Chapter Six: Gourmet's Gastronomic Tours: Samuel Chamberlain and His Bouquets

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In Bobos in Paradise, David Brooks portrays the lifestyles of the bourgeois Bohemians, who, among other defining characteristics, plan their own vacations rather than opting for organized tours. As they travel, the Bobos deliberately slow the pace in order to develop close relationships with indigenous people and to understand their cultures. They give a high priority to experiencing the local cuisine and searching for the “gemlike little basilica far off the normal tourist paths.” By demonstrating their independence from organized tourism, the Bobos also establish a claim to higher status in the social order.1

As it turns out, travelers and travel writers over the last two centuries have anticipated the Bobos by advertising their “off-the-beaten-path” itineraries as superior to the tours that guided travelers to the same old monuments in the same old places. Indeed, half a century before Brooks discovered the Bobos, Samuel Chamberlain, in his travel guides to France, Italy, and England, not only stigmatized package tours for middle-class Americans but designed an “off-the-beaten-track” travel experience that enabled his largely upper-middle-class travelers to establish their superiority to the mere tourist. Brooks’ “travel snobs” now follow in their footsteps.2

But Chamberlain’s guidebooks offered more to travelers than opportunities to rise in the social order. In considering other guidebooks and tours that were available to American tourists in Europe after World War II, it becomes clear that Chamberlain’s books filled a special niche. As Christopher Endy has shown, the most important alternatives included the increasingly popular package tour, comfortable tourism along the beaten path as prescribed by Fielding’s Travel Guide to Europe, or the so-called spontaneous, unstructured travel advocated by Arthur Frommer in Europe on 5 Dollars a Day. While Chamberlain was also a strong proponent of the unstructured journey, he never courted budget travelers and never mentioned the price of meals or auto rental, no doubt to suggest that money was no object to his readers. Instead, he advocated an automobile tour for the family emphasizing gastronomy and architecture in the provinces. In so
doing, Chamberlain was on a personal mission to educate and excite his readers about two subjects that had enriched his own life.³

Consistent with his own and *Gourmet*’s priorities, Chamberlain, with the assistance of his wife Narcissa, introduced travelers to the pleasures of fine dining in France, Italy, and Britain. The guidebooks recommended charming inns and epicurean restaurants where travelers could find authentic regional cuisine and provided recipes for some of the most popular dishes, while his photographs and drawings gave readers a better sense of the beauty and structural complexity of old churches, villages, and houses. Chamberlain embedded these architectural and culinary experiences in relatively unstructured automobile tours, which he and his wife had first experienced with their own children. The guidebooks thus provided a comprehensive view of the good life in elegant prose and appealing illustrations and invited readers to experience this life in their travels.

To suit the family’s needs, travelers could customize itineraries from a variety of options presented in the guidebooks. Such a freewheeling strategy put the traveler, rather than the travel agency, both literally and metaphorically in the driver’s seat. Of course, those who followed Chamberlain’s recommendations to the letter would, ironically, have chosen a package tour in all but name. Furthermore, it was not clear whether travelers would be able to connect with the local population, as Chamberlain intended. After all, the car could become an isolation chamber or a link to the locals depending on passengers’ inclinations and language skills.⁴

Despite Chamberlain’s success as a travel writer, he never developed a systematic approach to evaluating restaurants. Well versed in French cuisine, he often adopted the vague standards of regional cuisine proponents, who often preferred small family restaurants based on ambiance more than the quality of their food. His relative unfamiliarity with Italian and British cuisine was also evident in the less authoritative treatment he gave to the foodways of those countries.

All the same, *Gourmet* editor Earle MacAusland made a timely decision to send Chamberlain to research his guidebooks in Europe in the 1950s as airlines were introducing jet travel on transatlantic routes and fares were dropping. However, the eagerness of *Gourmet* readers to set off for Europe was also a tribute to the appeal of Chamberlain’s writing and illustrations. More than any other *Gourmet* author, not only did he contribute to the dramatic increase in American travel to Europe, but he and his publisher were also partly responsible for redirecting that traffic. To exploit his popularity after the success of *Bouquet de France*, MacAusland sent him to Italy and Britain, thus marking an
important shift in the magazine’s orientation. For the first time, *Gourmet* seriously considered the cultural and culinary claims of countries other than France and the United States.

**The Author and His Audience**

Well before launching *Gourmet* in 1941, Earle MacAusland knew that he had found his man. On the recommendation of a mutual friend, MacAusland sought out Chamberlain at MIT, where he taught graphic arts. And even though he quickly rejected MacAusland’s offer to edit the new magazine, Chamberlain had a compelling idea for a story about the adventures of Clementine, the Burgundian cook, in adapting to American life. As MacAusland recognized, the story promised to appeal to the kind of readers *Gourmet* was seeking.5

Because he understood his readers’ assumptions and aspirations, Chamberlain was well equipped to play the role of guide. He and his early readers had a common experience, shaped by generational, class, and geographical factors. Many were raised in small towns at the turn of the century when regional differences were diminishing and traditional values declining. Most gravitated toward cities as they came of age around 1920. Sons and daughters of well-educated, old-stock Americans who were predominantly professionals and businessmen, they sought to balance work with pleasure by embracing the consumer ethos and pursuing a pleasurable life in which travel and an elegant lifestyle figured prominently. And their children, in turn, who came of age after the Second World War, embraced consumerism with even more enthusiasm and resources than their parents. They too found in Chamberlain a compatible guide.

Chamberlain’s familiarity with France and French culture, traditionally a marker of upper-class status, enabled him to instruct his readers in finding the good life through travel and an appreciation of traditional culture, including especially gastronomy and architecture. Traveling with him, they crossed mountains and provincial boundaries; in experiencing a new lifestyle, they also crossed the barriers between the middle and upper-middle class. Their new savoir faire would help to stamp them as members of that class.6

Born in 1895 to a family with New England roots, Chamberlain grew up in Aberdeen, Washington, where his father practiced medicine. To attend the University of Washington and MIT, he moved first to Seattle and then to Boston, following the path of other urban migrants to larger cities. Like many future Paris exiles, he interrupted his studies at MIT to join the American Field Service, which supplied ambulance drivers to evacuate wounded French soldiers
from the battlefields. For his bravery during the Second Battle of the Marne, the French government awarded him the Croix de Guerre.7 Despite his daily brushes with death, Chamberlain enjoyed his first experience abroad. Among other memorable adventures, he and fellow ambulance corps drivers were pressed into service as pickers to preserve the grape crop in Champagne from a frost. During down times in the fields and on the front, he painted watercolors of local scenes; his photograph of the unit chef, M. Lebec, whose *poule au pot* (chicken stew), *navarin* (mutton stew with turnips), and *boeuf à la mode* (braised beef with vegetables) he enjoyed, was prophetic of his future career as artist and gastronomer.8

