

The noble art of the Pastry-cook

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Objektyp: **Article**

Zeitschrift: **The Swiss observer : the journal of the Federation of Swiss Societies in the UK**

Band (Jahr): - **(1955)**

Heft 1263

PDF erstellt am: **26.06.2024**

Persistenter Link: <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-694751>

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THE NOBLE ART OF THE PASTRY-COOK.

The scriptural axiom which says that man does not live by bread alone is of course figurative and carries none but moral and spiritual implications. But it might also be applied in a literal sense and we could not help doing so when we opened, and admired, Mr. W. Bachmann's latest book, called "Continental Confectionery". It runs to 350 pages and is published by Maclaren & Sons Ltd., at the price of 57/6.

The book is one of Mr. Bachmann's most valuable and outstanding contributions to the study and practice of the art of bakery and its many ramifications. Based upon and in great part translated from Swiss sources it covers a wide range and contains instructions and recipes for the making of most Continental sweetmeats: Cakes, pastries, gateaux, tarts, flans, biscuits and all sorts of cream, custard, chocolate and sugar confectionery.

But the work goes far beyond being a mere collection of recipes. It lays down the fundamentals of the pastry-cook's craft and the initial basis from which to achieve good results. It gives the composition of the main ingredients used in the mixtures, it analyses the constituents of the raw materials: Flour, butter, eggs, sugar and so forth and it explains the mechanics of baking, the temperatures of the ovens, the ways of the dough, all the technical information, in fact, that the professional craftsman requires if he wishes to rise above the average in his art.

An interesting and fascinating feature of the book consists of a historical retrospect on the art of baking and confectionery through the ages. It takes us back to thousands of years before the Christian era. The oldest known civilised peoples had cakes and pastries; the Chinese and later the Egyptians and the classical Greeks all knew and practised the art. There is ample evidence, also, of the important place it held in the gastronomic history of Europe down to present days and how much it kept pace with the cultural advancement of the nations. In fact the more civilised man became the less content was he to "live by bread alone". This historical section is illustrated by well-chosen prints which add greatly to its interest and understanding.

The book itself is most handsomely produced and beautifully illustrated. Almost every recipe has its corresponding illustration, there are over 500 of them showing either the preparation or the finished article,

often both. The indexing is adequate and well-arranged and the whole lay-out practical and workmanlike.

We are not qualified to express an opinion on the technical excellence of Mr. Bachmann's book, this must be left to the experts. But to the layman it appears to be a magnificent work, most carefully thought-out, well-ordered and finely produced, reflecting credit on both the author and his publishers.

Mr. Bachmann deserves praise for the careful and painstaking preparation and the immense amount of work that must have gone into the making of his book. We hope he will find compensation in a large circulation and in the appreciation of his fellow-craftsmen. As for ourselves, we can do no better than repeat and endorse Hilaire Belloc's lines which Mr. Bachmann quotes at the end of his preface:

"Wen I am dead, I hope it may be said:
His sins were scarlet, but his books were
read."

J.J.F.S. November, 1955.

OUR NEXT ISSUE.

Our next issue will be published on Friday, December 16th, 1955. (One issue only.)

We take the opportunity of thanking the following subscribers for their kind and helpful donations over and above their subscriptions: M. E. Dubois, Ch. Fer, M. N. Leuzinger, P. Bessire, W. Flory, H. Frutiger, A. J. Wymann, A. Bleiker, C. H. Willi, W. R. Gamper, W. B. Sigerist, Louis Chapuis, J. J. Huber.

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