CLASSICS TO GO

COOKERY AND DINING IN IMPERIAL ROME

APICIUS

Cookery and Dining

In Imperial Rome

Apicius

APICII·LIBRI·X

QVI DICVNTVR DE OBSONIIS ET CONDIMENTIS SIVE ARTE COQVINARIA QVÆ EXTANT

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NVNC PRIMVM ANGLICE REDDIDIT PROŒMIO BIBLIOGRAPHICO ATQVE INTERPRETATIONE DEFENSIT VARIISQVE ANNOTATIONIBVS INSTRVXIT ITA ET ANTIQVÆ CVLINÆ VTENSILIARVM EFFIGIIS EXORNAVIT INDICEM DENIQVE ETYMOLOGICVM ET TECHNICVM ARTIS MAGIRICÆ ADIECIT

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IOSEPHVS DOMMERS VEHLING

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INTRODVCIT FRIDERICVS STARR

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TEXT AND HEADINGS

The original ancient text as presented and rendered in the present translation is printed in capital letters.

Matter in parenthesis () is original. Matter in square brackets [] is contributed by the translator.

In most of the early originals the headings or titles of the formulæ are invariably part of the text. In the present translation they are given both in English and in the Latin used by those originals which the translator considered most characteristic titles.

They have been set in prominent type as titles over each formula, whereas in the originals the formulæ of the various chapters run together, in many instances without distinct separation.

NUMBERING OF RECIPES

A system of numbering the recipes has therefore been adopted by the translator, following the example of Schuch, which does not exist in the other originals but the numbers in the present translation do not correspond to those adopted by Schuch for reasons which hereafter become evident.

NOTES AND COMMENTS BY THE TRANSLATOR

The notes, comments and variants added to each recipe by the translator are printed in upper and lower case and in the same type as the other contributions by the translator, the Apiciana, the Critical Review and the Vocabulary and Index.

For the sake of convenience, to facilitate the study of each recipe and for quick reference the notes follow in each and every case such ancient recipe as they have reference to.

ABBREVIATIONS

NY—The New York Codex (formerly Cheltenham), Apiciana, I
Vat.—The Vatican Codex, Apiciana, II.
Vin.—The Codex Salmasianus, Excerpta a Vinidario, Apiciana, III.
B. de V.—Edition by Bernardinus, Venice, n.d., Apiciana, No. 1.
Lan.—Edition by Lancilotus, Milan, 1498, Apiciana, Nos. 2-3.
Tac.—Edition by Tacuinus, Venice, 1503, Apiciana, No. 4.
Tor.—Edition by Torinus, Basel (and Lyons), 1541, Apiciana, Nos. 5-6.
Hum.—Edition by Humelbergius, Zürich, 1542, Apiciana, No. 7.
List.—Edition by Lister, London, 1705, Amst., 1709, Apiciana, Nos. 8-9.
Bern.—Edition by Bernhold, Marktbreit, etc., Apiciana, Nos. 10-11.
Bas.—Edition by Baseggio, Venice, 1852, Apiciana, No. 13.
Sch.—Edition by Schuch, Heidelberg, 1867/74, Apiciana, Nos. 14-15.
Goll.—Edition by Gollmer, Leipzig, 1909, Apiciana, No. 16.
Dann.—Edition by Danneil, Leipzig, 1911, Apiciana, No. 17.
G.-V.—Edition by Giarratano-Vollmer, Leip. 1922, Apiciana, No. 19.
V.—The present translation.
Giarr.—Giarratano; Voll.—F. Vollmer; Bran.—Edward Brandt.

