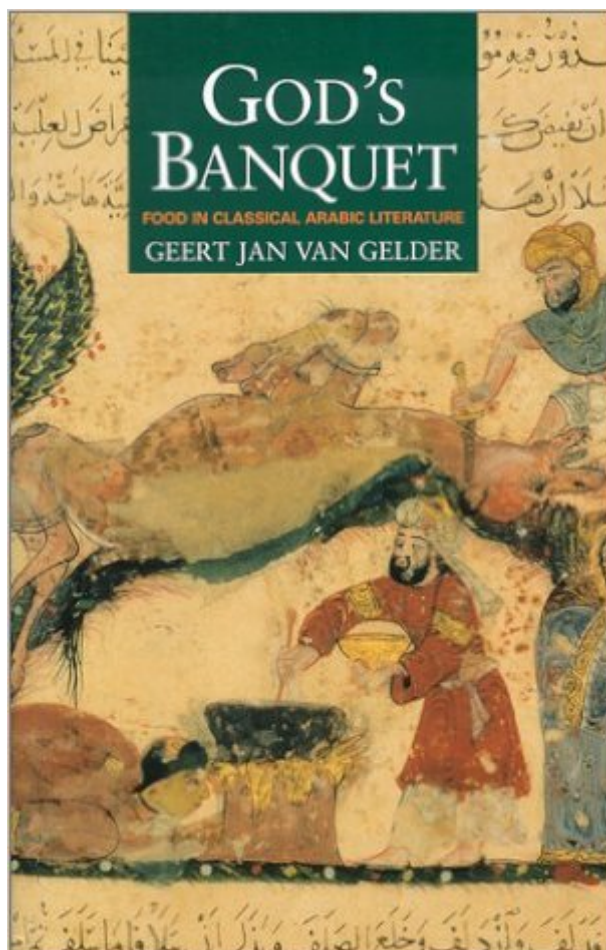


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God's Banquet: Food In Classical Arabic Literature



Synopsis

Eating and speaking are physically linked by the obvious biological fact that both are concerned with the mouth; thus is formed the first of many connections between food and literature. Arabic culture in particular manifests a special concern for this linkage: the Prophet himself reputedly referred to the Qur'an as "God's banquet." Geert Jan van Gelder's *God's Banquet* surveys the many and varied ways in which food appears in classical Arabic literature, including pre-Islamic poetry, the Qur'an, Islamic poetry and tales, the Thousand and One Nights,

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This innovative book illuminates both culinary and literary history. Van Gelder surveys the ways food appears in classical Arabic literature, including pre-Islamic poetry, the Qur'an, Islamic poetry and tales, the Thousand and One Nights, and popular genres such as the *adab* anthologies and satires. To show how food both forms and reveals aspects of Arab culture, he considers banquets and the prestige of prodigal hospitality; abstinence and piety versus satiety and sin; smorgasbords and rich literary diction; and food and parody. Focusing more on dishes than ingredients, the author is concerned with how food is depicted, as well as how literary texts are shaped by the theme of food. His command of the sources is magisterial, and he has a gift for unexpected conjunctions and deft phrasing that illuminate both literature and culture.

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