

Byzantine Recipes



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Bazmaawurd

Serves four as an appetizer.

This giant canapé was the traditional first course at a banquet in pre-Islamic Iran or Abbasid Baghdad. The name comes from the Persian *bazm*, "banquet," and *awurd*, "bringing." The recipe given here is from the collection of the Caliph al-Ma'mun. It calls for the flesh of citron, a fruit with very little flesh—we know it mostly for its candied peel. Lemon is an obvious substitute.

1 lavash, Mexican flour tortilla or other fresh thin flatbread
about 12" diameter
1 whole chicken breast, roasted, boned and chopped
2 tablespoons chopped walnuts
1½ to 2 lemons, peeled, seeded and chopped
1 tablespoon minced fresh tarragon
1 tablespoon chopped mint
2 tablespoons chopped basil

Spread flatbread on work surface. Sprinkle evenly all over with chicken, walnuts, chopped lemon, tarragon, mint and basil. Roll up and cut into 4 slices. Warm in oven before serving.

Baaridah

Serves two.

A baaridah was a cold meat or vegetable dish served before the hot dishes. Following pre-Islamic Iranian tradition, when a baaridah was made with fowl, it was usually a sort of chopped cucumber salad garnished with the roast meat. Some recipes call for only the seeds of cucumbers, which makes for a luxurious, slippery texture. This particular recipe is that of Harun's famous vizier, Yahya ibn Khalid al-Barmaki. Verjuice, the juice of sour grapes, is sold in Middle Eastern markets as *abghureh* or *hismri*. If you can't find it, lemon juice will do.

1 whole chicken breast, roasted
1 teaspoon coriander
½ teaspoon pepper
¼ teaspoon cumin
⅛ teaspoon cinnamon
¼ cup verjuice or lemon juice
1 teaspoon minced fresh mint
2 teaspoons minced fresh tarragon
1 teaspoon minced fresh thyme
2 tablespoons olive oil
salt
1 cucumber, peeled and cut in ¼-inch dice

When chicken is cool, remove skin and bones, and tear meat into small pieces. Place in bowl and add coriander, cumin, pepper, cinnamon, verjuice, mint, tarragon, thyme and oil. Mix well and season to taste with salt. To serve, mound chicken on salad plates and surround with chopped cucumbers.

Mulahwajah

Serves two.

Mulahwajah means "hasty." The book says that this recipe was often prepared for Harun al-Rashid. Galangal is sold in Arabia as 'irq al-hail or khulanjan, and in Southeast Asian markets under such names as kha and laos. Dried ginger could be substituted. Use the rue sparingly—it's very bitter.

2 tablespoons oil
1 onion
2 leeks
rue, preferably fresh
cilantro (green coriander, kuzbarah)
½ pound lamb, chopped or ground
2 teaspoons ground coriander seed
½ teaspoon cinnamon
1 teaspoon ground caraway
1 teaspoon ground pepper
1 teaspoon ground galangal
4 teaspoons vinegar
2 tablespoons soy sauce
2 tablespoons honey

Heat oil in pan. Add onion, leeks, pinch of rue and 2 to 3 sprigs cilantro and fry until soft. Add meat and fry until brown. Add coriander, caraway, pepper, galangal, vinegar and soy sauce. Cook until done. Stir in honey and garnish with several more sprigs cilantro. Serve with flatbread.

Tabaahaja

Serves four.

This recipe, from the manuscript of Yahya ibn Khalid al-Barmaki, makes striking use of murri, the indigenous Middle Eastern barley "soy sauce." Most dishes flavored with murri were vinegary, but this is the exception, being quite sweet. The result is surprisingly reminiscent of a Chinese "red-stewed" meat dish. The name comes from the Persian word for frying pan, tavah.

½ cup soy sauce
5 teaspoons honey
¾ teaspoon ground coriander seed
1 rounded teaspoon cinnamon
⅛ teaspoon pepper
2 pounds boneless lamb shoulder
½ cup oil
cilantro (green coriander, kuzbarah)
rue, preferably fresh, optional
mustard greens, optional

Mix soy sauce, honey, ground coriander, cinnamon and pepper. Add meat and marinate half an hour. Heat oil in large frying pan. When hot, spoon in meat and marinade. Reduce heat to medium-low and cover pan loosely for half an hour. Remove lid and cook, stirring often to prevent scorching, until meat is tender and sauce is reduced to a thick glaze. Pour off oil and serve, sprinkled with cilantro, rue and mustard greens, accompanied by flatbread.

Tabahajah (Miklagard's version)

Serves 4

250g lamb
pinch salt
1 tsp rue*
0.25 cup murri**
0.25 tsp coriander
pinch peper
60ml olive oil
1.5 tbls fresh coriander leaves
1.5 tbls mustard greens (leaves)
30g honey
0.5 tsp cinnamon

Beat the murri and honey in a bowl. Add the spices and stir well. Cut the meat into thin strips and marinate in this mixture for 1,5 hours. Chop herbs, removing stems. Heat oil in frying pan over a high heat until a few bubbles come up. Add meat and marinade and salt. Cook stirring for 15min until the saurce has reduced. Remove from heat and serve with fresh herbs on top.

* Rue is a herb that makes you throw up when eaten in quantity. Use with caution.

** You really don't want to know what this stuff is! (see vegetable section)

Judhaab

Serves four.

This favorite dish of medieval Baghdad consisted of a sweet pudding which was set at the bottom of a tannuur oven to catch the juices of roasting meat, which would be served with the pudding. Here we have a recipe from the collection of Caliph al-Wathiq (842-847).