INTRODUCTION

BY

FREDERICK STARR
Formerly Professor of Anthropology at the University of Chicago

NO translation of Apicius into English has yet been published. The book has been printed again and again in Latin and has been translated into Italian and German. It is unnecessary to here give historic details regarding the work as Mr. Vehling goes fully and admirably into the subject. In 1705 the book was printed in Latin at London, with notes by Dr. Martinus Lister. It caused some stir in the England of that time. In a very curious book, The Art of Cookery, in Imitation of Horace's Art of Poetry, with Some Letters to Dr. Lister and Others, Dr. Wm. King says:

> "The other curiosity is the admirable piece of Cœlius Apicius, '*De Opsoniis et condimentis sive arte coquinaria, Libri decem*' being ten books of soups and sauces, and the art of cookery, as it is excellently printed for the doctor, who in this important affair, is not sufficiently communicative....
>
> "I some days ago met with an old acquaintance, of whom I inquired if he has seen the book concerning soups and sauces? He told me he had, but that he had but a very slight view of it, the person who was master of it not being willing to part with so valuable a rarity out of his closet. I desired him to give me some account of it. He says that it is a very handsome octavo, for, ever since the days of

> Ogilvy, good paper and good print, and fine cuts, make a book become ingenious and brighten up an author strangely. That there is a copious index; and at the end a catalogue of all the doctor’s works, concerning cockles, English beetles, snails, spiders, that get up into the air and throw us down cobwebs; a monster vomited up by a baker and such like; which if carefully perused, would wonderfully improve us.”

More than two hundred years have passed and we now have an edition of this curious work in English. And our edition has nothing to lose by comparison with the old one. For this, too, is a handsome book, with good paper and good print and fine cuts. And the man who produces it can equally bear comparison with Dr. Lister and more earlier commentators and editors whom he quotes—Humelbergius and Caspar Barthius.

The preparation of such a book is no simple task and requires a rare combination of qualities. Mr. Vehling possesses this unusual combination. He was born some forty-five years ago in the small town of Duelken on the German-Dutch frontier—a town proverbial for the dullness of its inhabitants. There was nothing of dullness about the boy, however, for at the age of fourteen years, he had already four years study of Latin and one of Greek to his credit. Such was his record in Latin that his priest teachers attempted to influence him toward the priesthood. His family, however, had other plans and believing that he had enough schooling, decided that he should be a cook. As he enjoyed good food, had a taste for travel and independence, and was inclined to submit to family direction, he rather willingly entered upon the career planned for him. He learned the business thoroughly and for six years practiced his art in Germany, Belgium, France, England and Scandinavia. Wherever he

went, he gave his hours of freedom to reading and study in libraries and museums.

During his first trip through Italy and on a visit to Pompeii he conceived the idea of depicting some day the table of the Romans and of making the present translation. He commenced to gather all the necessary material for this work, which included intensive studies of the ancient arts and languages. Meanwhile, he continued his hotel work also, quite successfully. At the age of twenty-four he was assistant manager of the fashionable Hotel Bristol, Vienna.

However, the necessities of existence prevented his giving that time and study to art, which is necessary if it was to become a real career. In Vienna he found music, drama, languages, history, literature and gastronomy, and met interesting people from all parts of the globe. While the years at Vienna were the happiest of his life, he had a distaste for the “superheated, aristocratic and military atmosphere.” It was at that city that he met the man who was responsible for his coming to America. Were we writing Mr. Vehling’s biography, we would have ample material for a racy and startling narrative. We desire only to indicate the remarkable preparation for the work before us, which he has had. A Latin scholar of exceptional promise, a professional cook of pronounced success, and an artist competent to illustrate his own work! Could such a combination be anticipated? It is the combination that has made this book possible.

The book has claims even upon our busy and practical generation. Mr. Vehling has himself stated them:

> “The important addition to our knowledge of the ancients—for our popular notions about their table are entirely erroneous and are in need of revision.

> “The practical value of many of the ancient formulæ—for ‘In Olde Things There is Newnesse.’
>
> “The human interest—because of the amazing mentality and the culinary ingenuity of the ancients revealed to us from an altogether new angle.
>
> “The curious novelty and the linguistic difficulty, the philological interest and the unique nature of the task, requiring unique prerequisites—all these factors prompted us to undertake this translation.”

