

The SCIENCE of FOOD

The ultimate and definitive book on the science of food is now available. Harold McGee's On Food and Cooking: The Science and Lore of the Kitchen (Allen & Unwin, £20) gives the answer to everything you always wanted to know about food and never dared to ask. For instance, those who like hot curries may be interested to know that it is possible that the brain secretes endorphins, its own opiate substances, in response to a burning tongue, and that these contribute to the pleasurable 'hangover' of a fiery meal. Full accounts are given of the theory of emulsification and production of sauces, why fish meat is white, how the practice of 'sealing-in the juices' of a roast is scientifically false, what the toxins are in nutmeg, why raised bread can only be properly made with wheat flour, whether the onion is a stem or a leaf (it is both) and how many stigmas of saffron make an ounce (13,000). There can hardly be a question about food and cooking which this book doesn't answer in its 684 pages, which leave the mind reeling and the mouth watering. There are no recipes, but anyone interested in food cannot afford to be without it. We won't see a better reference work on food than this in our lifetimes.

RT

(Robert Temple)