1 chicken
¼ cup plus 2 tablespoons rosewater
ground saffron
1 pound dried apricots
2 fresh lavashes, Mexican flour tortillas or other flatbreads, 12" in diameter
½ cup sugar

Wash chicken and pat dry. Mix 2 tablespoons rosewater with pinch of saffron and rub on chicken, inside and out. Set chicken on high rack in 350-degree oven. Put apricots in small saucepan, add water to cover apricots by ½ inch and stew until softened. Place one lavash in baking pan. Arrange stewed apricots on top, sprinkle with sugar and ¾ cup rosewater in which pinch of saffron has been dissolved, then cover with remaining lavash. When juices begin running from chicken, set baking pan under it to catch juices. When chicken is done, serve on apricot pudding.

Keftedes

1 lb. lean beef or veal, ground
1 medium onion, grated
1 clove garlic, crushed
1 egg, beaten lightly
2 slices of bread, crusts removed, soaked in water and squeezed dry
3 Tbs minced parsley
2 sprigs fresh mint
1/2 tsp. ground cinnamon
1 Tbs red wine
2-3 Tbs water, if necessary
salt
1 cup of barley, powdered in the blender
olive oil, enough for a frying depth of 1/2"

In the original recipe, the meat would probably be pounded or minced instead of ground. You can run your meat through a food processor for a more period texture. Mix all ingredients except barley and olive oil, season & refrigerate for an hour. Pinch off small pieces the size of walnuts, form into a ball and dredge in the barley flour. Heat the oil to a smoking point and fry the meatballs until crisp, turning constantly. Remove and drain on absorbent paper.

Dolmades

3/4 cup of olive oil
1/2 onion, chopped
8 scallions, chopped fine
2 lg. cloves of garlic, chopped
1 cup natural barley
chopped fresh dill to taste
1/2 cup parsley, chopped
juice of 1/2 lemon
salt to taste
1 cup hot water
1 one pound jar grapevine leaves
3-4 pound chicken, cut in quarters

Heat 1/2 cup of oil in a skillet and add the onion and scallion and cook until soft. Add the garlic and cook for a few more minutes. Add barley, and brown slightly, stirring frequently, then add dill, parsley, lemon juice, salt and remaining olive oil. Stir well and add hot water. Cover and let simmer for five minutes. remove the grapeleaves from the jar and rinse. Line an enamel pan with a layer of leaves and set aside. To stuff the leaves, put a leaf on the work surface with the rough side up and the stem end toward you. Place a teaspoonful of barley mixture near the stem end. Using both hands, fold the part of the leaf near you up and over the filling. Then fold the right side of the leaf over the filling and then the left side and roll tightly and away from you, toward the pointed end. Place in the prepared pan with the seam side down. Continue until you have used all the ingredients. Place an inverted plate on top of the dolmades and add enough water to come up to the edge of the plate. Rub the chicken with additional lemon juice and garlic and place on top of the plate. Bring to a boil and then cover the pan, reduce the heat, and simmer for 1 1/4 hours. Check to see that the barley is tender and the chicken cooked. Remove, cool and chill. Serve with sour cream or Avgolemono Sauce.

Avgolemono Sauce

2 large egg yolks
juice of 1-2 lemons, strained
1 - 2 cups hot broth or boullion

Beat the egg yolks for two minutes. Continue to beat and gradually add the lemon juice. Beat in the hot broth or boullion. The amount of liquid depends on how thick you want the sauce.

Yuvarelakia

1 lb. ground lamb (may be pounded if you like)
1 grated onion
2 cloves of chopped garlic
6 Tbs natural barley (crush it coarsely in the blender or food processor)
3 Tbs chopped parsley
2 Tbs mint or basil (fresh)
1 Tbs dried oregano or thyme
salt
1 egg slightly beaten
5 cups stock
1 onion, chopped
1 stalk of celery, chopped
1 carrot, chopped
juice of 1 lemon

Combine lamb, grated onion, chopped garlic, barley, chopped parsley, fresh mint or basil, dried oregano or thyme, salt and the slightly beaten egg. Mix well and knead for a few minutes. Shape into walnut-sized barrel or egg shapes and set aside. Bring the 5 cups of stock to a boil with the chopped onion, celery, and carrot. Add salt to taste. Add the "barrels" and simmer, covered, for 30 minutes. Add the lemon juice and serve.

Chicken in Lemon Sauce

1 kg chicken drumsticks (or 800g boneless breasts)
2 chopped onions
1-2 tbs oil
1 cup ground blanched almonds
2 cups chicken stock
1-1.5 tsp ground ginger
fresh ground pepper
salt
0.5 tsp pure saffron (threads) infused in 0.25 cup hot stock
juice of 1-1.5 lemons

Trim chicken pieces as necessary, pat dry. Heat oil in a pan (big enough to hold chicken in one layer). Lightly fry onions till soft, but do not allow them to colour. Add chicken pieces and slowly seal on all sides, again without browning. Place almonds in food processor, add hot stock and blend for approx. 2 minutes. Using a sieve, strain this almond milk over the chicken, pressing the almond residue to extract all the liquid. The almond milk should have the consistency of thin cream; it will thicken during cooking. Add the ground ginger and saffron steeped in stock, together with a good grinding of pepper. Cover and simmer for 15min for breasts or 30min for drumsticks. Remove the lid and increase the heat to boil the sauce down to a thick, creamy consistency. Add the juice of one lemon, taste and add more if necessary. The lemon flavour should be distinct but not overpowering. Check for seasoning and add a little salt if desired.

Lucanian Sausages (Apicius)

Original Recipe
Lucanian Sausages

Apicius, #61:

Lucanicae: ... Teritur piper, cuminum, satureia, ruta, petroselinum, condimentum, bacae lauri, liquamen, et admiscetur pulpa bene tunas ita ut denuo bene cum ipso subtrito fricetur. Cum liquamine admixto, pipere integro et abundanti pinguedine et nucleis incies in intestinum perquam tenuatim perductum, et sic ad fumum suspenditur.