One word as to Mr. Vehling’s work in America. He was for five years manager of catering at the Hotel Pfister in Milwaukee; for two and a half years he was inspector and instructor of the Canadian Pacific Railway; he was connected with some of the leading hotels in New York City, and with the Eppley and the Van Orman Hotels chains, in executive capacity. He not only has the practical side of food use and preparation, he is an authority upon the science in his field. His printed articles on food and cookery have been read with extraordinary interest, and his lectures upon culinary matters have been well received. It is to be hoped that both will eventually be published in book form.

There is no financial lure in getting out an English translation of Apicius. It is a labor of love—but worth the doing. We have claimed that Mr. Vehling has exceptional fitness for the task. This will be evident to anyone who reads his book. An interesting feature of his preparation is the fact that Mr. Vehling has subjected many of the formulæ to actual test. As Dr. Lister in the old edition of 1705 increased the value and interest of the work by making additions from various sources, so our editor of today adds much and interesting matter in his supplements, notes and illustrations.

It is hardly expected that many will follow Mr. Vehling in testing the Apician formulæ. Hazlitt in speaking of “The Young Cook’s Monitor” which was printed in 1683, says:

> “Some of the ingredients proposed for sauces seem to our ears rather prodigious. In one place a contemporary peruser has inserted an ironical calculation in MS. to the effect that, whereas a cod’s head could be bought for fourpence, the condiments recommended for it were not to be had for less than nine shillings.”

We shall close with a plagiarism oft repeated. It was a plagiarism as long ago as 1736, when it was admitted such in the preface of Smith’s “The Compleat Housewife”:

> “It being grown as fashionable for a book now to appear in public without a preface, as for a lady to appear at a ball without a hoop-petticoat, I shall conform to the custom for fashion-sake and not through any necessity. The subject being both common and universal, needs no argument to introduce it, and being so necessary for the gratification of the appetite, stands in need of no encomiums to allure persons to the practice of it; since there are but a few nowadays who love not good eating and drinking....”

Old Apicius and Joseph Dommers Vehling really need no introduction.

FREDERICK STARR

Seattle, Washington, August 3, 1926.

PREFACE

The present first translation into English of the ancient cookery book dating back to Imperial Roman times known as the Apicius book is herewith presented to antiquarians, friends of the Antique as well as to gastronomers, friends of good cheer.

Three of the most ancient manuscript books that exist today bearing the name of Apicius date back to the eighth and ninth century. Ever since the invention of printing Apicius has been edited chiefly in the Latin language. Details of the manuscript books and printed editions will be found under the heading of Apiciana on the following pages.

The present version has been based chiefly upon three principal Latin editions, that of Albanus Torinus, 1541, who had for his authority a codex he found on the island of Megalona, on the editions of Martinus Lister, 1705-9, who based his work upon that of Humelbergius, 1542, and the Giarratano-Vollmer edition, 1922.

We have also scrutinized various other editions forming part of our collection of Apiciana, and as shown by our “family tree of Apicius” have drawn either directly or indirectly upon every known source for our information.

The reasons and raison d’être for this undertaking become sufficiently clear through Dr. Starr’s introduction and through the following critical review.

It has been often said that the way to a man’s heart is through his stomach; so here is hoping that we may find a better way of knowing old Rome and antique private life

through the study of this cookery book—Europe’s oldest and Rome’s only one in existence today.

J. D. V.

Chicago, in the Spring of 1926.

THANKS

For many helpful hints, for access to works in their libraries and for their kind and sympathetic interest in this work I am especially grateful to Professor Dr. Edward Brandt, of Munich; to Professor Dr. Margaret Barclay Wilson, of Washington, D.C., and New York City; to Mr. Arnold Shircliffe, and Mr. Walter M. Hill, both of Chicago.

J. D. V.

Chicago, in the Summer of 1936.

THE BOOK OF APICIUS

A STUDY OF ITS TIMES, ITS AUTHORS AND THEIR SOURCES, ITS AUTHENTICITY AND ITS PRACTICAL USEFULNESS IN MODERN TIMES

ANYONE who would know something worth while about the private and public lives of the ancients should be well acquainted with their table. Then as now the oft quoted maxim stands that man is what he eats.