During the interwar period, Chamberlain exploited various opportunities to study, travel, and work in Europe. He launched a career as a commercial etcher, which enabled him to fund a summer trip to France in 1922. With fellowships from the American Field Service and the Guggenheim Foundation and sales of his etchings, Chamberlain and his wife extended their stay in France for most of the next decade. He apprenticed with professional artists to hone his skills in lithography and etching, while building a portfolio of sketches from Normandy, Brittany, and the Midi that would accompany his later articles in *Gourmet*. He even used an automobile to visit the provinces and thus laid the groundwork for the new approach to travel that he would advocate after the war.9

Chamberlain, however, was an expatriate with a difference. Unlike literary innovators Ernest Hemingway and F. Scott Fitzgerald or artistic pioneers Man Ray and Alexander Calder, his traveling companion in Normandy in the 1920s, Chamberlain had little interest in challenging artistic conventions or the genteel tradition. Instead, he embraced the preindustrial landscape and traditional culture of Europe and New England as the subjects of his black-and-white drawings and photographs. They, in turn, gave eloquent testimony to the charms of traditional life on both sides of the Atlantic, a message conveyed in picture books and guidebooks to well-educated American travelers, who developed an affinity for aesthetically pleasing buildings and vistas.10

In 1930, the Chamberlains with their two young daughters purchased a house in Senlis, near Paris, where they lived until 1934. During those years, as he later explained, “the noble art of gastronomy was creeping in, and the graphic arts were beginning to serve as accomplices to the epicurean theme.” In the process, Chamberlain collected some 1,200 cookbooks and other gastronomical tomes. More important, he schooled himself in the diverse specialties and techniques of French cuisine by observing French cooks at work in their kitchens. Knowledge of gastronomy would strengthen his already firm grasp of traditional
culture in France and would make Chamberlain’s advice on travel and the good life more persuasive to readers.  

Like other exiles, the Chamberlains experienced financial problems during the Depression and returned to the United States. Following their arrival in 1934, the family made a relatively smooth transition to life in historic Marblehead near Boston, while Chamberlain himself embarked on a new career. He taught etching at MIT, learned photography, and published a series of illustrated volumes mostly documenting traditional New England life.

In 1941, Chamberlain volunteered for a position as an Air Force intelligence officer and was soon assigned to the European sector. After a stint in Egypt, he joined the Italian campaign in the Naples area, where he found time to explore the hinterlands of Apulia by jeep, while recording his experience in sketches. During a brief stay in Britain in 1945 as a member of the U.S. Strategic Bombing Survey, Chamberlain dodged bombs, produced a report for the Survey, and sketched and photographed Cambridge and Oxford. For his war service, the American government awarded him the Legion of Merit, while France bestowed the Légion d’Honneur on him.

After the war, Chamberlain resumed his work as an illustrator of America’s colonial heritage until MacAusland approached him, this time to do a series of illustrated articles on France for Gourmet. He eagerly accepted this “traveling fellowship.” When the first of these articles appeared to much fanfare in the March 1949 Gourmet, a little more than six years had passed since the publication of the concluding chapter of “Clementine in the Kitchen.” No doubt the gap would have been shorter, but from 1945 to 1947 many roads, hotels, and restaurants were inaccessible to travelers in France.

As was true of “Clementine,” the three Bouquets owed their impact to Chamberlain’s ability to express for readers their common experience as relatively affluent, educated, and well-traveled Americans in the first half of the twentieth century. After living through the isolationism of pre–World War II America, they served in the military or lived through one or both wars; many then traveled to Europe for pleasure. In the process, they came to appreciate the values that Americans and Europeans shared and to regard the Atlantic Alliance as a political expression of these shared values.

Chamberlain and his readers were particularly invested in French culture. Many resonated to his quotation of Jefferson in the introduction to Bouquet de France: “Everyone has two countries—his own and France.” In Chamberlain’s case—and for many of his readers—this was more than a cliché. France appealed to them because of the quality of its art and gastronomy, but also because
they were striving to assimilate those elements of French culture that were already customary for upper-class Americans. Accordingly, readers valued Chamberlain’s praise for American contributions to the restoration of the Cathedral of Rheims after World War I and to the liberation of southern France during the 1944 American landing at St. Raphael, and most shared the pride that he expressed in the mingling of American with other NATO soldiers on the streets of Fountainbleau in 1950.15

On a more mundane level, Chamberlain’s readers must have understood his satisfaction in discovering that a Frenchman had built his Marblehead home and the ensuing decision he and his wife made to decorate it with “simple French furniture which is mingled harmoniously with a number of American and English pieces.” Here was an appropriate metaphor for the convergence of European and American culture that Gourmet readers could happily endorse.16

Over the next quarter of a century, Chamberlain engaged in a love fest with his audience. He shared his enthusiasm for traditional European life in a respectful and innovative fashion and offered a concrete plan for Gourmet readers to explore that life for themselves. And he did so while rarely mentioning the unstable governments and frequent displays of anti-Americanism in France and Italy that might have discouraged travel in those countries. (Chamberlain noted slyly that at a refreshment stand on the roof of the Milan Cathedral “it is possible to slake one’s thirst with capitalistic, non-Communist Coca Cola.”)17

Readers found his judgments about restaurants, hotels, and cultural monuments entertaining and informative. Those who had been to Europe came away from his books with a sense of having revisited places they loved. Some regarded him as not only a guide but a personal friend. While there were few comments about his photographs and sketches in Gourmet’s letters-to-the-editor column, they must have contributed greatly to the popularity of his books. More remarkably, his food writing captured the imagination of his readers. He knew how to dramatize fine dining for a reading public that, for the most part, considered their meals as part of a daily routine. In Chamberlain’s books, dining became, instead, an important event in the leisurely exploration of old towns and villages in remote areas of France, Italy, and Britain. In a letter to Gourmet, Walter Myers noted, “It requires genius to take such commonplaces as food and drink and give them the glamour of romance, spiced every now and then with a glittering touch of the literary.”18

The close relationship Chamberlain established with readers owed much to his apparent high regard for the audience, as well as his modesty, wit, and wisdom. Chamberlain addressed his readers as “civilized friend(s)” who are “en-
dowed with aesthetic sensibilities, educated taste buds and a normal _joie de vivre_ (and that without any apple-polishing is my idea of a *Gourmet* reader).” He later remarked that his greatest reward in writing the travel guides were the reports about “many American tourists carrying these books with them on their trips abroad.”

Chamberlain expressed his sense of intimacy with readers by sharing his experiences in the first person “we” (he and his wife) and addressing them in the second person. “If you stay a day or more in the Evesham area, we have some delightful little side trips to suggest... If you poke around the churchyard long enough...” And he surely gained the trust of readers by refusing to flaunt his expertise. Even in discussing architecture and gastronomy, subjects he knew well, Chamberlain never hesitated to direct readers to sources providing more information than he was able to include in his book. In the introduction to *Italian Bouquet*, he thanked readers for suggesting other sources. In the introduction to *British Bouquet*, he identified three more comprehensive guidebooks.

The response of readers to his articles and books confirms Chamberlain’s success in connecting with them. Within a few months of *Gourmet’s* founding, “Clementine in the Kitchen” was already a favorite of the magazine’s readers. Equally enthusiastic was the response to the various chapters of his three travel books, although I leave aside readers’ opinions of the *Beauty of Britain*, the book version of which appeared in 1963.