Translation: [Lucanian Sausages: ... Pepper is ground with cumin, savory, rue, parsley, condiments, bay berries, and garum. Finely ground meat is mixed in, then ground again together with the other ground ingredients. Mix with garum, peppercorns, and plenty of fat, and pine nuts; fill a casing stretched extremely thin, and thus it is hung in smoke. [Giacosa, p. 182]

Ingredients:

One pound pork and pork fat, mixed (approx 70% lean)

1/4 teaspoon ground pepper

3/4 teaspoon ground cumin

1 teaspoon winter savory, dried, or 1 T. fresh

1/4 teaspoon ground juniper berries

1 teaspoon Thai fish sauce (garum)

1 T. fresh parsley (3-4 sprigs)

2 T. pine nuts, very coarsely chopped

Sausage casings

Preparation Steps

Cut meat and fat into chunks and place in a bowl. Sprinkle with pepper, cumin, savory, juniper berries, and fish sauce. Mix with hands so that all chunks are well-coated with spice mixture. Break stems from parsley, and break each sprig into 3-4 pieces. Add to meat mixture and toss. Put meat mixture through meat grinder, or grind with a food processor. Mix in pine nuts and stuff into sausage casings. Finished sausages may be grilled, boiled, roasted, or smoked.

Number of Servings

Makes 8-10 small sausages.

Notes

Note that rue is omitted from this recipe, due to possible health concerns. Bay berries were unavailable, so juniper berries were substituted, as they appear in other meat recipes in Apicius. I was unable to determine what "condiments" are referred to, so they were omitted. I originally attempted to make this recipe without chopping the pine nuts first, but they clogged my modern sausage-stuffing equipment. Therefore, I recommend either chopping the nuts before adding them, or planning to re-grind the sausage mixture after adding them (which is what I ended up doing).

The original recipe calls for additional pepper, in the form of whole peppercorns, but after cooking a sample, my tasters agreed that it did not need any additional seasonings. Pepper fans may feel free to add a few whole peppercorns to the mixture before stuffing the sausage into the casings.

References

Giacosa, Ilaria Gozzini (Herklotz, Anna, translator). *A Taste of Ancient Rome*. The University of Chicago Press, Chicago and London, 1992. ISBN 0-226-29032-8.

Vehling, Joseph Dommers (translator). *Apicius: Cookery and Dining in Imperial Rome*. Dover Publications Inc., New York, 1977. ISBN 0-486-23563-7.

Esicia Omentata (Pine-nut Stuffed Meatballs)

Original Recipe

Esicia Omentata:

Apicius, #48

Ground Meat Patties in Omentum: Grind chopped meat with the center of fine white bread that has been soaked in wine. Grind together pepper, garum, and pitted myrtle berries if desired. Form small patties, putting in pine nuts and pepper. Wrap in omentum and cook slowly in caroenum. [Giacosa, pp. 89-90]

Ingredients:

4 cups red wine (to boil down to 2 cups caroenum)

1 lb. ground pork or beef

4 slices of white bread

1/4 cup red wine

1/2 teaspoon peppercorns

8-10 juniper berries

2 teaspoons Thai fish sauce

1/4 cup pine nuts

Preparation Steps

Put the four cups of red wine in a saucepan. Boil over medium-high heat for about half an hour, or until the liquid has reduced by half.

Meanwhile, remove the crusts from the slices of bread and tear the bread into bits. Place in a large bowl and pour the 1/4 cup of red wine over them. Knead until the red wine is evenly distributed; the mixture should be pasty. Add meat and mix well.

Grind together peppercorns and juniper berries. Mix with fish sauce and pour over meat mixture. Mix until spices are evenly distributed.

Form walnut-sized meatballs, making a hollow in each with your thumb. Place 6-8 pine nuts in the hollow and roll meatball firmly to seal. Poach dumplings in reduced wine for about 6 minutes, turning once while cooking. Remove meatballs and allow remaining liquid to reduce by half. Serve hot, with reduced liquid as a sauce.

Number of Servings

Makes approximately two dozen meatballs.

Notes

I have chosen to omit the omentum (pork caul fat) and simply poach the dumplings in the caroenum. The meatballs seemed to remain quite moist without it. Juniper berries are substituted for myrtle berries, as the latter were unavailable.

For this recipe, a Cabernet Sauvignon works well.

References

Giacosa, Iliaria Gozzini (Herklotz, Anna, translator). *A Taste of Ancient Rome*. The University of Chicago Press, Chicago and London, 1992. ISBN 0-226-29032-8.

Vehling, Joseph Dommers (translator). *Apicius: Cookery and Dining in Imperial Rome*. Dover Publications Inc., New York, 1977. ISBN 0-486-23563-7.

Avem (Olive-stuffed Birds)

Original Recipe

Avem:

Apicius, #231

Another recipe for birds: Stuff the stomach with crushed fresh olives, sew up, and boil thus. Then remove the cooked olives. [Giacosa, p. 112]

Ingredients:

One whole chicken OR eight pieces of cut up chicken

3/4 - 1 cup assorted Greek olives, crushed

olive oil

salt (optional)

Preparation Steps

Wash chicken. If using a whole chicken, stuff the cavity with the chopped olives; if you wish, sew the cavity closed. Coat whole chicken or pieces liberally with olive oil and sprinkle generously with salt (note that if olives seem salty, you may wish to omit additional salt). Place in roasting pan (if using chicken pieces, layer them in the pan with the olives) and roast at 375 degrees F for approximately one hour, or until done.

Number of Servings

Serves 8.

Notes

The original recipe calls for the olives to be removed from the birds after cooking; however, I have chosen to serve them with the meat, for diners to eat or discard as they wish.

This recipe can be used with just about any type of poultry, but is especially good with quail.