Much of the ancient life is still shrouded and will forever be hidden by envious forces that have covered up bygone glory and grandeur. Ground into mealy dust under the hoofs of barbarian armies! Re-modeled, re-used a hundred times! Discarded as of no value by clumsy hands! The “Crime of Ignorance” is a factor in league with the forces of destruction. Much is destroyed by blind strokes of fate—fate, eternally pounding this earth in its everlasting enigmatic efforts to shape life into something, the purpose of which we do not understand, the meaning of which we may not even venture to dream of or hope to know.

Whatever there has been preserved by “Providence,” by freaks of chance, by virtue of its own inherent strength—whatever has been buried by misers, fondled, treasured by loving hands of collectors and connoisseurs during all these

centuries—every speck of ancient dust, every scrap of parchment or papyrus, a corroded piece of metal, a broken piece of stone or glass, so eagerly sought by the archaeologists and historians of the last few generations—all these fragmentary messages from out of the past emphasize the greatness of their time. They show its modernity, its nearness to our own days. They are now hazy reminiscences, as it were, by a middle-aged man of the hopes and the joys of his own youth. These furtive fragments—whatever they are—now tell us a story so full and so rich, they wield so marvelous a power, no man laying claim to possessing any intelligence may pass them without intensely feeling the eternal pathetic appeal to our hearts of these bygone ages that hold us down in an envious manner, begrudging us the warm life-blood of the present, weaving invisible ties around us to make our hearts heavy.

However, we are not here to be impeded by any sentimental considerations. Thinking of the past, we are not so much concerned with the picture that dead men have placed in our path like ever so many bill boards and posters! We do not care for their “ideals” expounded in contemporary histories and eulogies. We are hardly moved by the “facts” such as they would have loved to see them happen, nor do we cherish the figments of their human, very human, subconsciousness.

To gain a correct picture of the Roman table we will therefore set aside for a while the fragments culled from ancient literature and history that have been misused so indiscriminately and so profusely during the last two thousand years—for various reasons. They have become fixed ideas, making reconstruction difficult for anyone who would gain a picture along rational lines. Barring two exceptions, there is no trustworthy detailed description of the ancient table by an objective contemporary observer. To

be sure, there are some sporadic efforts, mere reiterations. The majority of the ancient word pictures are distorted views on our subject by partisan writers, contemporary moralists on the one side, satirists on the other. Neither of them, we venture to say, knew the subject professionally. They were not specialists in the sense of modern writers like Reynière, Rumohr, Vaerst; nor did they approach in technical knowledge medieval writers like Martino, Platina, Torinus.

True there were exceptions. Athenaeus, a most prolific and voluble magiric commentator, quoting many writers and specialists whose names but for him would have never reached posterity. Athenaeus tells about these gastronomers, the greatest of them, Archestratos, men who might have contributed so much to our knowledge of the ancient world, but to us these names remain silent, for the works of these men have perished with the rest of the great library at the disposal of this genial host of Alexandria.

Too, there are Anacharsis and Petronius. They and Athenaeus cannot be overlooked. These three form the bulk of our evidence.

Take on the other hand Plutarch, Seneca, Tertullian, even Pliny, writers who have chiefly contributed to our defective knowledge of the ancient table. They were no gourmets. They were biased, unreliable at best, as regards culinary matters. They deserve our attention merely because they are above the ever present mob of antique reformers and politicians of whom there was legion in Rome alone, under the pagan régime. Their state of mind and their intolerance towards civilized dining did not improve with the advent of Christianity.

The moralists’ testimony is substantiated and supplemented rather than refuted by their very antipodes, the satirists, a

group headed by Martial, Juvenal and the incomparable Petronius, who really is in a class by himself.