Aside from the affectionate, somewhat nostalgic picture of small-town life in Senlis, France, and Marblehead, Massachusetts, it was the adventures of the exuberant and opinionated Clementine herself that appealed to readers. One called the whole series “a rare treat.” Another announced that he had fallen in love with her. But it was the nostalgia theme that was most prominent, suggesting that readers who had already been to France but were unable to return after the outbreak of war found the Clementine articles a useful and entertaining substitute for travel.

Readers’ reception of *Bouquet de France* was as positive as the response to the Clementine series. The keynote in virtually all responses was a sense of familiarity and even intimacy between author and readers. Wesley King, who attended Chamberlain’s lectures on etching at MIT, remarked, “I feel that your Sam Chamberlain series is really great. I would like to take the whole series to France this summer.” Robert Gile spoke of *Bouquet* as “my Bible” during a recent drive through France, while adding that it was “one of the most delightful books I have read in some time.” Parker Perry also called it “our bible. Michelin can star them, but Samuel’s the guide for us.” The MacKenzie family regarded Chamberlain as
“such a man-after-our-own-hearts that we speak of him as ‘Sam.’” Seven years later, Mary Webster remarked, “Many of our compatriots can’t wait to see ‘Les Dancing girls’ of Paris, but this family studies its Bouquet de France and hits the provinces.”

Reactions to Italian Bouquet were similar. Even as chapters appeared in Gourmet, readers were eager to the see the full book. Michael Kahler was “enthralled” with the chapter on Tuscany. “I can only recommend it as a bible to other hotel students and apprentice gastronomes like myself.” He was certain that the complete version would be “the most exciting (to the palate, that is) book of all times.” Reviewing the published volume, Charlotte Turgeon, cookbook writer and subscriber to Gourmet, considered Chamberlain not only an “artist with pen, pencil, and camera, but an artist with words.” Reading the book was “almost as good as a second trip” to Italy. “You can almost smell and taste the good Italian food he talks about.” Turgeon even ventured to predict that in the aftermath of its publication “a flood of tourists, hopefully epicurean, each carrying this distinctive book, bound in white and gold,” would descend on Italy. Chamberlain might have shuddered at the thought.

MacAusland and his staff were fully aware of Chamberlain’s value to the Gourmet enterprise and made every effort to showcase his articles so that readers would notice them. In Gourmet’s first issue, for example, the lead article was Chamberlain’s “Burgundy at a Snail’s Pace,” which occupied five consecutive pages, while incorporating his sketches of historical buildings with the text. When the first chapter of “Bouquet de France” appeared, the editors paired it with an article by Curnonsky, France’s most famous gastronomer, entitled “Discourse on French Cuisine,” suggesting that Chamberlain was a culinary authority in the same league with his French counterpart.

Once readers had made their voices heard, Gourmet editors sought to exploit the public enthusiasm for him. After Gourmet’s Travel Service was created in 1953, MacAusland wrote that the “many Gourmet readers” who had not yet profited from Chamberlain’s “epicurean tour of the French provinces” would be able to do so with the assistance of the Travelways Service. For similar reasons, Gourmet’s advertisers exploited Chamberlain’s name to promote visits to France. In the May 1950 issue, the French National Railroad reminded readers that its trains served the Basque country, which was the subject of that month’s Chamberlain article. Of course, readers who opted for these services would be relinquishing some of their autonomy.

When Bouquet de France appeared in book form during the Christmas season of 1952, Gourmet stimulated reader interest by running two-page advertise-
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ments with a strong pitch from MacAusland. Blurbs described “Bouquet” as “a strictly non-political, strictly appetizing and entertaining trip from the cobblestone streets of Normandy to aperitif time at Maxim’s. If your heart belongs to la belle France, you will want to own—and give . . . Bouquet de France.” In this way, Gourmet deftly reassured readers, who had no stomach for the current political scene in France, that Chamberlain would show them beautiful sites and delicious meals instead. The sale of more than a hundred thousand copies in the first two years after publication would suggest that readers were pleased with Chamberlain’s focus.26

After Italian Bouquet appeared, Gourmet’s strategy was to build sales by reminding readers of their enchantment with Chamberlain’s previous Bouquet. According to one advertisement, Chamberlain’s “new book” was a “picturebook, guidebook, [and] cookbook” rolled into one, which would serve both the adventurous and “the armchair traveler.” The Christmas advertisement offered readers a package deal: “Four Books of Christmas for holiday giving,” the two Chamberlain books and the two volumes of the Gourmet Cookbook. The ads continued the next year. To encourage sales, the May 1959 issue used a medical metaphor: “Diagnosis: spring fever. Rx: Chamberlain’s Bouquets” (alongside the text was a picture of an office worker dreaming at his desk).27

Off the Beaten Path

Samuel Chamberlain created a new kind of guidebook to take advantage of his own skills, while serving the needs of Gourmet readers. As Chamberlain announced in the introduction to Bouquet de France, he approached France “with camera, sketchpads and tastebuds.” The product was a guidebook, cookbook, and coffee-table book all rolled into one and aimed at the “food-conscious American.” Like the traditional guidebook, Chamberlain’s volumes provided readers with hotel and restaurant options while suggesting cultural sites worth visiting. It was, in this sense, a combination of the green (sites worth visiting) and red (restaurants and hotels) Michelin guides. In addition, each of his three travel books presented recipes in a supplementary “treasury” at the end of the book, while two of them interspersed more recipes in each chapter. And the lavish illustrations qualified all three volumes as coffee-table books.28

Conventional and distinctive at the same time, Chamberlain’s philosophy of travel sought to draw readers off the beaten path so they would engage more deeply with the local people and culture and spend less time at better-known tourist sites. This theme echoed many travel writers of the past two centuries.
However, few had provided detailed accounts of provincial restaurants in almost every region of France, Italy, and Great Britain. In order to take advantage of less traveled routes without amenities and to allow for last-minute changes in the itinerary, Chamberlain also advocated travel by car and a reliance on the picnic for the midday meal.

Chamberlain borrowed some of his ideas about travel from Maurice-Edmond Sailland, the French epicure, who, as a joke, dubbed himself Curnonsky (literally “why not sky?”) to exploit the cult of Russian culture in early twentieth-century France. During the 1920s, Curnonsky and his companion Marcel Rouff wrote twenty-eight volumes on *La France Gastronomique*, which evaluated restaurants in every region of the country. These books were the product of a series of automobile trips to the French provinces and expressed the authors’ enthusiasm for linking fine dining and touring by automobile. In addition to reports on French restaurants and inns, they also incorporated regional recipes. As a result of these publications, Curnonsky was voted “*prince élu des gastronomes*” (the elected Prince of Gastronomers), although he preferred the less pretentious and more accurate “*Sa rondeur*” or “His plumpness.”

