
By Frederick B. Glaser
This is a remarkable, mind-blowing bit of historical detection, as well as an eminently readable, stylistically superlative piece of writing, with stunning visuals to boot. The author argues that the commonly accepted view of restaurants being the creation of the former chefs of aristocrats thrown out of work by the excesses of the French Revolution is incorrect. In a closely reasoned, copiously documented, and exceptionally well-written book she highlights the role of an otherwise obscure French entrepreneur and his colleagues, who took advantage of a then-current theory that a plethora of individuals with "nervous stomachs" required institutions that would prepare "restoratives" for them, and that these institutions evolved into what we can now recognize as the precursors of restaurants. The verbal conjunction is no accident, in other words. Among the innovations of this group was the menu, hitherto unknown; that the internet now routinely provides menus of current restaurants to interested parties looking for enjoyable meals is a tribute to this group of Parisian pioneers. The text is accompanied by many graphics by Daumier and others that well illustrate issues with which the author deals. A delight to read and to view, and a major accomplishment.

Why are there restaurants? Why would anybody consider eating to be an enjoyable leisure activity or even a serious pastime? To find the answer to these questions, we must accompany Rebecca Spang back to France in the eighteenth century, when a restaurant was not a place to eat but a thing to eat: a quasi-medicinal bouillon that formed an essential element of prerevolutionary France's nouvelle cuisine. This is a book about the French Revolution in taste and of the table--a book about how Parisians invented the modern culture of food, thereby changing their own social life and that of the world. During the 1760s and 1770s, those who were sensitive and supposedly suffering made public show of their delicacy by going to the new establishments known as "restaurateurs' rooms" and there sipping their bouillons. By the 1790s, though, the table was variously seen as a place of decadent corruption or democratic solidarity. The Revolution's tables were sites for extending frugal, politically correct hospitality, and a delicate appetite was a sign of

counter-revolutionary tendencies. The restaurants that had begun as purveyors of health food became symbols of aristocratic greed. In the early nineteenth century, however, the new genre of gastronomic literature worked within the strictures of the Napoleonic police state to transform the notion of restaurants and to confer star status upon oysters and champagne. Thus, the stage was set for the arrival of British and American tourists keen on discovering the mysteries of Frenchness in the capital's restaurants. From restoratives to Restoration, Spang establishes the restaurant at the very intersection of public and private in French culture--the first public place where people went to be private.

From Booklist Public eateries are so ubiquitous it may not occur to most of us that the restaurant has a unique history, intimately tied to debates about aristocracy and democracy, public affairs, and private life in the era surrounding the French Revolution. Spang, a lecturer in modern European history at University College[^]-London, traces this history and challenges the traditional gastronomic narrative of dining out in the French capital. Before the Revolution, a "restaurant" was a restorative bouillon; those who went to "restaurateurs' rooms" were flaunting their delicacy. During the Revolution, fraternal banquets that ignored social distinctions were an ideal, which the hospitality of restaurateurs sometimes seemed to approximate. By Napoleon's rise to power, "the regime separated pleasure from policing, fashion from ideology, and individual taste from communitarian truth." In this era, gastronomy ruled; restaurants remained public places but were no longer political arenas. Spang's work should appeal to readers seriously interested in the social and intellectual history of dining out. Mary Carroll Almost every page of this decidedly scholarly though highly readable book gave me something to think about: the origins of restaurant reviewing in the early years of the 19th century, the way in which other Europeans came to identify the restaurant with the essence of French-ness itself, or the fact that in French one word--carte--does double duty for both menu and map. --Michael Gora (Boston Sunday Globe) Spang writes entertainingly, with a keen sense of humor and with no great reverence for her subject. It is a refreshing contrast to much of the overwritten adulation of restaurants that passes for criticism today. --Roger Harris (Newark Star-Ledger) Spang has written an ambitious, thought-changing book. Until now, most restaurant history was pop history, filled with canned "Eureka!" moments and arch legend-making...Spang's book is an example of the new "niche" history, and, like the best of such books, it is rich in weird data, unsung heroes, and bizarre true stories about the making of familiar things. --Adam Gopnik (New Yorker) No more fables about ancien regime chefs, whose aristo patrons had been guillotined or exiled in the French Revolution...an end to those anecdotes about their invention of dishes broiled on a breastplate on some Napoleonic battlefield. Because Spang reveals the restaurant's first true author: Mathurin Roze de Chantoiseau, "friend of all the world," an entrepreneur who edited an annual business directory in which he recommended himself as the "king's restaurateur" and founder of the first "house of health." --Vera Rule (The Guardian) [A] pleasingly spiced history of the restaurant...How has [the] restaurant ritual come to be? And why does it have this form? Such questions are now familiar in works of cultural and social history...[but] Spang adds to the genre without falling prey to its jargon. --Edward Rothstein (New York Times) This prize-winning academic historical study is a lively, engrossing, authoritative account of how the restaurant as we know it developed...Rebecca Spang is consistently perceptive about the semiotics of her theme, and as generous in her helpings of historical detail as any glutton could wish. (The Times) Rebecca Spang explodes a culinary myth that has lasted nearly two hundred years. --Margaret Visser (London of Books 2000-11-30) This is a book that works on a number of different levels. There is meat and drink here for those interested in the metaphysical and metaphorical aspects of eating; a wealth of erudition on some relatively little studied aspects of Enlightenment culture and the French Revolution; and those scholars of the period who follow convention in regarding the rise of the French restaurant as epiphenomenon of the French Revolution, a well presented challenge to their account. --Kate Soper (Radical Philosophy) The title of Rebecca L. Spang's scholarly yet highly accessible social history, *The Invention of the Restaurant* causes a small jolt of surprise. For people who eat out so often that boiling a pot of spaghetti at home is a special occasion, a world without restaurants is hard to imagine. We realize, at some level, that they have not always been here, but few of us could say who invented them, or when...Much of this information is ignored in the standard food histories, and Spang's excavation of it makes for interesting reading, particularly because the French Revolution and its aftermath would change restaurants almost beyond recognition, into something very like the places where we go out to eat today. --Pete Wells (Salon.com) Readers hungry for mouth-watering accounts of sumptuous meals or paeans to the glories of French cuisine will not find them here. Spang's focus is on the restaurant as an institution, and her history pretty much ends in the mid-19th century. Spang is far more interested in viewing restaurants in a wider social, political and historical context. Her book is well...argued, dryly witty and full of fascinating details. --Merle Rubin (Los Angeles Times) Spang chronicles these developments [in the history of restaurants] in a tasty work, which is about far more than food. (Harvard Magazine) Spang traces [the] history [of restaurants] and challenges the traditional gastronomic narrative of dining out in the French capital...Spang's work should appeal to readers seriously interested in the social and intellectual history of dining out. --Mary Carroll (Booklist) A deeply gratifying social history of the Parisian public food world, as multilayered and earthy as pot-au-feu, for all its scholarship, as agreeably informal as a bistro. (Kirkus s) Spang presents her story as an excursive and discursive feast, seasons it with wit and gentle irony, lards it with cameos, quotations, and illustrations. Her appetizing message is served with a deft touch. --Eugen Weber (American