There is one more man worthy of mention in our particular study, Horace, a true poet, the most objective of all writers, man-about-town, pet of society, mundane genius, gifted to look calmly into the innermost heart of his time. His eyes fastened a correct picture on the sensitive diaphragm of a good memory, leaving an impression neither distorted nor “out of focus.” His eye did not “pick up,” for sundry reasons, the defects of the objects of observation, nor did it work with the uncanny joy of subconscious exaggeration met with so frequently in modern writing, nor did he indulge in that predilection for ugly detail sported by modern art.

So much for Horatius, poet. Still, he was not a specialist in our line. We cannot enroll him among the gifted gourmets no matter how many meals he enjoyed at the houses of his society friends. We are rather inclined to place him among the host of writers, ancient and modern, who have treated the subject of food with a sort of sovereign contempt, or at least with indifference, because its study presented unsurmountable difficulties, and the subject, *per se*, was a menial one. With this attitude of our potential chief witnesses defined, we have no occasion to further appeal to them here, and we might proceed to real business, to the sifting of the trustworthy material at hand. It is really a relief to know that we have no array of formidable authorities to be considered in our study. We have virgin field before us—i.e., the ruins of ancient greatness grown over by a jungle of two thousand years of hostile posterity.

Pompeii

Pompeii was destroyed in A.D. 79. From its ruins we have obtained in the last half century more information about the

intimate domestic and public life of the ancients than from any other single source. What is more important, this vast wealth of information is first hand, unspoiled, undiluted, unabridged, unbiased, uncensored;—in short, untouched by meddlesome human hands.

Though only a provincial town, Pompeii was a prosperous mercantile place, a representative market-place, a favorite resort for fashionable people. The town had hardly recuperated from a preliminary attack by that treacherous mountain, Vesuvius, when a second onslaught succeeded in complete destruction. Suddenly, without warning, this lumbering *force majeur* visited the ill-fated towns in its vicinity with merciless annihilation. The population, just then enjoying the games in the amphitheatre outside of the "downtown" district, had had hardly time to save their belongings. They escaped with their bare lives. Only the aged, the infirm, the prisoners and some faithful dogs were left behind. Today their bodies in plaster casts may be seen, mute witnesses to a frightful disaster. The town was covered with an airtight blanket of ashes, lava and fine pumice stone. There was no prolonged death struggle, no perceivable decay extended over centuries as was the cruel lot of Pompeii's mistress, Rome. There were no agonies to speak of. The great event was consummated within a few hours. The peace of death settled down to reign supreme after the dust had been driven away by the gentle breezes coming in from the bay of Naples. Some courageous citizens returned, searching in the hot ashes for the crashed-in roofs of their villas, to recover this or that. Perhaps they hoped to salvage the strong box in the atrium, or a heirloom from the triclinium. But soon they gave up. Despairing, or hoping for better days to come, they vanished in the mist of time. Pompeii, the fair, the hospitable, the gay city, just like any individual out of luck, was and stayed forgotten. The Pompeians, their joys, sorrows, their work and play, their

virtues and vices—everything was arrested with one single stroke, stopped, even as a camera clicks, taking a snapshot.

The city’s destruction, it appears, was a formidable opening blow dealt the Roman empire in the prime of its life, in a war of extermination waged by hostile invisible forces. Pompeii makes one believe in “Providence.” A great disaster actually moulding, casting a perfect image of the time for future generations! To be exact, it took these generations eighteen centuries to discover and to appreciate the heritage that was theirs, buried at the foot of Vesuvius. During these long dark and dusky centuries charming goat herds had rested unctuous shocks of hair upon mysterious columns that, like young giant asparagus, stuck their magnificent heads out of the ground. Blinking drowsily at yonder villainous mountain, the summit of which is eternally crowned with a halo of thin white smoke, such as we are accustomed to see arising from the stacks of chemical factories, the confident shepherd would lazily implore his patron saint to enjoin that unreliable devilish force within lest the *dolce far niente* of the afternoon be disturbed, for siestas are among the most important functions in the life of that region. Occasionally the more enterprising would arm themselves with pick-axe and shovel, made bold by whispered stories of fabulous wealth, and, defying the evil spirits protecting it, they would set out on an expedition of loot and desecration of the tomb of ancient splendor.