References

Giacosa, Ilaria Gozzini (Herklotz, Anna, translator). *A Taste of Ancient Rome*. The University of Chicago Press, Chicago and London, 1992. ISBN 0-226-29032-8.].

Vehling, Joseph Dommers (translator). *Apicius: Cookery and Dining in Imperial Rome*. Dover Publications Inc., New York, 1977. ISBN 0-486-23563-7.

In Pullo Elizo I us Crudum (Uncooked Sauce for Birds)

Original Recipe

In Pullo Elizo I us Crudum

Apicius, #235

Put in the mortar dill seed, dry mint, laser root, moisten with vinegar, fig wine, broth, a little mustard, oil and reduced must, and serve. (Vehling, p. 149)

Ingredients:

1 teaspoon dill seed
1 1/2 teaspoons dried peppermint
4 cloves garlic
1 1/2 teaspoon balsamic vinegar
4 teaspoons sweet sherry
1 teaspoon honey
1/3 cup chicken broth
1/4 - 1/2 teaspoon ground mustard (depending on strength)
5 teaspoons olive oil
1 tablespoon red wine, boiled to reduce by half

Preparation Steps

Grind dill seed and peppermint together. Place in food processor with garlic and vinegar. Dissolve honey in sherry, heating a little, if necessary, and add to mixture. Add remaining ingredients and process until garlic is finely ground. Refrigerate for 2-3 hours before serving, so that flavors blend.

Number of Servings

Makes approximately 3/4 cup of sauce

Notes

As noted elsewhere, Giacosa recommends garlic as a substitute for laser root. I chose sherry mixed with honey as a substitute for "fig wine," as the latter was not available at my local liquor store. Red wine was substituted for must.

References

Vehling, Joseph Dommers (translator). Apicius: Cookery and Dining in Imperial Rome. Dover Publications Inc., New York, 1977. ISBN 0-486-23563-7.

Assaturatam (Honey Roasted Meat)

Original Recipe

Assaturatam:

Apicius, #268

Assaturam: Assam a furno simplicent salis plurimo conspersam cum melle inferes.

Roasted Meat: The meat is roasted plain in the oven, sprinkled generously with salt. Serve with honey. [Giacosa, p. 88]

Ingredients:

2-3 pounds beef roast

1 tablespoon salt

1/2 cup honey, divided

Preparation Steps

Heat oven to 450 degrees F. Sprinkle the roast with salt, making sure to get all sides. Place in roasting pan and put in oven. Turn heat down to 325 degrees F. Cook for 1 1/2 – 2 hours or until done. One hour into cooking time, drizzle 1/4 cup of honey over the roast and return to oven. Serve with remaining honey on the side for dipping.

Number of Servings

Serves 8-10.

Notes

As it worked out, the beef got a little more thoroughly cooked than I had intended. However, once it was sliced and thrown back into the cooking juices for a little while, it soaked up the honey flavor even better and was very moist and tender.

References

Giacosa, Ilaria Gozzini (Herklotz, Anna, translator). *A Taste of Ancient Rome*. The University of Chicago Press, Chicago and London, 1992. ISBN 0-226-29032-8.

Vehling, Joseph Dommers (translator). *Apicius: Cookery and Dining in Imperial Rome*. Dover Publications Inc., New York, 1977. ISBN 0-486-23563-7.

Mishmishya (Meat Stew With Fruit)

(al-Baghdadi)

Cut fat meat small, put into the saucepan with a little salt, and cover with water. Boil and remove the scum. Cut up onions, wash, and throw in on top of the meat. Add seasonings, coriander, cumin, mastic, cinnamon, pepper and ginger, well ground. Take dry apricots, soak in hot water, then wash and put in a separate saucepan, and boil lightly: take out, wipe in the hands, and strain through a sieve. Take sweet almonds, grind fine, moisten with a little apricot juice and throw in. Some color with a trifle of saffron. Spray the saucepan with a little rose water, wipe its sides with a clean rag, and leave to settle over the fire: then remove.

2 lbs. lamb -- cubed
½ tsp. black pepper
½ tsp. salt
1 lg. onion -- finely chopped
¼ tsp. ground ginger
½ lb dried apricots
½ tsp. ground coriander
½ tsp. ground cumin
1/3 c ground almonds
¼ tsp. saffron
¼ tsp. ground cinnamon
1 tsp. rosewater

Brown the meat, cover with water. Add the onions and spices; stew until the meat is tender. Add apricots - either puree them or add them whole as I have. Stir in almonds and rosewater to thicken.

Notes: I did not use mastic, as it was not available. For this feast I substituted beef for the lamb.

Recipe for the Barmakiyya (Spiced Chicken Pies)

(Andalusian p. A-9)

It is made with hens, pigeons, ring doves, small birds, or lamb. Take what you have of it, then clean it and cut it and put it in a pot with salt and onion, pepper, coriander and lavender or cinnamon, some murri naqi, and oil. Put it over a gentle fire until it is nearly done and the sauce is dried. Take it out and fry it with mild oil without overdoing it, and leave it aside. Then take fine flour and semolina, make a well-made dough with yeast, and if it has some oil it will be more flavorful. Then stretch this out into a thin loaf and inside this put the fried and cooked meat of these birds, cover it with another thin loaf, press the ends together and place it in the oven, and when the bread is done, take it out. It is very good for journeying; make it with fish and that can be used for journeying too.

Note: The Barmecides were a family of Persian viziers who served some of the early Umayyad Caliphs, in particular Haroun al-Rashid, and were famed for their generosity.

Commercial frozen bread dough

1 lb boned chicken (or lamb)

1 c. chopped onion

1/2 t pepper

1 1/2 tsp. cinnamon

1 tsp. salt

olive oil for frying

1 t coriander

Chop the meat into small pieces. Heat the olive oil in a saucepan, add chopped onion and spices, and simmer until the meat is nearly cooked. Transfer the meat to a skillet and continue to cook until the juices have been absorbed.