Historical)The perfect book for a time of year that celebrates, among other things, food. Historian Rebecca Spang begins with an inspired question: Why are there restaurants? To answer this, she takes the reader back a couple of centuries to France, when a restaurant was actually a thing to eat and not a place to go. Her well-researched, compelling book deservedly won several awards. (Globe and Mail 2001-12-22)It is by now hardly necessary to point out that this is an excellent book. Rebecca Spang's *Invention of the Restaurant* well deserves the prizes and enthusiastic reviews it has garnered from both academic and non-academic sources since its appearance in 2000. The reasons for these successes are easy to discern. Spang's book is delightful to read, beautifully constructed and concerned with a topic of immediate appeal: how and why was the restaurant invented?...A splendid work showing considerable erudition and great narrative talent. I look forward to reading Spang's next publication. --Rebecca Earle (French History 2002-12-01)By focusing on the development of gastronomy as a discourse, and by analyzing that discourse's constitutive claims to autonomy, Spang offers a more nuanced understanding of what makes her study important and new, if not revolutionary. With its engaging prose style and its judicious use of both scholarly apparatus and illustrations, the book is reminiscent of the work of John Brewer and Simon Schama (not coincidentally, since the latter was Spang's thesis director). Offering both a detailed history of the emergence of the restaurant and an introduction to the major cultural and political movements of the revolutionary era, *The Invention of the Restaurant* spans the period from 1770 to about 1840. --Jody Greene (Eighteenth-Century Studies)Why do restaurants exist? Why do we go to restaurants? Reading Rebecca Spang's *Invention of the Restaurant: Paris and Modern Gastronomic Culture* does not directly answer these questions on a personal level, but it does, with many insights, help illuminate the history and sociology of eating out...Spang's book, while thoroughly researched, is highly readable and enjoyable. This French Revolution of the table will obviously interest amateurs and professionals of culinary topics. I would argue, though, that the book should intrigue even more many readers with no knowledge or particular love of the kitchen. Because every chapter is well introduced and focuses on a particular aspect of the restaurant, such varied fields of study as sociology, history, economy, science, literature, and law find their place. As a result, the book will appeal to many types of readers including undergraduates and graduates. Of special interest is the way Spang considers the public-and-private-sphere debate as well as her unique approach of the French Revolution. Her analysis is accomplished in great detail--starting with the various definitions of the evolution of the word "restaurant"--and includes many frontspieces, caricatures, and copious notes. Finally, Spang's book is an engaging portrait and a serious but accessible tool for understanding the metamorphosis of the emerging modern French society. *The Invention of the Restaurant* deserves to be read by all. --Veronique Olivier-Wallis (Eighteenth-Century Books Online)From the Inside FlapWhy are there restaurants? Why would anybody consider eating to be an enjoyable leisure activity or even a serious pastime? To find the answer to these questions, we must accompany Rebecca Spang back to France in the eighteenth century, when a restaurant was not a place to eat but a thing to eat: a quasi-medicinal bouillon that formed an essential element of prerevolutionary France's nouvelle cuisine. 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In the early nineteenth century, however, the new genre of gastronomic literature worked within the strictures of the Napoleonic police state to transform the notion of restaurants and to confer star status upon oysters and champagne. Thus the stage was set for the arrival of British and American tourists keen on discovering the mysteries of Frenchness in the capital's restaurants. From restoratives to Restoration, Spang establishes the restaurant at the very intersection of public and private in French culture-- the first public place where people went to be private, and where taste played an increasingly significant role in creating and validating social and cultural distinctions.