In educating his American audience about French life and cuisine, Chamberlain borrowed heavily from Curnonsky, whom he had met in Paris in the 1920s, and also recommended the *Guide Michelin* for France and Italy. Like *Sa rondeur*, Chamberlain believed that the automobile would enable readers to explore small restaurants, towns, hotels, and monuments in out-of-the-way places; it would also transport the six-hundred-page guidebooks Chamberlain was writing. However, he put his own stamp on these books by marrying information about food, wine, and restaurants with a presentation of the visual charms of provincial towns. His illustrations documented aspects of everyday life from street scenes to local markets to five-hundred-year-old houses, and they served as a model for amateur artists, who Chamberlain urged to follow in his footsteps by sketching, painting, and shooting their way through Europe.

At the heart of this enterprise was Chamberlain’s commitment to travel rather than tourism. His goal was to assist readers in understanding the beauty of everyday life and the artistry displayed in the construction of modest buildings, squares, and public monuments. Experiencing the food and viewing the layout of small towns were two ways to learn about a regional culture. And these activities would encourage travelers to take charge of their journeys and proceed at a leisurely pace. All the same, Chamberlain was careful not to ask too much of his readers. In both Italy and France, he told them where to find locals who spoke English. And, in case they yearned for their compatriots, Chamberlain
suggested various bars and restaurants where the food was “perfectly good” and the traveler could hear “the sweet music of American speech.”

Chamberlain denounced packaged tours that increasingly took Americans quickly through the capital cities of several different countries in a few weeks. To avoid competing with the hordes of tourists who were visiting cultural monuments, he advised his readers to bypass the capital cities altogether. Such counsel reinforced the inclination of the “displaced Anglo-Saxon,” who “yearns to get off the beaten highway, away from his compatriots, and to explore untrodden paths.” To fulfill their dreams, Chamberlain urged readers to take charge of their itinerary and customize their travels. In so doing, they could interact more fully with the local people, especially those who were not involved in the tourist industry, and experience more directly the local way of life.

From March 1949, when Chamberlain published his first travel article on France, until September 1963, when the last chapter of the “Beauty of Britain” series appeared, he expressed his rising irritation with tourism. In Bouquet de France, Chamberlain mildly objected to visiting ski resorts at Chambéry and Chamonix that were “names straight from your travel folder.” Hotels in those towns featured “cushioned comfort” and, as its counterpart, standardized “‘international’ cooking” to please the palates of skiers from Europe and America. Similarly, restaurateurs on the Mediterranean coast, who believed that all Anglo-Saxons “recoil from a whisper of garlic or the gentlest zephyr of saffron,” replaced their “vibrant, colorful, aromatic” dishes with the “cautious, conventional, international cuisine of the resort hotel.”

The situation was more worrisome in Britain in 1960. “Swarms of trippers” gathered at Beaulieu Abbey, which Lord Montagu had turned into a car museum. At Blenheim Palace, Chamberlain warned his readers to be prepared for “shuffling, gaping throngs” if they toured in the summer. As for the Lake District, travelers would find “coaches from the Midland manufacturing towns, bearing plump ladies in flowering dresses.” At least they were gone by evening. Just across the Scottish border north of Carlisle, readers should avoid the “turnstile tourist trap” that featured “teashops, souvenir stands, tartan emporia and a rather seedy chap with bagpipes.” According to Chamberlain, the shepherding of large groups through sites selected by a travel agency left them in a state of passivity.

Abandoning the package tour, travelers would put themselves initially in Chamberlain’s hands. With their cars, they would visit places that were normally inaccessible, thus enhancing their sense of adventure. Increasing options, however, would require making choices. By focusing readers on the epicurean theme
and emphasizing the pleasures of visiting more modest cultural monuments, Chamberlain helped travelers to narrow these options. Where gastronomy was strong, readers could skimp on monuments and enjoy the restaurants. In less epicurean territory, they could spend more time visiting churches and museums.36

So as not to diminish the freedom that travelers gained by rejecting packaged tours, Chamberlain discussed whether and in what form they needed guides above and beyond his own books. Visiting the temples at Paestum, Italy, he was delighted that “there are no guides to pester you here.” In Oxford, he strongly recommended that his readers avoid tours organized by travel agencies. Instead of being whisked through the major sites at the University, travelers could take their own leisurely stroll, while using British Bouquet supplemented by Alden’s Oxford Guide as sources of information. Human and print guides were acceptable so long as they were not imposed by outsiders and fit the traveler’s needs.37

The epicurean orientation often shaped the itineraries that Chamberlain recommended. His proposed “mild adventures” were usually quests for culinary experiences off the beaten path. Rather than launch his readers in Paris, he sent them immediately to one of France’s lesser-known regions. Located in eastern France, La Bresse was the home of the country’s greatest gourmet, Brillat-Savarin. There, with gastronomy as a guide, mild adventurers could forget about architectural monuments after visiting the Eglise de Brou in Bourg-en-Bresse. Instead, they would search out “villages rather than large towns,” “meet smiling country chefs rather than headwaiters in tuxedos,” and “sleep in quiet, clean rooms with running water rather than in a suite with a salle de bain (bathroom).”38

Beyond “mild adventures,” it was possible to “get entirely off the beaten track” and have “the refreshing sensation of being a pioneer” in a Marches hill town like Ascoli Piceno, with its “completely undiscovered air.” There one could enjoy a “picturesque food market” and a sixth-century baptistery. Farther south, Apulia was “for the more adventuresome, for those who like to go to the very end of the road, to discover what lies really far off the beaten track.” In this case, it was the trulli (houses with conical roofs) in Alberobello that merited his fulsome introduction.39

Whether the destination was a monument, a town square, a hotel, or a restaurant, Chamberlain recommended the small, the simple, and the remote. In visiting such places, travelers would come to understand the daily life of the country and feast on authentic dishes and wines in the company of locals. In Italian Bouquet, Chamberlain noted his preference for the Italian Riviera as compared to its French counterpart because it has “a straight-forward simplicity that actually comes as somewhat of a relief.” There were fewer fancy shops selling jewelry
and perfume than on the French side of the border and more “ undiscovered” monuments like the “deserted little chapel” on a “narrow dirt road” in L’Aquila. There, Chamberlain admired the details of the rose window and the “flawless doorway” that stood out against the church’s “sun-baked façade.” In the absence of tourists, he believed, travelers would be able to experience more fully the beauty of the architecture and the setting.  

As with monuments, Chamberlain recommended small towns and inns. He was, for example, quite taken with the thatched roofs and charming pubs of Clovelly in Devon. As for the “idyllic village” of Bibury in the Cotswolds, photographers and painters would enjoy its seventeenth-century almshouses bordering “the sleepy river Coln.” In Devizes, Chamberlain urged his readers to try out the Bear Hotel, located on a charming market square that was especially busy on market day, when “talkative farmers and cattle dealers, each with his pipe and pint,” filled the public rooms. The excellent Sunday breakfast was another draw for travelers and locals. 