Make thin loaves of the bread dough, and fill according to the instructions. Bake on a cookie sheet at 350deg. for 40 minutes.

Notes: I did not use murri in this recipe; I was unable to locate all the ingredients. A recipe for murri is available in Cariadoc's Miscellany. Additionally, I used commercial bread dough in place of making my own, due to the scale of this recipe for a feast. The Miscellany contains Cariadoc's proportions for the dough.

Buran (Meatballs in a Yogurt and Eggplant Dip)

al-Baghdadi p. 191/8 (GOOD)

Take eggplant, and boil lightly in water and salt, then take out and dry for an hour. Fry this in fresh sesame-oil until cooked: peel, put into a dish or a large cup, and beat well with a ladle, until it becomes like kabis. Add a little salt and dry coriander. Take some Persian milk, mix in garlic, pour over the eggplant, and mix together well. Take red meat, mince fine, make into small cabobs, and melting fresh tail, throw the meat into it, stirring until browned. Then cover with water, and stew until the water has evaporated and only the oils remain. Pour on top of this the eggplant, sprinkle with fine-ground cumin and cinnamon, and serve.

1 lb eggplant
1 lb lamb (makes 30-40 cabobs)
1 c yogurt
3 T sesame oil
2 cloves garlic
1/4 t coriander
1/2 t salt
1/2 t cumin
1 t cinnamon

Cut eggplants in thick slices (approximately 1 1/2"), put in boiling salted water (6 c water + 6 T salt) for 7 minutes. Remove, let stand 1 hour. Make lamb into small meatballs (may add cinnamon etc. if you wish). Fry in melted lamb fat ("tail"). When browned, cover with water and simmer until only the oil is left. Then fry eggplant in sesame oil until cooked, peel, mash, add salt and coriander. Crush garlic, add to yogurt, mix with eggplant. Put the meatballs on top, sprinkle with cumin and cinnamon, and serve.

-- From the electronic version of Cariadoc's Miscellany, available on-line at:
<http://www.pbm.com/~lindahl/cariadoc/miscellany.html>

Notes: This is really good, but be prepared for garlic. I served it with the orange slices to temper the garlic. I used beef in place of lamb in this recipe. Adding a little cinnamon to the beef gives it a "lamb-y" flavor.

Zirbaya (Chicken in a Sweet Sauce)

Andalusian p. A-8

Take a young, cleaned hen and put it in a pot with a little salt, pepper, coriander, cinnamon, saffron and sufficient of vinegar and sweet oil, and when the meat is cooked, take peeled, crushed almonds and good white sugar, four ounces of each; dissolve them in rosewater, pour in the pot and let it boil; then leave it on the embers until the fat rises. It is very nutritious and good for all temperaments; this dish is made with hens or pigeons or doves, or with the meat of a young lamb.

1 chicken, 3 lb
1 t salt
1/2 t pepper
1 t coriander
2 t cinnamon
20 threads saffron
2 T wine vinegar
2 T olive oil
4 oz = 2/3 c almonds
1/2 c sugar
4 T rosewater

Put cut-up chicken, spices, vinegar, and oil into pot. Bring to boil, cook covered over moderate to low heat 40 minutes, stirring periodically to keep the chicken from sticking. Blanch and grind almonds, mix with sugar and rosewater to make a paste. Stir this in with chicken, bring back to a boil and cook about 8 minutes until sauce thickens.

-- From the electronic version of Cariadoc's Miscellany, available on-line at:
<http://www.pbm.com/~lindahl/cariadoc/miscellany.html>

fish

Kakavia

This is a fresh fish soup, which is improved by having as many different varieties of fish as possible. You can make it with salt or fresh water fish, but you will need at least 3 or 4 varieties for the best results.

1 cup scallions or leeks, sliced
1/2 cup olive oil
1/2 stalk fennel, sliced
3 sprigs of parsley
1 bay leaf
1 tsp thyme
2 cup dry white wine
4 cups water
4 pounds of fish (3 or 4 different types)
1 pound shrimp
1 pound mussels or scallops in the shell (well scrubbed)
thick slices of home made bread

Saute onions in oil until soft. Add fennel, herbs, wine and water and bring to a boil. Season with salt and simmer for 45 minutes. Pour stock through a sieve and squeeze out the juice from the vegetables and discard the fibers. Return to the pot and bring to a boil. (For a richer stock, ask the fishseller for the heads and bones from your fish and add them to the water for the initial boiling. Remove when you strain out the vegetables. Or you could add a bottle of clam juice instead of some of the water). Lightly salt the fish and let stand for 10 minutes, then rinse and lower into the boiling liquid. Lower heat and simmer 10 minutes. Add shrimp and scallops or mussels and simmer an additional 10 minutes. Taste and adjust the seasonings. Toast the bread slices and place them in large soup plates or bowls. Place a variety of fish and some of the broth in each dish. You may also serve the Avgolemono Sauce with this.

Fresh Oysters

3-4 oysters per person
pinch of pepper
pinch of ground lovage
2 egg yolks
1 tbls vinegar
1 tbls olive oil
1 tbls wine
1 tsp anchovy essence
1 tbls honey (optional)

Open the oysters as near as possible to the time of eating. They may be served raw, stewed, or baked then covered with the following sauce. Mix the pepper and lovage with the egg yolks, then add the vinegar, a drop at a time, to make a smooth mixture. Stir in the olive oil, wine, and anchovy essence. Honey may be added if you like. Mix all ingredients together thoroughly and pour over oysters and serve.