Only about a century and a half ago the archaeological conscience awoke. Only seventy-five years ago energetic moves made possible a fruitful pilgrimage to this shrine of humanity, while today not more than two-thirds but perhaps the most important parts of the city have been opened to our astonished eyes by men who know.

And now: we may see that loaf of bread baked nineteen centuries ago, as found in the bake shop. We may inspect

the ingenious bake oven where it was baked. We may see the mills that ground the flour for the bread, and, indeed find unground wheat kernels. We see the oil still preserved in the jugs, the residue of wine still in the amphorae, the figs preserved in jars, the lentils, the barley, the spices in the cupboard; everything awaits our pleasure: the taverns with their “bars”; the ancient guests’ opinion of Mine Host scribbled on the wall, the kitchens with their implements, the boudoirs of milady’s with the cosmetics and perfumes in the compacts. There are the advertisements on the walls, the foods praised with all the *eclat* of modern advertising, the election notices, the love missives, the bank deposits, the theatre tickets, law records, bills of sale.

Phantom-like yet real there are the good citizens of a good town, parading, hustling, loafing—sturdy patricians, wretched plebeians, stern centurios, boastful soldiers, scheming politicians, crafty law-clerks, timid scribes, chattering barbers, bullying gladiators, haughty actors, dusty travelers, making for Albinus’, the famous host at the *Via della Abbondanza* or, would he give preference to Sarinus, the son of Publius, who advertised so cleverly? Or, perhaps, could he afford to stop at the “Fortunata” Hotel, centrally located?

There are, too, the boorish hayseeds from out of town trying to sell their produce, unaccustomed to the fashionable Latin-Greek speech of the city folks, gaping with their mouths wide open, greedily at the steaks of sacrificial meat displayed behind enlarging glasses in the cheap cook shop windows. There they giggle and chuckle, those wily landlords with their blasé habitués and their underlings, the greasy cooks, the roguish “good mixers” at the bar and the winsome if resolute *copæ*—waitresses—all ready to go, to do business. So slippery are the cooks that Plautus calls one

Congrio—sea eel—so black that another deserves the title *Anthrax*—coal.

There they are, one and all, the characters necessary to make up what we call civilization, chattering agitatedly in a lingo of Latin-Greek-Oscan—as if life were a continuous market day.

It takes no particular scholarship, only a little imagination and human sympathy to see and to hear the ghosts of Pompeii.

There is no pose about this town, no *mise-en-scène*, no stage-setting. No heroic gesture. No theatricals, in short, no lies. There is to be found no shred of that vainglorious cloak which humans will deftly drape about their shoulders whenever they happen to be aware of the camera. There is no “registering” of any kind here.

Pompeii’s natural and pleasant disposition, therefore, is ever so much more in evidence. Not a single one of this charming city’s movements was intended for posterity. Her life stands before our eyes in clear reality, in naked, unadorned truth. Indeed, there were many things that the good folks would have loved to point to with pride. You have to search for these now. There are, alas and alack, a few things they would have hidden, had they only known what was in store for them. But all these things, good, indifferent and bad, remained in their places; and here they are, unsuspecting, real, natural, charming like Diana and her wood nymphs.

Were it not quite superfluous, we would urgently recommend the study of Pompeii to the students of life in general and to those of Antiquity in particular. Those who would know something about the ancient table cannot do without Pompeii.

Three Ancient Writers: Anacharsis, Apicius, Petronius

To those who lay stress upon documentary evidence or literary testimony, to those trusting implicitly in the honesty and reliability of writers of fiction, we would recommend Petronius Arbiter.

His *cena Trimalchionis*, Trimalchio's dinner, is the sole surviving piece from the pen of a Roman contemporary, giving detailed information on our subject. It is, too, the work of a great writer moving in the best circles, and, therefore, so much more desirable as an expert. Petronius deserves to be quoted in full but his work is too well-known, and our space too short. However, right here we wish to warn the student to bear in mind in perusing Petronius that this writer, in his *cena*, is not depicting a meal but that he is satirizing a man—that makes all the difference in the world as far as we are concerned. Petronius' *cena* is plainly an exaggeration, but even from its distorted contours the student may recognize the true lines of an ancient meal.