In his digest of Paris restaurants, provided reluctantly for those travelers who rejected his advice to avoid the capital, the names of some of the best-known and most expensive establishments headed the list, but Chamberlain deliberately ended with Chez Josephine “because it represents something quite priceless in the French tradition.” Its intimacy and honest cuisine were representative of the typical French household, as well as the family restaurant. “The bouquet of France” came from “Josephine’s quail roasting in the oven and her boeuf bourguignon gurgling gently on the back of the cook stove.”  

One of the most notable institutions in Italy was the trattoria, often located on an obscure side street in the oldest part of the city and featuring a lively ambiance and a loyal, local clientele. Chamberlain carefully distinguished the ristorante, with its typewritten menu and leisurely waiters wearing white coats, from the trattoria, where waiters rushed about in shirt sleeves and supplied diners with handwritten menus; even if there were fewer dishes to select from, trattoria food was often better and the prices lower. More importantly, the diners rubbed elbows with each other. At the Dodici Aposoli in Verona, “gay with murals and uncontrived atmosphere,” the presence of “robust, conversational businessmen” gave assurance that the food was tasty. As for the Trattoria Rina in Genoa, “Rina Augusto and his smiling family will offer you a chance to know warm-hearted Italian people for a fleeting hour or so—an unforgettable experience.”  

When prospects were dim for finding a good restaurant, Chamberlain recommended that travelers buy picnic items after breakfast and stop for a roadside
lunch. One of the advantages of this plan was that the traveler could forage for lunch in the market where there were opportunities to bargain with the shopkeepers and enjoy the sight of colorful food. Among the options in Italy were bread, *bel paese* cheese, a slice of *mortadella*, and a bottle of Chianti; in Britain, the traveler could buy Yorkshire ham, pork pies, cheeses, crackers, and a bottle of stout; in Nice, why not try a pizza as an appetizer to a *salade niçoise*, which would be both colorful and savory?

To thoroughly enjoy these provincial adventures, Chamberlain advised readers to use cars and local inns to slow down their pace and enjoy the journey. As he explained, it was relaxing to drive through English villages on a summer day. Whenever an opportunity arose for a pleasant detour, such as visiting Stilton to investigate the origins of the cheese, it was easy enough to turn off the main road. A charming country inn could also be relaxing. At the Hôtel de Paris et de la Poste in Sens, “a coquettish little bar and a sheltered terrace for aperitif time” created the peaceful ambiance that “makes the relay post an unclouded joy.” So did the sight and sound of Bressan fowl cooking on a spit that also anticipated the joys of the table.

For a “week’s total tranquility,” Chamberlain recommended Orta San Giulio, a small village on Lake Orta in the Piedmont. It was an excellent place to catch up on correspondence or stroll the piazza with the townsfolk in the evening. The traveler could watch young boys waltzing in the piazza and, to end the evening, purchase a *caffe espresso* and a liqueur. “Does this sort of thing appeal to you?”

Chamberlain also celebrated Orta San Giulio for the many opportunities it offered to artists. The “radiant little town” would be an excellent subject for the “water colorist,” while the town hall would be “irresistible to the passing pencil sketcher,” as Chamberlain himself demonstrated with his own pencil sketch of the intricate detail of the façade. The traveler could, thus, pass a few hours or a day in an activity he had chosen and learn more about the subject of his artwork.

Indeed, Orta San Giulio was only one among many sites that Chamberlain recommended to amateur artists who were equipped with a pen, a brush, or a camera. In describing these sites, he often identified specific subjects to depict and gave instructions on the proper perspective and light conditions to show them well. In this way, the illustrations in his guidebook became models for travelers who wanted to create, as well as view, art and encouraged a more active engagement with the people and places they were visiting. Moreover, good art required painstaking work and was therefore conducive to slowing down the pace of travel and enabling travelers to reflect on what they were seeing.
Chamberlain was familiar with the European tradition of painting and sketching important cultural sites and often placed his own work in the perspective of those who went before him. In that way, he hoped to educate his readers on changing approaches to depicting these sites. Take Lower Burgundy. It was “filled with a succession of beautiful towns which read like the pages from an

artist’s sketchbook.” In Auxerre, Chamberlain photographed the clock tower, while noting that it was “precisely the sort of subject that many nineteenth-century artists chose for their colored lithographs.” In his photograph, the clock tower provided the backdrop for a market day. An etching of the same scene showed market stalls and mingling buyers somewhat overwhelmed by the city buildings looming behind them.48

Befitting his preference for the charm of old villages where history was alive in the surviving architecture, Chamberlain identified “picturesque” buildings and “vistas opening up in many directions” in Thaxted (Essex), which he regarded as a “painter’s town.” By photographing the timbered Guildhall to highlight its overhanging upper stories as well as the interesting vistas past the Guildhall to the church, Chamberlain demonstrated the artistic possibilities of the town. He remarked that “this is one of the favorite sketch subjects for itinerant watercolorists, who are almost always at hand during the summer season.” Just in case the artist should run out of subjects, Chamberlain’s backup was the local church with its 181-foot spire, the “picture-book almshouses” nearby, and a windmill with its arms fallen off. “Why not bring your lunch and your sketchbook and enjoy this charming corner of Essex?”49

On the Italian Riviera “pencil sketchers and water-colorists” could choose from a variety of fishing villages east of Nervi. After considering its “animation and color,” Chamberlain declared Camogli “one of the most sketchable villages in Europe.” In addition to the harbor, artists would find its fishing boats, the rococo church, and the steep white facades of the houses that fronted the harbor interesting subjects to capture in their work.50

But Chamberlain was also interested in documenting the encroachment of modern life in traditional settings. Among various examples of this development was a scene in Guildford where he photographed the local bishop blessing an array of new cars and trucks lining the sides of the streets beneath the Guildhall with its overhanging balcony and domed clock. “We have photographed it for you,” he remarked, in order to encourage fellow cameramen to consider the juxtaposition of modern ways with traditional settings as subjects for their own work.51

Chamberlain’s Gastronomy

Despite his success in devising an approach to travel that satisfied the needs of his readers, Chamberlain had difficulty in evaluating restaurants. Of course, he knew French cuisine well and accepted without hesitation French assumptions about the elements of fine dining. However, when he reviewed restaurants, he
experienced the problems that plagued other French advocates of regional cuisine. Like Curnonsky and Rouff, Chamberlain searched for the distinctive dishes characteristic of each province. Like them, he expected to find such dishes in small restaurants that were essentially extensions of the home. They were family enterprises, featuring an intimate ambiance and a cook who was often the wife of the proprietor. Drawn to the restaurants by their location and ambiance, critics and customers alike sometimes weighted these factors more heavily than the food itself. Moreover, judging the quality of the food became problematic when tourist organizations in Paris initiated a program to identify regional dishes and modify them to suit the tastes of outsiders (Parisians and foreign tourists). In addition, skillful provincial chefs sometimes created new dishes without advertising them as such. Their French customers, in turn, often assumed that they were eating traditional, regional fare.52

Once outside of France, Chamberlain was on even shakier ground. He revealed his unfamiliarity with Italian and British cuisine and sought ways to compensate for his ignorance. One strategy was to approach these cuisines from the perspective of a Frenchman. This Gallo-centric view, however, did little to educate his readers about the distinctiveness of these two culinary traditions.

