



The Greedy Queen: Eating with Victoria

Annie Gray

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In the 19th century, a revolution took place in how we ate - from the highest table in the land to the most humble. Annie Gray's book is both a biography of Britain's most iconic monarch, and a look at the changing nature of cooking and eating in the Victorian era.

From her early years living on milk and bread under the Kensington system, to her constant indigestion and belligerent over-eating as an elderly woman, her diet will be examined, likes and dislikes charted, and the opinions of those around her considered. More than that, though, this book will take a proper look below stairs. Victoria was surrounded by servants, from ladies-in-waiting, to secretaries, dressers and coachmen. But there was another category of servant, more fundamental, and yet at the same time more completely hidden: her cooks.

From her greed to her selfishness at the table, her indigestion and her absolute reliance on food as a lifelong companion, with her when so many others either died or were forced away by political factors, Victoria had a huge impact on the way we all eat today. Annie Gray gives us a new perspective on Britain's longest reigning monarch, viewing her through the one thing more dear to her than almost anything else: her stomach.

The Greedy Queen: Eating with Victoria Details

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Author : Annie Gray

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From Reader Review The Greedy Queen: Eating with Victoria for online ebook

Theresa says

A fascinating insight into the eating habits of Queen Victoria and the wider population over her reign. Annie Gray goes into so much detail about the integral nature of food at court - from elaborate banquets served a la francaise in London and at Windsor, to the breakfasts and teas taken outside at Balmoral and Osborne - that it became overwhelming until you become used to the monotony of the food and the realisation that, unlike today, you didn't need to consume everything on the table. One thing I was particularly struck by was how food at court was recycled so much, with servants and the poor around the royal residences being given anything that was not eaten by the Queen and her household.

I was a bit disappointed with how long the chapters were, with no subheadings or clear sections, as it meant the book was difficult to fit around work. However, Annie Gray's writing was so clear, and everything flowed well, so reading the book itself was a pleasure whenever I managed to sit down to read a chapter.

Thoroughly recommended for anyone interested in the history of food and/or Queen Victoria.

Carolyn Harris says

A culinary biography of Queen Victoria and a history of attitudes toward food, cooking and dining in the Victorian era. Victoria was an enthusiastic and adventurous eater who who sampled bird's nest soup in 1884 and an ostrich egg omelette in 1899. There are fascinating descriptions of the Queen as a culinary tourist, sampling bouillabaisse in the French riviera and seeking out local delicacies on private visits to Switzerland, Italy and Germany. Victoria's daily meals, which generally featured lamb chops or mutton, are compared to the more elaborate meals served at state dinners. Queen Victoria's weight fluctuated over the course of her reign, declining during her adolescence , increasing in her early years as Queen, declining again during her marriage to Prince Albert then increasingly rapidly during her widowhood. I would have been interested to read more about the impact of the British Empire on the Queen's meals. There are references to her enthusiasm for Indian curry dishes and the import of preserved meats from Australia and New Zealand later in her reign but there is no discussion of Canadian wheat, bacon and fish, which were all exported to Britain during Queen Victoria's reign. The book includes recipes for a variety of dishes enjoyed by the Queen including pancakes with marmalade and royal haggis. A delicious read with a fresh perspective on Queen Victoria.

Heidi Rose says

I enjoyed this book and its wonderful descriptions of dining with the Royals. It was easy to imagine the opulence of the time and I think I would have loved a royal cubby house! Lovely book which I will certainly read again.

Verity W says

This is an interesting insight into what Queen Victoria ate through her life and how the royal kitchens were organised. I enjoyed it, although I found that the way that the book was organised was a bit confusing - the chapters are chronological but within the chapters it jumps around a quite a bit and it's sometimes hard to keep track of where you are in Victoria's life.

But I did learn a lot about upper class catering and the increase in mass production and changes in food distribution during the Victorian era.

Krissy says

This is a fun read filled with social history, food, & glimpses of a Queen. It's interesting to think about how food etiquette impacted people culturally. Gray bills this as not the typical biography and honestly it isn't. 19th century recipes are included in the chapters and an appendix of modernized versions of them is included.

Toby borrowed this one to me. Not sure I'd buy it for my own shelves. I am curious to see other biographies and what sort of diaries and letter collections by Queen Victoria are available. :)

Plumpernickel says

"The Greedy Queen - eating with Victoria" by Annie Gray was one of the most interesting books I read in 2017. The book covers Queen Victoria's kitchens, menus, eating habits, eating companions, state banquets, child rearing and chefs. I learnt about the scale of operations of a royal palace and how kitchens in English palaces were modernized and run. The book also revealed how fond Victoria was of food and adventurous when it came to new foods. If you like reading about food, catering, history, this book should be definitely read.

