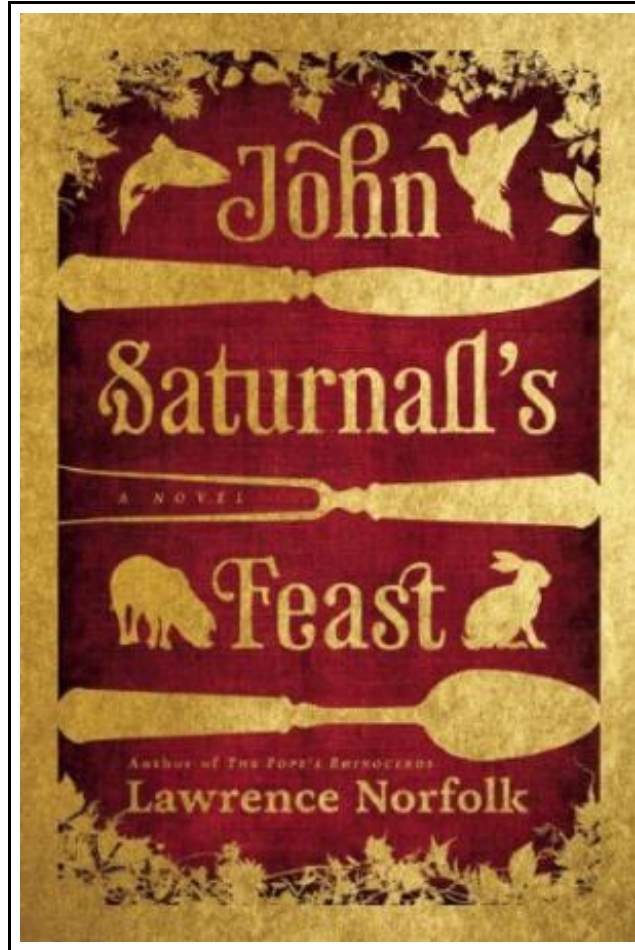


## John Saturnall's Feast



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*(Prof. Loyce Runolfsson Jr.)*

## JOHN SATURNALL'S FEAST



Grove/BOMC. 1 Cloth(s), 2012. hard. Book Condition: New. Orphaned when his mother was cast out of her village as a witch in early 17th-century England, John Saturnall is taken in at the kitchens at Buckland Manor, in this sensuous, long-anticipated novel from the Somerset Maugham Awardwinning author of *Lemprière's Dictionary*. The one thing John possesses is the knowledge of a mythical text about food, and he quickly rises from kitchen boy to Cook, celebrated for his singularly keen palate and preternatural cooking ability. When the king himself visits Buckland it is John Saturnall who cooks for him. And when Lady Lucretia, the lord's aristocratic daughter, takes a vow of hunger to protest her arranged marriage, it is John again who is given the task of tempting her to eat. But in their ensuing battle, something else begins to grow between the cook and the lady."Lawrence Norfolk, historical novelist extraordinaire, inhabits the 17th century through its food. From the reign of Charles I through civil war, Cromwell's protectorate and on to the restoration, we are treated to both lavish feasting and battlefield foraging, the politics of the high table and the hearthside use of medicinal herbs. Norfolk's ability to fold history in on itself, and to summon deep time, is as dazzling here as it was in his earlier novels: family genealogy becomes a myth of origins. The material is fascinating. Norfolk's imagination is bigger and more abstract than the individual; he conjures so well the bustling bureaucracy of the 17th-century manor house, its systems of rights and obligations, its geographical and social significance. The food writing is sensuous and exact . you put the book down wanting to make it all."Guardian (London) 413.



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