In his guidebooks, Chamberlain advocated the French idea, shared to a lesser extent by other ethnic groups, that food plays a central role in creating a joyous life. Feasting in the remote Provençal village of Les Baux at l’Oustau de Baumanière, one of France’s great restaurants, Chamberlain thought of its closest counterpart in the United States. What came to mind were the resort hotels in the Rocky Mountains. However, “the comparison stops when you taste Monsieur Thuiller’s cooking!” By contrasting French and American practices, Chamberlain hoped to increase his readers’ awareness of the special culinary opportunities available to them in France and other parts of Europe.53

What particularly heightened the enjoyment of dining in France was the festive atmosphere that surrounded a fine dinner. French chefs and diners alike celebrated in conversation and literature the satisfaction of the senses they were about to experience. As he roasted a pig at the Hôtel de l’Abbaye in Talloires, Chef Tiffenat proclaimed that “this dish should be anticipated like the first rendezvous of love and should be golden as a young gypsy.” In somewhat different fashion, Chef Roger Thiry of the Relais de Corny in Lorraine gently mocked the more elaborate dinner he prepared and the diners who ate it. Midway through a menu in verse with commentary on each of the courses, Thiry remarked tongue in cheek that his guests drank “a little Bordeaux juice” to absolve them of their “gourmand sins.”54
In his restaurant reviews, Chamberlain always noted the name and specialties of the cook or chef, who was the key to creating a fine meal, whether from the repertoire of *haute cuisine* or *cuisine régionale*. In the latter case, Chamberlain expected the cook to prepare simple, straightforward dishes characteristic of the region. By contrast, a great chef should be able to “prepare . . . a wealth of intricate dishes” to satisfy his guests. As an example of the latter, Chamberlain singled out Fernand Point at La Pyramide. Even though Point had no menu or wine list, diners were certain that whatever he served would be delicious and that his wine cellar contained virtually all of the most reputable French wines.55

In Chamberlain’s view, however, it was the regional diversity of French cuisine that made it truly great. To illustrate this concept, he imagined a culinary relief map of France on which mountains represented the areas of gastronomical excellence. Paris and Lyon, both actually located near sea level, would be the two grand peaks. Chamberlain then represented Burgundy, Normandy, and Dauphiny as “imposing plateaus,” while noting “other mountain ranges of culinary splendor” in Alsace, the Pyrenees, Perigord, and the Riviera. To support his claim for Alsace, Chamberlain noted that it “is truffl ed with good restaurants as picturesque as they are palatable.” By contrast, the center and north would appear on the map as flat areas lacking in any notable cuisine. Auvergne, for example, had only a few passable restaurants.

Extending the concept of a culinary relief map to England made little sense in view of the virtual absence of regional specialties; however, Chamberlain had high praise for the two culinary capitals of Italy, Lombardy and Bologna, which he regarded as the rough equivalents of Paris and Lyon.56

Despite this exercise in geography, the idea of regional cuisine was much more complicated than Chamberlain acknowledged. To be sure, the conviction that smaller, remoter restaurants, which served local specialties, deserved notice like their more famous Parisian counterparts was valid, but only up to a point. The provincial eateries’ easier access to fresh ingredients from the surrounding countryside and the greater variety of flavors, including zesty dishes from Provence and Languedoc, were assets that justified this attention. However, the contrast between Paris and the provinces raised two questions Chamberlain never addressed. Was each of the regions, including Paris, truly distinctive, and should restaurants featuring regional cuisine be judged by different standards than Parisian restaurants serving *haute cuisine*?57

On several occasions, Chamberlain recognized that the distinction between Paris and the provinces, a central assumption in *Bouquet de France*, was no longer so clear. Provincial migration to Paris and the rapid shipment of fresh produce to
the capital encouraged the rise of provincial restaurants representing virtually all regional cuisines in Paris. It was now possible to make a regional tour of France without leaving the capital. With this in mind, Chamberlain himself recommended that readers who could not visit Perigord eat at the Rotiserie Perigourdine to taste the “splendors of its cooking.” Moreover, he acknowledged that haute cuisine was not confined to Paris. In Les Baux, he spoke in hushed tones of “la grande cuisine française” that Chef Thuillier prepared. Although Thuillier served some regional dishes, most of the cooking was “on a loftier plane.”

Even in the provinces, there was clear evidence that provincial distinctiveness had broken down. At Le Chapon Fin, regarded by many as the finest restaurant in Bordeaux, Chamberlain, to his surprise, discovered an excellent selection of Burgundy vintages on the wine list. In addition, Narcissa Chamberlain noted that the recipe for canard à l’orange was placed in the Pyrenées section, because it was submitted by M. Fouquet, whose restaurant was located in that region. However, Fouquet had learned to cook the dish in Normandy, where he was born. She also explained that piperade, a Basque egg dish, had recently become popular in Paris.

Chamberlain’s persistent advocacy of small regional restaurants made the quality of the cuisine a secondary consideration. Like Curnonsky and Rouff, he was so caught up in the discovery of diamonds in the rough and intent on enjoying their informality that he gave insufficient attention to the quality of the food they served. As for the standards that should be applied to dishes classified as haute cuisine versus those that belonged properly to cuisine régionale, Chamberlain said nothing, nor did he address the role of Paris-based organizations in shaping the cuisine of various provinces.

It is also difficult to discern Chamberlain’s own evaluation of restaurants because he relied heavily on French culinary authorities, many of whom were members of prestigious gourmet societies. In one case, he substituted an account of society rituals for commentary on the quality of their dinners. Approaching the Clos du Vougeot, the home base of the Tastevin, he remarked, “In this ‘Acropolis of Burgundy,’ the Confrérie des Chevaliers du Tastevin, a most active group of bon vivants and wine men, have established their order.” At their “Rabelaisian banquets, held in the ancient cellar,” they “don ceremonial robes, and join in food, wine, and song: ‘C’est la chanson du vigneron, Au glou, glou, glou, glou du flacon’” (“It’s the song of the wine grower, the gurgle, gurgle, gurgle, gurgle of the bottle”).

After meeting Georges Legendre, long-time chef of the society, who was charged with preparing their quarterly feasts in Nuits St. Georges, Chamberlain
identified four of his special dishes that were “beyond reproach,” although there was no evidence that he had tasted the finished product; he then segued quickly to the claims of one “dignified member of the Tastevin tribe” that the wine of the Côte de Nuits is a curative (“Un verre de Nuits prépare la votre”). The claim was based on Louis XIV’s belief that his illness in 1680 had been cured by drinking a Côte de Nuits wine. In the absence of Chamberlain’s commentary, it is worth noting that Julia Child, who was initiated into the Tastevin at the Clos de Vougeot in 1953, thought that the dinner was undistinguished. 62

In both England and France, Chamberlain regarded a restaurant proprietor or chef’s membership in a prestigious gastronomic society as an index of the culinary quality of the establishment. There was some justification in relying on such authorities, but too often Chamberlain presented their views in place of his own dining experience at the restaurant. Indeed, aside from a brief list of the restaurant specialties and occasional comments about the freshness of the ingredients, Chamberlain largely confined his own assessment to the restaurant’s ambiance.