There is, not so well-known a beautiful picture of an Athenian dinner party which must not be overlooked, for it contains a wealth of information. Although Greek, we learn from it much of the Roman conditions. Anacharsis' description of a banquet at Athens, dating back to the fourth century B.C. about the time when the Periclean régime flourished, is worth your perusal. A particularly good version of this tale is rendered by Baron Vaerst in his book "Gastrosophie," Leipzig, 1854, who has based his version on the original translation from the Greek, entitled, *Voyage du jeune Anacharsis en Grèce vers le milieu du quatrième siècle avant l'ère vulgaire par J. J. Barthélemy*, Paris, 1824. Vaerst has amplified the excerpts from the young traveler's observations by quotations from other ancient Greek writers upon the subject, thus giving us a most beautiful and

authentic ideal description of Greek table manners and habits when Athens had reached the height in culture, refinement and political greatness.

Anacharsis was not a Hellene but a Scythian visitor. By his own admission he is no authority on Grecian cookery, but as a reporter he excels.

This truly Hellenic discussion of the art of eating and living at the table of the cultured Athenians is the most profound discourse we know of, ancient or modern, on eating. The wisdom revealed in this tale is lasting, and, like Greek marble, consummate in external beauty and inner worth.

We thus possess the testimony of two contemporary writers which together with the book of Apicius and with what we learn from Athenaeus should give a fair picture of ancient eating and cookery.

Apicius is our most substantial witness.

Unfortunately, this source has not been spared by meddlesome men, and it has not reached us in its pristine condition. As a matter of fact, Apicius has been badly mauled throughout the centuries. This book has always attracted attention, never has it met with indifference. In the middle ages it became the object of intensive study, interpretation, controversy—in short it has attracted interest that has lasted into modern times.

When, with the advent of the dark ages, it ceased to be a practical cookery book, it became a treasure cherished by the few who preserved the classical literature, and after the invention of printing it became the object of curiosity, even mystery. Some interpreters waxed enthusiastic over it, others who failed to understand it, condemned it as hopeless and worthless.

The pages of our Apiciana plainly show the lasting interest in our ancient book, particularly ever since its presence became a matter of common knowledge during the first century of printing.

The Apicius book is the most ancient of European cookery books. However, Platina's work, *de honesta uolvptate*, is the first cookery book to appear in print. Platina, in 1474, was more up-to-date. His book had a larger circulation. But its vogue stopped after a century while Apicius marched on through centuries to come, tantalizing the scholars, amusing the curious gourmets if not educated cooks to the present day.

Apicius, the Man

Who was Apicius? This is the surname of several renowned gastronomers of old Rome. There are many references and anecdotes in ancient literature to men bearing this name. Two Apicii have definitely been accounted for. The older one, Marcus A. lived at the time of Sulla about 100 B.C. The man we are most interested in, M. Gabius Apicius, lived under Augustus and Tiberius, 80 B.C. to A.D. 40. However, both these men had a reputation for their good table.

Athenaeus on Apicius

It is worth noting that the well-read Athenaeus, conversant with most authors of Antiquity makes no mention of the Apicius book. This collection of recipes, then, was not in general circulation during Athenaei time (beginning of the third century of our era), that, maybe, it was kept a secret by some Roman cooks. On the other hand it is possible that the Apicius book did not exist during the time of Athenaeus in the form handed down to us and that the monographs on various departments of cookery (most of them of Greek

origin, works of which indeed Athenaeus speaks) were collected after the first quarter of the third century and were adorned with the name of Apicius merely because his fame as a gourmet had endured.

