

Grazing

The ramblings and recipes of a man
who gets paid to eat

John Newton

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Introduction

This is a book of the type that used to be called a miscellany. It rolls up servings of travel with some sides of history, a leavening of memoir and a generous helping of culinary speculation into one shaggy, baggy parcel. If it seems all over the place, that's the way it is meant to be.

The good thing for the reader is that it means you can dip in anywhere, and come up with a tasty morsel.

The greater part of the book deals with my two long-term mistresses: Spain, and food. From the moment I set foot on Spanish soil I fell deeply in love. The examination of that love affair will help you to understand her seductive powers, and my hopelessness in the face of them.

And food. Probably from the first thing to pass my lips – my mother's milk – I've been in love with flavour, raw ingredients and those products made from them by skilful craftsmen and women. This love also includes, more and more, the people who grow and raise the things we eat.

A couple of times I have been unfaithful to my Spanish mistress, and have wandered and eaten promiscuously in other countries that have beguiled me; Tunisia and Mauritius being two I have visited more than once.

It will, I hope, be devoured by those who love to eat and travel and read about what they eat and where they can eat it: those insatiable readers who gobble up around 750,000 cookbooks every year – and who want to know more.

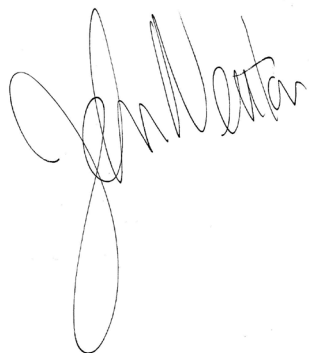
It contains stories about the curiously deformed but well informed Grimod de la Reynière, the world's first restaurant critic; the history of the Dagwood dog; how – and why – they kill tordos; how to eat flesh with a clear conscience; what Gypsies eat when they're on the road; the gender politics of instant couscous, and the strange, delicious and life-giving things that grow on the floor of the forest.

It comprises articles re-worked to include all I wanted to put in but couldn't because of editorial space restrictions; speeches re-worked ditto; other articles written and not published by squeamish editors; and original pieces written for just such a collection that I knew would happen one day.

As a bonus, there is a curious and often pertinent bundle of recipes gleaned from friends (some famed chefs, others fine home-cooks), history books, and travels and yet others concocted in our ramshackle family kitchen. Most are useful, some brilliant, others are included only for their historic interest.

About these recipes. Firstly, they have all been cooked and are all cookable for anyone who knows their way around a kitchen. Secondly, they have all been carefully edited by the publisher. And thirdly, there is my abbreviation, EVOO: extra virgin olive oil. It is the only oil I use when cooking the kinds of recipes you find in this book, along with butter, where necessary, which is often. Rarely do I specify how much EVOO to use, because you will have a bottle or a tin on hand, and my suggestion of two tablespoons or half a cup will be less useful than your reading of the recipe. Where more precision is needed you will be given an exact amount.

All in all, I like to think it is a constructive and entertaining book, written for those interested enough in what we eat, and why we eat what we eat, to read more than the glossies and food pages of the daily press.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "John Newton". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large loop at the end of the name.

John Newton