The examples of Chamberlain’s deference to authorities with links to gastronomic societies are numerous. On André Simon’s word, he included the Connaught Hotel in the list of the top fifteen London restaurants. In addition, he considered it a good sign that the Hotel Central in Luneville had “received [the] unrestrained applause of a group of Wine and Food Society pilgrims” from England. He also reported that Raymond Thuilier, chef of L’Oustau de Baumanière, and Monsieur Chapuis, the chef at the Hotel du Grand Cerf at Senlis, as well as Edwin M. Adams of the Golden Lion in Stirling, were members of the Tastevin, while proprietor George Fuller at the Vineyard in Colerne was both a Chevalier and a “dedicated member of the Wine and Food Society.” These affiliations, in Chamberlain’s mind, seemed to guarantee a good meal. 63

Reports from the Club des Cents, whose members frequented restaurants all over France in order to select two of them for annual awards based on the excellence of their cooking, also influenced Chamberlain. He praised Chef Raveau’s Hotel de l’Esperance in Pouilly-sur-Loire because the Club des Cents, that “most exacting and erudite of gastronomic clubs,” awarded Raveau a diploma. And he noted that Chef Baratettero had posthumously received a Diploma of Honor from the Club for the excellence of his cooking. As for Baratettero’s worthy wife, Maxim’s in Paris had invited her to cook the Hotel du Midi’s regional dishes, which her husband had made famous. 64

Chamberlain’s strong commitment to French culinary practices was also evident in his guidebooks on Italy and Britain. Recognizing the low esteem in
which British cooking was held, he initially agreed to take on the project only because publisher Earle MacAusland, who was of Scottish descent and greatly admired the British Isles, asked him to do so. Chamberlain, accordingly, entitled the series of articles he wrote for *Gourmet* “The Beauty of Britain,” suggesting a focus on cultural and natural sites rather than cuisine. And his wife provided no recipes in the text of the articles or the book.65

So, why was there “A Treasury of British Recipes” at the end of *British Bouquet*? According to Chamberlain, the actual experience of British cooking turned out to be more positive than he anticipated, so he and Narcissa assembled it after the articles appeared in *Gourmet*. Evidently there were fewer “treasures” in Britain than in France or Italy, given that the supplement ran to thirty-three pages, about half the length of its Italian and French counterparts. Moreover, the Chamberlains failed to solicit the favorite recipes of chefs whose restaurants they had frequented, as they did for the French and Italian treasuries. Instead, the recipes selected for the Treasury came from a search through British cookbooks and consultations with Elizabeth David, the prominent cookbook writer.

Nonetheless, “A Treasury of British Recipes” was testimony to Chamberlain’s increasing appreciation of British cooking. From the outset he praised Anglo-Saxon breakfasts. He also discovered excellent food at some country places as, for example, the White Hart Hotel in Lincoln, where he developed “a sudden rapture for fine English cooking” after feasting on roast *contrefilet* (tenderloin) of beef and boiled potatoes.66

Still, Chamberlain had clear reservations about the British culinary scene, reflecting the widespread belief that British cuisine was inferior to its French counterpart. In his opinion, menus throughout the British Isles had a sameness “that soon becomes wearisome,” in large part because there were so few regional specialties in country hotels; instead, the same fried filet of plaice greeted the traveler on menus in every part of the country. And the quality of cooking varied widely. Some counties, like Windsor, were essentially culinary wastelands. Chamberlain warned his readers that “dedicated gourmets will not be particularly happy here, but it isn’t quite fair to expect Windsor Castle and Lucullus too.” Although he rarely gave low marks to individual restaurants, he noted that the roast chicken at the White Hart in Lewes “had been in the oven more than once.” As for beverages, the poor handling of the wine in a number of restaurants disappointed Chamberlain.67

In his insistence on measuring the improvement in British cuisine by the growing number of French restaurants in Britain, Chamberlain revealed his Gallocentric bias. He noted that interest in French cooking had wavered at times,
but he believed that its influence in London had been in the ascendancy since World War II. Of course, London did not “glitter as brilliantly as the great luminary in Paris but it gets brighter all the time.”

It is not surprising, then, that Chamberlain’s list of thirty-one exemplary London restaurants in *British Bouquet* included eleven serving primarily French food and exactly the same number featuring British cooking. Among the other nine restaurants, four were Italian, one was Greek, and four had no clear ethnic identity. And, as goes London, so goes the larger metropolitan area. Chamberlain was particularly enthusiastic about the Hinds Head in Bray-on-Thames, an English inn with Gallic flourishes and a favorite haunt of the Wine and Food Society. As for the Bell Inn at Aston Clinton, which offered French and Italian dishes, “discriminating London Gourmets” who found it within easy driving distance were among its loyal patrons.

In the case of the Gravetye Manor in East Grinstead, it was Londoners who transmitted the French influence to the periphery in the first place. After the Gore Hotel in London took over the Gravetye, its director, Peter Herbert, arranged the brilliant French menu, including *crêpe de fruits de mer* (seafood crepe) and *escalope de veau* (scalloped veal), and transformed its wine cellar and kitchen.

In evaluating Italian cooking, Chamberlain kept in mind his own and his audience’s relative ignorance of the subject. Indeed, the fact that there were almost three times as many recipes in the text of *Bouquet de France* as in *Italian Bouquet* suggests that the two Chamberlains were learning more about Italian cuisine before selecting appropriate recipes for their readers. As Samuel admitted, the “sublime pesto,” served on the Italian Riviera and described in detail to his neophyte audience “as a gustatory experience not to be forgotten,” was new to him as well. So were other Italian dishes, such as the “plump, wine-red octopus,” which he did not recommend because it was “an acquired taste.”

Given his readers’ ignorance of Italian cooking, Chamberlain remedied some basic misconceptions. He warned that the Italian restaurants they frequented in America, most of which were owned by Neapolitans and served pizza, minestrone, and spaghetti, in no way represented the astonishing variety of Italian cooking. And for those who were put off by the strong garlic flavor in the food served in Italian-American restaurants, he noted that Italian chefs in Italy were far more subtle in their use of it.