What Athenaeus knows about Apicius (one of three known famous eaters bearing that name) is the following:

> “About the time of Tiberius [42 B.C.-37 A.D.] there lived a man, named Apicius; very rich and luxurious, for whom several kinds of cheesecake called Apician, are named [not found in our present A.]. He spent myriads of drachmas on his belly, living chiefly at Minturnæ, a city of Campania, eating very expensive crawfish, which are found in that place superior in size to those of Smyrna, or even to the crabs of Alexandria. Hearing, too, that they were very large in Africa, he sailed thither, without waiting a single day, and suffered exceedingly on his voyage. But when he came near the coast, before he disembarked (for his arrival made a great stir among the Africans) the fishermen came alongside in their boats and brought him some very fine crawfish; and he, when he saw them, asked if they had any finer; and when they said that there were none finer than those which they had brought, he, recollecting those at Minturnæ ordered the master of the ship to sail back the same way into Italy, without going near the land....
>
> “When the emperor Trajan [A.D. 52 or 53- was in Parthia [a country in Asia, part of Persia?] at a distance of many days from the sea, Apicius sent him fresh oysters, which he had kept so by a clever contrivance of his own; real oysters....”

(The instructions given in our Apicius book, Recipe 14, for the keeping of oysters would hardly guarantee their safe arrival on such a journey as described above.)

Athenaeus tells us further that many of the Apician recipes were famous and that many dishes were named after him. This confirms the theory that Apicius was not the author of the present book but that the book was dedicated to him by an unknown author or compiler. Athenaeus also mentions one Apion who wrote a book on luxurious living. Whether this man is identical with the author or patron of our book is problematic. Torinus, in his *epistola dedicatoria* to the 1541 edition expresses the same doubt.

Marcus Gabius (or Gavius) Apicius lived during Rome's most interesting epoch, when the empire had reached its highest point, when the seeds of decline, not yet apparent, were in the ground, when in the quiet villages of that far-off province, Palestine, the Saviour's doctrines fascinated humble audiences—teachings that later reaching the very heart of the world's mistress were destined to tarnish the splendor of that autocrat.

According to the mention by various writers, this man, M. Gabius Apicius, was one of the many ancient gastronomers who took the subject of food seriously. Assuming a scientific attitude towards eating and food they were criticised for paying too much attention to their table. This was considered a superfluous and indeed wicked luxury when frugality was a virtue. These men who knew by intuition the importance of knowing something about nutrition are only now being vindicated by the findings of modern science.

M. Gabius Apicius, this most famous of the celebrated and much maligned bon-vivants, quite naturally took great interest in the preparation of food. He is said to have originated many dishes himself; he collected much material

on the subject and he endowed a school for the teaching of cookery and for the promotion of culinary ideas. This very statement by his critics places him high in our esteem, as it shows him up as a scientist and educator. He spent his vast fortune for food, as the stories go, and when he had only a quarter million dollars left (a paltry sum today but a considerable one in those days when gold was scarce and monetary standards in a worse muddle than today) Apicius took his own life, fearing that he might have to starve to death some day.

This story seems absurd on the face of it, yet Seneca and Martial tell it (both with different tendencies) and Suidas, Albino and other writers repeat it without critical analysis. These writers who are unreliable in culinary matters anyway, claim that Apicius spent one hundred million *sestertii* on his appetite—*in gulam*. Finally when the hour of accounting came he found that there were only ten million *sestertii* left, so he concluded that life was not worth living if his gastronomic ideas could no longer be carried out in the accustomed and approved style, and he took poison at a banquet especially arranged for the occasion.

In the light of modern experience with psychology, with economics, depressions, journalism, we focus on this and similar stories, and we find them thoroughly unreliable. We cannot believe this one. It is too melodramatic, too moralistic perhaps to suit our modern taste. The underlying causes for the conduct, life and end of Apicius have not been told. Of course, we have to accept the facts as reported. If only a Petronius had written that story! What a story it might have been! But there is only one Petronius in antiquity. His Trimalchio, former slave, successful profiteer and food speculator, braggard and drunkard, wife-beater—an upstart who arranged extravagant banquets merely to show off, who, by the way, also arranged for his funeral at