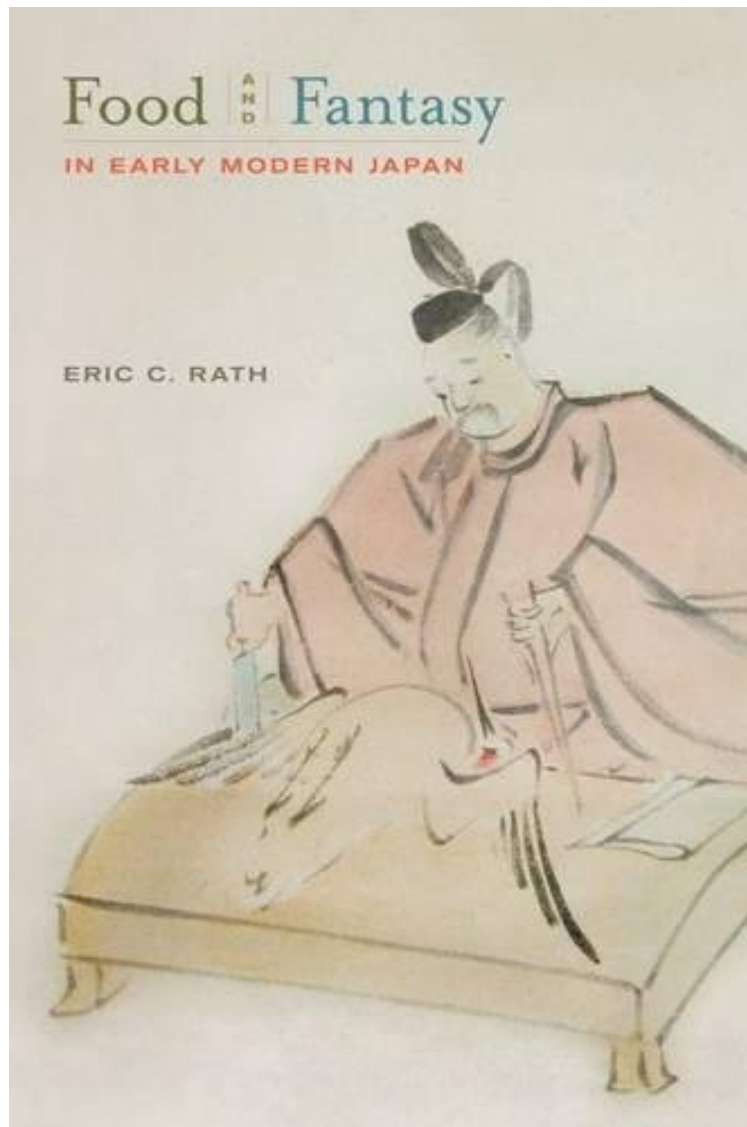


[Library ebook] Food and Fantasy in Early Modern Japan

Food and Fantasy in Early Modern Japan

Eric Rath

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Eric Rath : Food and Fantasy in Early Modern Japan before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Food and Fantasy in Early Modern Japan:

10 of 10 people found the following review helpful. Very highly recommended for food scholars in all disciplines. By Customer This is a brief review, because I am planning to write a longer one for a journal as soon as I get time. In this book Rath draws our attention to some fascinating genres of historical Japanese cooking. He shows that food preparation and consumption was about far more than satisfying hunger - it was an aesthetic and spiritual practice that

involved high degrees of devotion, skill and sophistication. Food was one of many ways that Japanese society turned mundane acts like drinking tea, gardening, or enjoying nature into matters of deep significance and almost endless depth. In the process food was unhinged entirely from its role as something to eat, to the point where eating it actually seemed to profane its' essence. It was too good for mere mortals to eat, so it became an offering or sacrifice. Or after appreciating the performance of preparing and carving the food, the audience had no interest in actually eating such a beautiful thing. Rath illuminates Japanese history in a new way, but he also shows us an aspect of food which is universal - that we have many ways to enjoy it besides actually eating it, and that sometimes after the pleasure of watching it being prepared (think of TV cooking shows here), consuming it with our eyes and mind, we are satisfied in a way that we cannot achieve by pushing the stuff through our mouths and into our stomachs.

How did one dine with a shogun? Or make solid gold soup, sculpt with a fish, or turn seaweed into a symbol of happiness? In this fresh look at Japanese culinary history, Eric C. Rath delves into the writings of medieval and early modern Japanese chefs to answer these and other provocative questions, and to trace the development of Japanese cuisine from 1400 to 1868. Rath shows how medieval “fantasy food” rituals—where food was revered as symbol rather than consumed—were continued by early modern writers. The book offers the first extensive introduction to Japanese cookbooks, recipe collections, and gastronomic writings of the period and traces the origins of dishes like tempura, sushi, and sashimi while documenting Japanese cooking styles and dining customs.

“This volume is a cogent reminder that to truly understand the importance of food in our lives, we must examine not merely its material role, but also its symbolic significance.”