Byzantine Salmon

Original Recipe

[To cook fish]

Hierophile, 13th century

...one should choose fish which has a delicate flesh... They should be cooked with oxymel, vinegar and garum. [Master Demetrios, Byzantine Cuisine]

Ingredients:

4 lbs. salmon fillets

4 Tbsp. White wine vinegar

2 Tbsp. + 2 tsp. Honey

2 tsp. Fish sauce

Olive oil

Preparation Steps

Spread a small amount of olive oil in the bottom of the baking dish to prevent sticking. Place the fish in the baking dish, skin side down. Pour the vinegar, honey, and fish sauce combined into a sauce over the fish. Bake at 350° for about 30 minutes, or until the flesh from the thickest part of the filet can be flaked with a fork.

Number of Servings

Serves 8-12.

Notes

The salmon was perhaps a bit stronger flavor that Hierophile had in mind, but it was at a reasonable price, whereas other, milder fish were not. I choose the salmon. Again there is no indication of how the fish was cooked, but as it appears that fish should be cooked with the sauce, I decided to bake it. I have used Thai fish sauce to approximate garum.

I find that I cannot tolerate the smell of fish sauce, but the flavor is not at all objectionable. This was excellent served chilled with Mustard Sauce.

References

Master Demetrios, Byzantine Cuisine.

Moussaka

1 1/2 cups natural barley
salt
3/4 cup Feta cheese, crumbled
1 lb. ground beef
1 onion, finely chopped
bread crumbs
4 zucchini, sliced
3 cups medium white sauce:
2 Tbs olive oil
2 Tbs flour
1 cup of warm milk
pinch of salt

Cook the barley in salted water until done. Drain & set aside. Brown the ground beef and onions together. Sprinkle the zucchini with salt and let stand 10 minutes. Squeeze out the excess moisture. Add the zucchini to the beef and onions and saute a few moments longer. Mix half of the Feta cheese and the beef mixture with the barley. Oil a 9 x 12 x 3 baking pan with olive oil and spread the barley mixture over it. Make the white sauce by heating the olive oil in a heavy skillet. Stir in the flour and add the 1 cup of warm milk, stirring steadily to make a smooth sauce. Add the pinch of salt. Add the rest of the Feta to the sauce and stir. Pour the sauce over the barley, top with bread crumbs and bake at 350° F for 30 to 40 minutes. Remove and let stand 10 minutes before cutting.

Salad Oxogarita

cos lettuce
chickory or endive
basil
cucumber
squill vinegar
garum (fish sauce)

Shred and mix lettuce, chickory and basil. Bathe cucumber in squill vinegar, then slice and add to the salad. Lightly splash the salad in 2:1 mixture of vinegar and garum (well mixed).

Byzantine Murri

Description

There is taken, upon the name of God the Most High, of honey scorched in naqrah (perhaps this word means 'a silver vessel'), three ratls, pounded scorched oven bread, ten loaves; starch, half a ratl; roasted anise, fennel and nigelia, two uqiyahs of each; Byzantine saffron, an uqiya; celery seed, an uqiyah; Syrian Carob, half a ratl; fifty peeled walnuts, as much as half a ratl; split quinces, five; salt, half makkauk dissolved in honey; thirty ratls water; and the rest of the ingredients are thrown in it, and it is boiled on a slow flame until a third of the water is absorbed. Then it is strained well in a clean nosebag of hair. It is taken up in a greased glass or pottery vessel with a narrow top. A little lemon from Takranjiya (? Sina'ah 51 has Bakr Fahr) is thrown on it, and if it suits that a little water is thrown on the dough and it is boiled upon it and strained, it would be a second (infusion). The weights and measurements that are given are Antiochan and Zahiri [as] in Mayyafariqin.

The following quantities are for 1/32 of the above recipe. The first time I used more bread and the mixture was too thick. I have not discovered what a mukuk is, so the salt is pure guesswork.

1 ratl = 12 uqiya = 600mL

Recipe

3 tbs honey

45g bread

1 tbs wheat starch

2/3 tsp anise

2/3 tsp fennel

2/3 tsp nigelia DANGER: This plant is poisonous, omit from recipe

1/4 tsp saffron

1/3 tsp celery seed

3/2 tsp carob

3/2 tsp walnut

45g quince

1/8 tsp salt

600mL water

1/4 of a lemon

cooked the honey in a small frying pan, bringing it to a boil then turning off the heat several times; it tasted scorched. The bread was sliced white bread, toasted in a toaster to be somewhat blackened, then mashed in a mortar. The anise and fennel were toasted in a frying pan, then put in a mortar with celery seed and walnut, and ground. After it was all boiled together, it was put in a cloth bag and the liquid drained out and used.

Byzantine Mustard Sauce

Original Recipe

[Sauce for fish]

Hierophile, 13th century

For fresh fish, one should use, as it has been indicated for the month of June, all those that have delicate flesh, and these may be seasoned with a mustard sauce... [Master Demetrios, Byzantine Cuisine]

Ingredients:

3 Tbsp. Ground mustard seed

2/3 c. white wine vinegar

2 large garlic cloves, minced

3/4 cup olive oil

Preparation Steps

Whisk all ingredients together; serve over fish.

Notes

Demetrios speculates that these ingredients might approximate a Byzantine mustard sauce. This is very thin, a vinaigrette. I made it a bit "thicker" by increasing the mustard from 1 teaspoon to 3 tablespoons. The result is a vinaigrette that remarkably retains an emulsion for a very long time. Must be something in the mustard seed. The extra mustard gives the sauce quite a bit of heat, which tends to grow upon the tongue as the vinegar is washed away.

Beware!

Demetrios says that the mustard sauce to which Hierophile refers might also be something like a modern Hollandaise sauce.

References

Master Demetrios, Byzantine Cuisine.