Louise Culmer says

Very enjoyable account of Queen Victoria's life through food. there are chapters about what she ate in the various stages of her long life, the royal kitchens, cooks, and even some attention paid to the food of ordinary people. The chapter on kitchens describes the chaotic conditions at Buckingham palace in the early years of Victoris's reign - guests complained that there was no one to show them to their rooms, and one unfortunate gentleman had to spend the night on a sofa because he couldn't find his way back to his room. one of the most interesting chapters describes how service a la francaise (many dishes placed on the table at once) was gradually replaced by service a La russe (one dish served at a Time). Annie Grey has some interesting things to say about the queen, for instance when discussing her relationship with her children. Victoria has often been accused of disliking her children, but in fact as Annie Grey observes: 'the Queen seems to have behaved much like any other mother, alternating between wanting to throttle her increasing band of hoodlums, and absolutely adoring all of them.' Queen Victoria had a partiality for drink as well as food, so much so that prince Albert was advised to curb her drinking for 'a queen does not drink a bottle of wine at a meal.' this

book should not be read when hungry, so many different delicious dishes are described in it, and there are recipes for those who wish to try them.

Laura Noakes says

Fascinating look at Queen Victoria through the prism of food. This is popular history done right.

Sheryl Kirby says

Queen Victoria was one of the most interesting characters in history, whether you look at her from the perspective of royalty, parent, or politician. But what about Victoria's life in food? She certainly did love to eat, as Dr. Annie Gray points out in this detailed work about not just Victoria's own meals but about how food was procured, prepared, and eaten within the royal palaces during the Victorian era. From corruption and theft to kitchens that often flooded with backed-up sewage, right down to the variance in menus for staff, courtiers and the royal family (the kitchens sometimes needed to turn out thousands of meals per day, most with extensive multi-course menus), Gray covers it all from Victoria's first meal last Queen to her last. There's even a collection of recipes for some of Victoria's favourite dishes.

Simon says

Lots and lots of over egged facts, anecdotes, spurious facts (even in the copious chapter notes), extensive bibliography and to top it off an appendix with annotated and modernised recipes.

Chapter include:

Victoria's Childhood

Dining styles

Kitchens

Cooks

Pvt Palaces

Motherhood

Ordinary eating

The wider world of food &

The ageing Queen

I must admit after gorging on reams of foods I became a little full and found repetition giving me heartburn and wished myself for just a poached egg. I felt not enough titbits to keep me nibbling of Annie Gray's meander through one of England's most studied and known Queen, but forced myself to sit at the table for a little longer.

Not sure if this book is for the hardened researcher or the nibbler of history.

Many of the books quoted in the Bibliography also give insights into the depths of Victoria's larder and would elicit a quick taste I think.

As Annie sums up 'the culinary legacy of Victoria lives on', food is complicated, time consuming, awe inspiring 'but like Victoria the person' she was 'down to earth, honest and delightful' enjoying the simple foods such as tea, biscuits, poached egg, drank whiskey and milk to. She embraced the world and its offered culinary delights bringing much variety to our own tables, even our love of Curry of Chickens a l' Indienne;

so thanks you Victoria for enjoying food and its delightful variety and thanks you Annie for researching the subject and giving us a plate full to gobble through.

Alicia says

Having enjoyed Dr Gray's TV appearances (and being a bit resentful that "food historian" was never mentioned on careers night) I was looking forward to this. Because it's proper history i.e doesn't speculate where there is little to no evidence, you don't get a lot of highly coloured embellishment, but the insight into how Queen Victoria ate, how that differed from the people around her and how food culture in Britain changed during her reign is very interesting. Can't imagine that the Duchess of Cambridge would be reassured that there's a 150 year history of the media body shaming women in the royal family, though.

Schopflin says

I loved this! I was always interested in the food history but it also manages to be a warm, if selective, biography and a fascinating insight into the administration of royal households.

BonnieL says

The book had an interesting start but it quickly became tedious with endless discussions of menus, explanations of the various types of service, descriptions of kitchens and of all the various implements and pots and pans. When the author states that Victoria essentially kept to the same menus for years, both for private and state meals, then there seemed to be little point to the rest of the book, which became repetitive and dull. This would be a great book for any author wanting authentic details for a book set in the Victorian era and also for anyone fascinated by the food preparation of the time.

Alena says

Way too detailed for my level of interest (I didn't even know I had a level of interest, I just like the author when I catch her on TV/radio and enjoy her on Twitter).

But despite that, the writing was really accessible and enjoyable. And while I could have done with a little less detail on the foods eaten, I liked reading about Victoria, the places she lived, how she lived, her household, etc. And about how the world changed around her.

Helen says

This is fun: not exactly a biography of Victoria but a look at her life through food, with lots of social history. Although the title sounds a bit hostile this made me warm to her rather more than other accounts have done. The food is described lavishly - both the excesses of the royal table and the history of food for others

throughout the period, also fascinating details of how the whole thing worked behind the scenes in all the royal homes and when travelling. There are some recipes if you fancy trying some of it. Oh, and Victoria used to put whisky in her claret, which I find quite alarming but the author tells us is worth trying.