The Chamberlains also used “A Treasury of Italian Recipes” to remedy readers’ ignorance of Italian cuisine. They were, in fact, optimistic that this recipe collection would have a bigger impact than its French counterpart and even become “a worthy rival . . . to the Italian cookbooks in English that already exist.”
Accordingly, they abandoned the organization of recipes by region that they had used in the French treasury in favor of a basic cookbook approach that ran from first course to last.\textsuperscript{73}

In the body of \textit{Italian Bouquet}, however, Chamberlain applied the regional approach to Italian cooking, while at the same time proclaiming that the uniform character of the Italian people, who were “gay, musical, creative, and openly friendly,” shaped the cooking. As such, it followed that the Italians would enjoy spicy, aromatic food much like their neighbors in southern France. Indeed, Chamberlain had already reported in \textit{Bouquet de France} that the Provençal specialties of \textit{bouillabaisse}, \textit{brandade}, and Chateauneuf-du-Pape were a product of the regional “\textit{joie de vivre}” based in the climate, while the character of Langue-doc’s inhabitants, “gay, Gallic and gregarious,” shaped its aromatic cooking. By insisting on the common ethnic character and diet in southern France and all of Italy, Chamberlain, in effect, obliterated the French-Italian border in favor of a different geography. No doubt, this identification of character with diet helped Chamberlain explain the roots of a cuisine with which he was not so familiar, but it was in conflict with the regional organizing principle of his books.\textsuperscript{74}

Another aid in evaluating Italian cuisine was to gauge the response of French patrons to the dishes they were eating in Italian restaurants. Noting, for example, that Frenchmen occupied a third of the tables at the Ristorante Aldo in Milan, Chamberlain remarked that “few Parisian restaurants could have made them look more contented.” Even granting that these Frenchmen enjoyed their meals and that they were possessed of fine palates, it was strange that Chamberlain used them as expert witnesses on the subject of Italian cuisine. Moreover, he was surely skating on thin ice in looking more favorably on the Dodici Apostoli in Verona because the proprietor spoke French or because several “robust, conversational businessmen” in that restaurant attacked their “ample fare and full-blooded Valpolicella with gusto.”\textsuperscript{75}

There were also problematic features in the treasuries attached to each of the guidebooks that were primarily the work of Narcissa Chamberlain. Of course, she had to cope with the problem of ingredients that were unavailable to American cooks; on these grounds, she had no choice but to omit certain representative recipes altogether, while revising others. She scrapped, for example, such Bordeaux specialties as \textit{cèpes} (a type of mushroom) \textit{à la bordelaise} and lamprey (an eel-like fish); the Auvergnac recipe for \textit{potée}, because few housewives could obtain a whole pig’s head; and the Nivernais recipes based on truffles, foie gras, and crayfish, because the ingredients would be difficult to obtain in America. More serious was the decision not to offer a recipe for the famous Norman specialty,
tripes à la mode de Caen. Apparently, Narcissa doubted that Americans would eat organ meats, even though she had already included various recipes for kidney and liver.⁷⁶

By contrast, there were fewer problems with absent ingredients in the Italian and British Treasuries, perhaps because the Chamberlains had a less exhaustive knowledge of those cuisines. Even so, they offered no Italian recipes for squid in order to avoid “a slight shock to the eye.” Also, the haggis recipes in the British Treasury came with a warning that the sheep’s stomach, essential to making it, would be difficult to order at an American butcher shop.⁷⁷

In other recipes included in the French and Italian Treasuries, the Chamberlains advised substituting ingredients, even though some of these changes altered the taste of the dishes. In the French Treasury, for example, they recommended that readers who wished to serve snails use the “excellent” imported, canned variety. As for the Italian recipes, they considered “our [America’s] good southern shrimp” an acceptable substitute for scampi, while baked ham could replace prosciutto and canned anchovies pinch-hit for the fresh variety. Particularly surprising was the Chamberlains’ casual suggestion that any good-quality cooking oil was an acceptable substitute for olive oil.⁷⁸

Chamberlain’s travel books invited Americans interested in gourmet dining to pursue this interest in an “off-the-beaten-track” trip rather than a package tour. Distinctive in their formats compared to other guidebooks, Chamberlain’s photos and sketches confirmed the visual appeal of Europe. As guidebooks, cookbooks, and coffee-table items, they could be used for a variety of purposes. Many armchair travelers found them entertaining and informative; even if they never set foot in Europe or ate a gourmet meal, they acquired from the texts a better sense of regional foodways, geography, and culture in the three countries he treated. Other readers were eager to follow Chamberlain’s prescriptions for traveling in Europe. His proposed automobile tour, which maximized the traveler’s flexibility, appealed to the independent spirit of some Americans without exceeding their capacity to navigate the roads and inns that Chamberlain documented in his guidebooks. Still others cooked from the recipes, translated by Narcissa.

One unanticipated result of Chamberlain’s popularity was a shift away from the original emphasis in Gourmet on French and American cuisine. As it turned out, Bouquet de France exhausted the market for a guidebook emphasizing French cuisine. In order to exploit Chamberlain’s appeal to readers, the magazine’s editors sent him to Italy and later Britain. In the process, Gourmet gave a
level of recognition to the cultures and cuisines of those two countries that it previously accorded only to France and America.79

It is also important to note that Chamberlain contributed to a subtle shift away from the male dominance of the gourmet movement in America. Of course, he authored the three guidebooks, but his wife’s name appeared below his on the title pages of all three *Bouquets* as a translator of the recipes. No doubt, she was also heavily involved in planning their trips as family vacations to include their two daughters. In this way, the Chamberlains provided a genuinely new model for gourmet activity. At the same time, Chamberlain’s preference for skipping capital cities with their elegant restaurants presided over by professional male chefs was part of a strategy to favor the small family restaurants in the provinces that often featured the cooking of a woman.

The striking similarities in the off-the-beaten-track strategy adopted by Chamberlain, his many predecessors, and David Brooks’ bourgeois Bohemians suggest that using travel to bolster social status was a common practice. Both Chamberlain’s readers and the Bobos achieved this goal by planning their own vacations—with assistance from guidebooks—slowing the pace of travel, and seeking close relationships with indigenous people, their cultures, and food-ways. Of course, with the advance of modernization, travelers had to work harder to find unbeaten paths. After all, in 1950, Americans experienced a sense of adventure in traveling through Europe by automobile. For Brooks’ Bobos, by contrast, only the frontiers of Africa and Latin America were sufficiently exotic to provide that same experience.80

While travel off the beaten track likely propelled travelers up the social ladder, it is unclear whether Chamberlain’s readers or Brooks’s Bobos met local people as they proposed to do, despite language barriers and the potential isolation of automobile travel. Letters to the editors in “Sugar and Spice” said nothing about such local encounters. Their silence suggests that such encounters were rare or nonexistent or that the letter writers had reasons for not reporting them.

Curiously, neither the Bobos nor Chamberlain, who sought escape from the developed world, acknowledged their dependence on the products of the industrial revolution. Chamberlain, for example, steered readers away from the manufacturing belt in England and complained bitterly about noises from motor scooters in Italy, both of which made life uglier and more frenetic. However, it is obvious that transatlantic steamers and airplanes, good roads, and automobiles provided the foundation of their own and the Bobos’ travel schemes. Perhaps the romance of seeking an escape from the modern world blinded travelers to their real dependence on modern technology.
Given the popularity of his writings among *Gourmet* readers from the first issue through the 1960s, Chamberlain should be recognized for the important role he played in advancing the cause of gourmet dining. Both the sales of the guidebooks and the rapid expansion of subscriptions to the magazine give some measure of his influence. And it is quite likely that Chamberlain’s readers, persuaded by his high opinion of gourmet dining societies, may have been partly responsible for swelling their ranks.