Carotæ and Pastinacæ (Carrots and Parsnips in Wine Sauce)

Original Recipe

[Parsnips] Another way:

[Apicius 119]

Boil the parsnips hard, put them in a sauce pan and stew with oil, stock, pepper, raisin wine, strain, and bind with roux.

Carotæ and Pastinacæ:

[Apicius 122]

Carrots and parsnips are fried with a wine sauce.

Ingredients:

6 carrots

2 parsnips

1/4 cup olive oil

1/2 cup chicken broth OR vegetable broth OR water with 1/4 teaspoon salt added

1/2 teaspoon ground pepper

1/4 cup sweet wine or sherry

rice flour or bread crumbs (optional)

Preparation Steps

Peel and slice carrots and parsnips. Place in a skillet with remaining ingredients except rice flour. Cook, stirring occasionally, until carrots and parsnips are done, about 25-30 minutes. If needed, thicken with rice flour or bread crumbs before serving.

Number of Servings

8 servings.

Serving Size

1/2 cup.

Notes

The "roux" mentioned in the translation is probably an incorrect translation. Roux was not used as a thickener in Roman times. I have suggested the substitution of either rice flour or bread crumbs, but I have found that with this recipe, it is usually not necessary to thicken the sauce at all. By the time the carrots and parsnips are sufficiently cooked, the liquid has reduced itself to a thick paste that binds itself to the vegetables. In fact, if the pan becomes too dry, you may need to add some additional liquid to the pot to keep the vegetables from sticking.

References

Vehling, Joseph Dommers (translator). Apicius: Cookery and Dining in Imperial Rome. Dover Publications Inc., New York, 1977. ISBN 0-486-23563-7.

Fungis (Mushrooms In Sauce)

Original Recipe

Fungis:

Apicius, #311

For ash tree mushrooms: Pepper, caroenum, vinegar, and oil. [Giacosa, p. 45].

Ingredients:

1 pound fresh mushrooms, mixed (e.g., white and Portobello)

1/2 teaspoon ground pepper

2 cups white wine

1/2 cup vinegar

1/2 cup olive oil

Preparation Steps

Boil the white wine in a saucepan for half an hour, or until liquid is reduced by approximately half. Meanwhile, wash, trim and slice mushrooms. Mix pepper, reduced wine, vinegar, and oil and pour over mushrooms. Allow to marinate for at least an hour before serving, and preferably overnight.

Number of Servings

Serves 8.

Notes

The original recipe does not specify whether the mushrooms should be cooked or not. For this version, it is interpreted it as marinated mushrooms. We have also used the recipe for parboiled mushrooms (which reduces the time needed for marinating), but an equally valid case could be made for sauteeing or simmering the mushrooms in this sauce.

References

Giacosa, Iliara Gozzini (Herklotz, Anna, translator). *A Taste of Ancient Rome*. The University of Chicago Press, Chicago and London, 1992. ISBN 0-226-29032-8.

Vehling, Joseph Dommers (translator). *Apicius: Cookery and Dining in Imperial Rome*. Dover Publications Inc., New York, 1977. ISBN 0-486-23563-7.

I us in Assaturae (For Roasted Meat)

Original Recipe

Assaturas:

Apicius, #220

Assaturas: Mirtae siccae bacam extenteratam cum cumino, pipere, melle, liquamine, defrito et oleo teres et fervefactum amulas. Carnem elixam sale subassatam perfundis, piper aspargis et inferes.

For Roasted Meat: Crush dried, pitted myrtle berries with cumin, pepper, honey, garum, defrutum, and oil; heat and thicken with starch. Boil the meat and then roast it slightly with salt; pour the sauce over, sprinkle with pepper, and serve. [Giacosa, pp. 35-6]

Ingredients:

1/4 cup dried currants
1 1/4 teaspoons ground cumin
1/4 teaspoon ground pepper
1 1/2 teaspoons honey
3/4 teaspoons Thai fish sauce (garum)
1/4 cup white wine, boiled to reduce by half
2 teaspoons olive oil
Bread crumbs

Preparation Steps

Place currants, cumin, pepper, honey, fish sauce, reduced wine, and olive oil in a blender or food processor and blend until smooth. Pour into a saucepan and bring to a boil. Add a small amount of bread crumbs, just until sauce thickens.

Number of Servings

Makes approximately 1/2 cup sauce.

Notes

Myrtle berries were unavailable, so I chose to substitute dried currants instead. My sauce seemed quite thick without the addition of bread crumbs, so I left them out. Perhaps if fresh currants or myrtle berries had been used, the mixture would have been moister, requiring thickening.

References

Giacosa, Ilaria Gozzini (Herklotz, Anna, translator). *A Taste of Ancient Rome*. The University of Chicago Press, Chicago and London, 1992. ISBN 0-226-29032-8.
Vehling, Joseph Dommers (translator). *Apicius: Cookery and Dining in Imperial Rome*. Dover Publications Inc., New York, 1977. ISBN 0-486-23563-7.

Lenticulam (Lentils With Leeks)

Original Recipe

Aliter Lenticulam (Lentils Another Way):

Apicius, #184

Cook the lentils, skim them, add leeks, green coriander; crush coriander seed, flea-bane, laser root, mint seed and rue seed moistened with vinegar; add honey, broth, vinegar, reduced must to taste; then oil, stirring until it is done, bind with roux, add green oil, sprinkle with pepper and serve. [Vehling, p. 128]

Ingredients:

2 cups lentils

dash salt

1 large leek, sliced into rings

1 tablespoon cilantro

1 1/2 teaspoons ground coriander seed

2 cloves garlic, minced

1 teaspoon crushed dried mint leaves or 1 tablespoon fresh mint, minced

1 teaspoon celery seed

2 teaspoons white wine vinegar

2 tablespoons honey

2 cups vegetable broth

2 tablespoons white wine vinegar

1/2 cup red wine, boiled to reduce by half

1/4 cup olive oil

bread crumbs or flour for thickening

1 tablespoon olive oil

1/8 teaspoon ground pepper

Preparation Steps

Cook the lentils in boiling salted water until al dente, about 15 minutes. Drain, rinse, and return to pot. Add leeks and cilantro. Grind together coriander seed, garlic, mint, celery seed, and 2 teaspoons vinegar, and add to pot. Add honey, broth, remaining vinegar, reduced wine, and 1/4 cup olive oil. Cook for an additional 30-40 minutes, until lentils are soft and leeks are cooked through. If needed, thicken with bread crumbs or flour. Remove to serving dish, drizzle remaining oil on top, and sprinkle with ground pepper.

