

Renaissance and Reformation
Renaissance et Réforme



Bach, Volker. The Kitchen, Food, and Cooking in Reformation Germany

Christina Moss

Volume 40, numéro 4, automne 2017

URI : <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1086076ar>

DOI : <https://doi.org/10.33137/rr.v40i4.29278>

[Aller au sommaire du numéro](#)

Éditeur(s)

Iter Press

ISSN

0034-429X (imprimé)

2293-7374 (numérique)

[Découvrir la revue](#)

Citer ce compte rendu

Moss, C. (2017). Compte rendu de [Bach, Volker. The Kitchen, Food, and Cooking in Reformation Germany]. *Renaissance and Reformation / Renaissance et Réforme*, 40(4), 188–190. <https://doi.org/10.33137/rr.v40i4.29278>

© Canadian Society for Renaissance Studies / Société canadienne d'études de la Renaissance; Pacific Northwest Renaissance Society; Toronto Renaissance and Reformation Colloquium; Victoria University Centre for Renaissance and Reformation Studies, 2017

Ce document est protégé par la loi sur le droit d'auteur. L'utilisation des services d'Érudit (y compris la reproduction) est assujettie à sa politique d'utilisation que vous pouvez consulter en ligne.

<https://apropos.erudit.org/fr/usagers/politique-dutilisation/>

érudit

Cet article est diffusé et préservé par Érudit.

Érudit est un consortium interuniversitaire sans but lucratif composé de l'Université de Montréal, l'Université Laval et l'Université du Québec à Montréal. Il a pour mission la promotion et la valorisation de la recherche.

<https://www.erudit.org/fr/>

Bach, Volker.

The Kitchen, Food, and Cooking in Reformation Germany.

Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 2016. Pp. 212. ISBN 978-1-4422-5127-4 (hardcover) US\$85.

In *The Kitchen, Food, and Cooking in Reformation Germany*, part of Rowman and Littlefield's new series on historic kitchens, Volker Bach seeks to describe the culinary practices of early modern Germans. His treatment of the subject is informative and accessible to specialists and laypeople alike. He draws from an extensive array of primary sources, from household account books to botanical guides, to cookbooks and literature. His treatment of the subject matter encompasses the ingredients commonly used by early modern Germans, cooking instruments and methods of food preparation, and the ways in which food and drink were (and were supposed to be) consumed.

The monograph is divided into seven chapters. The first, "The Land and People," provides a cursory overview of early modern German history and geography in order to situate the reader. The second, "The German Larder," details the various ingredients commonly used in early modern German cuisine, from bread to meat and fish to cabbage and legumes. The following chapter, the "Household Book," describes the materials used by early modern Germans in food storage, preparation, and serving. The next chapter, "The Three Tables," draws its title from a 1525 broadsheet, which describes the lives of rich, poor, and middle-class people using the analogy of three set tables: one with an excess of food, one without sufficient food, and one with just enough. In this chapter, Bach describes how differences in social status affected diet and food preparation. The following chapter, "Table Manners," addresses social mores around communal eating and drinking. The sixth chapter, "A New Cookbook," describes the cookbooks that circulated in early modern Germany, both in printed and manuscript form. Finally, Bach provides a selection of representative recipes drawn from the various cookery books cited throughout the monograph, which give readers a sense of both the sorts of food served in early modern German households and the typical format of an early modern recipe.

Bach's treatment of the subject matter is consistently thorough, and he covers the geographical breadth of German-speaking lands. Additionally, he pays careful attention to the ways in which experiences of food and cooking

differed according to social position. This is most evident in the chapter on “The Three Tables,” but Bach maintains this focus throughout the volume, and attempts whenever possible to elucidate the experiences of the common folk in early modern Germany in as much detail as possible. This can be challenging at times, since so many of the surviving primary sources available to Bach, from cookbooks to household accounts, were produced by members of elite families and those in their employ. Nevertheless, Bach seeks out references to the diets and practices of poor and middle-class early modern Germans wherever he can find them, from descriptions of army rations to the memoirs of the rural schoolmaster Thomas Platter.

If there is any subtopic to which Bach might have paid more attention, it is the intersection of food and religion. Although the book’s title speaks of “Reformation Germany,” the religious upheavals of the sixteenth century are barely mentioned in the historical overview provided in the first chapter. Religion is not entirely absent from the book, as Bach does discuss the practices of fasting and charity at some length. However, the Eucharist, that central meal of the Christian faith, is omitted entirely from Bach’s treatment, despite the fact that it remained an important practice for virtually all Christians in early modern Europe, even as they disagreed on its correct name and theological significance. Another aspect of food in early modern Germany that might have received more attention was the importance of shared meals and the practice of hospitality among reformers, who frequently hosted men and families from the Protestant diaspora and whose mealtimes were often filled with lively theological discussion. More in-depth treatment of the differences between Jewish and Christian households would also have been welcome; Bach very briefly mentions Jewish dietary restrictions in his introductory overview, but does not return to the topic in the subsequent chapters.

Notwithstanding these minor omissions, however, Bach’s monograph is a valuable resource, both for those with a specific interest in culinary history and for historians of early modern Germany who seek to develop a fuller picture of the lives their subjects lived. It is perhaps a professional hazard for historians that, in our fascination with texts and ideas and laws, it can sometimes be tempting to forget that early modern Germans, from Luther and Charles V to peasants in Bavaria or Alsace, were fully embodied human beings. They engaged in the world around them not only with their minds but also with their senses, and Volker Bach’s book is an excellent way to gain insight into an

important aspect of their everyday lived realities. Seasoned scholars and non-specialists alike will find much of value in his work.

CHRISTINA MOSS

University of Waterloo

Caravale, Giorgio.

***Preaching and Inquisition in Renaissance Italy: Words on Trial.* Trans. Frank Gordon.**

Leiden: Brill, 2016. Pp. xi, 274. ISBN 978-90-04-32545-6 (hardcover) US\$174.

Giorgio Caravale, a prolific scholar of early modern Italy, has published an excellent study of the Inquisition's attempts to curb subversive preachers. *Preaching and Inquisition* is a modified, English translation of his *Predicazione e Inquisizione nell'Italia del Cinquecento. Ippolito Chizzola tra eresia e controversia antiprottestante* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2012). As the latter's subtitle indicates, the prime focus is on a leading preacher, Ippolito Chizzola from Brescia (1521–65), a Lateran Regular Canon, whose sermons in the 1540s came under attack and were investigated by the Roman Inquisition. Later, however, Chizzola became a “hero of the Counter Reformation” (4), when arguing against Pier Paolo Vergerio in a 1562 *Risposta* to some of his writings. This translation covers the prologue and the thirteen chapters of the original with minor additions. This is preceded by a helpful thirty-page “Introduction to the English Edition.”

The introduction outlines issues about the Catholic Church's handling of controversial preachers in the sixteenth century: namely, the problems of putting “Words on Trial.” It provides a useful guide to the recent historiography on the Roman Inquisition, and its handling of accused preachers. Caravale deals with the history of preaching in Renaissance Italy, seeing preaching and heresy as a two-sided coin to be studied, looking at continuity as well as disruption in pre-Reformation preaching. Caravale importantly warns historians about the dangers of uncritical adoption of the Inquisition perspective. He makes valuable points about the issues of orality in sermons and links with written culture, and about the limitations of sources for the inquisitors, given the meagre survival of notes, both for and about them, and the dubious reliability of what was recorded and reported. In the present case, “the transition from orality to