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Review of Christmas Food and Feasting: A History

Rebecca Tolley

East Tennessee State University, tolleyst@etsu.edu

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Review of Christmas Food and Feasting: A History

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[Christmas food and feasting : a history](#)



[Shanahan, Madeline.](#) Rowman & Littlefield, 2019

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Part of the "Meals" series edited by Ken Albala, this volume brings Christmas food and feasting's "social and cultural meaning into sharp focus," according to the series foreword. Food has traditionally played a central role in Christmas celebrations; the focal point of the occasion is often the meal gathering. An independent food historian, Shanahan reveals recurring themes and dishes that span centuries of Christmas tradition. She focuses on the British Christmas tradition, although she examines American customs and the British influence on traditions around the world, highlighting such motifs as paper crowns and plum puddings. The first chapter provides context in the form of a short history of Christmas. Subsequent chapters examine "meats and main," "puddings and desserts," "festive cakes," "sweet treats," and finally, "drink." Traditionally, Christmas tables were heavily laden with meat. Sugar's importance cannot be underscored, as three of six chapters focus on sweet dishes. Alcohol plays a critical role as well, stemming from wassailing traditions. Includes illustrations and notes.

Summing Up: Recommended. Lower-division undergraduates and general readers.

Reviewer: [R. Tolley](#), East Tennessee State University

Recommendation: Recommended

Readership Level: General Readers, Lower-division Undergraduates

Interdisciplinary Subjects: [Food and Agriculture](#)

Subject: [Science & Technology](#)

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