Number of Servings

Eight 1/3 cup servings.

Notes

Giacosa suggests garlic as a substitute for the now-extinct laser root. The "flea-bane" has been omitted entirely from this redaction. Mint leaves are substituted for mint seed, as the latter is not commercially available in food-grade quantities. Rue has been found to cause some health problems, so celery seed is substituted for the rue seed.

References

Giacosa, Ilaria Gozzini (Herklotz, Anna, translator). *A Taste of Ancient Rome*. The University of Chicago Press, Chicago and London, 1992. ISBN 0-226-29032-8.

Vehling, Joseph Dommers (translator). *Apicius: Cookery and Dining in Imperial Rome*. Dover Publications Inc., New York, 1977. ISBN 0-486-23563-7.

Mystron (Savoury Barley)

Original Recipe

Mystron:

Athenaeus, *The Partying Professors*

'Nicander of Colophon is the author who employs the word mystron when describing the use of the word barley groats in the first of his two books *On Farming*. He writes: "But when you are making a dish of fresh kid or lamb or capon, put some barley groats in a mortar, pound them well, then stir in some ripe olive oil. When the stock is boiling hard, pour it over the pounded groats, put the lid on the pot and steam it; for when it is cooked in this way, the heavy meal swells up. Serve it when lukewarm in hollow mystra.'" [Grant, p. 96]

Ingredients:

2 cups pearl barley

1/3 cup olive oil

4 cups chicken broth

Preparation Steps

Place barley, oil, and broth in a modern rice steamer. Cook until done. (Alternatively, combine ingredients in a large pot and cook on a stovetop as directed for barley) Serve in hollowed out bread loaves (optional).

Number of Servings

Approximately 8 1/2 cup servings.

Notes

This is a very rich side dish -- small servings are recommended.

References

Grant, Mark. *Roman Cookery: Ancient Recipes for Modern Kitchens*. Serif, London, 2000. ISBN 1-897959-39-7.

White Sals (Walnut Dip)

(A Collection of Medieval and Renaissance Cookbooks, Vol. 2, pg. Misc-3. It is one of the three recipes translated from *Kitab al-Tabikh* (The Book of Dishes): *Oriental 5000* (British Library) pp.70b, 71a, 74b.)

White sals. Walnut meats, garlic, pepper, cinnamon, white mustard, Tahini and lemon juice.

1 c. walnuts

2 (or 1 very large) cloves garlic

1/8 tsp. black pepper -- ground

1/2 tsp. cinnamon -- ground

1/8 tsp. ground mustard

3 Tbsp. tahini

2-3 Tbsp. lemon juice

In a food processor combine walnuts and garlic until they form a smooth paste. Add spices and the tahini. Process until the mixture is uniform. Add lemon juice until mixture forms a thick paste.

Notes: This got really thick upon resting in the fridge for a couple of days.

Carrot Paste

(An Anonymous Andalusian Cookbook of the 13th Century)

Take a ratl of carrots, of which you have cleaned the interior. Cook it in a ratl of water, some two boilings, then take it off the fire and let it dry a little, over a sieve. Add it to three ratls of honey, cleaned of its foam, and cook all this until it takes the form of a paste. Then season it with ginger, galingale, cubeb and flowers [of clove?] , half an ū qiya in all for each ratl. Eat it like a nut at meals. Its benefits: it fortifies coitus and increases desire beautifully; it is admirable.

1 lb. Carrots

½ lb. (about ¾ c.) honey

1/8 tsp. ground cloves

¼ tsp. ground ginger

1/8 tsp. ground cubebs

Boil the carrots until done. Drain and cool them, and then puree them with the honey in a food processor. Transfer the puree to a non-stick skillet and cook again to remove some of the moisture and thicken the honey. Add the spices. Serve with pita bread. I did not use galingale, because it was not available.

Notes: The original calls for three parts honey to one part carrots, but these proportions seemed to be too much honey. You lose the character of the carrots, so I changed the proportions to two parts carrots to one of honey. It is likely that modern carrots are sweeter than period ones; perhaps this accounts for the large amount of honey in the original. I believe that "flowers" refers to flowers of cinnamon, not clove as is indicated in the translation. Flowers of cinnamon were not available, so I went ahead and used ground cloves. The flavor is similar to pumpkin pie.

Cooked dish of lentils

al-Andalusi p. C-5 (no. 377)

Wash lentils and put them to cook in a pot with sweet water, oil, pepper, coriander and cut onion. When they are cooked throw in salt, a little saffron and vinegar; break three eggs, leave for a while on the flame and later retire the pot. Other times cook without onion. If you wish cook it with Egyptian beans pricked into which have been given a boil. Or better with dissolved yeast over a gentle fire. When the lentils begin to thicken add good butter or sweet oil, bit by bit, alike until it gets absorbed, until they are sufficiently cooked and have enough oil. Then retire it from the flame and sprinkle with pepper.

1 1/2 c dried lentils = 10 oz
2 1/4 c water
1 1/2 T oil
3/8 t pepper
1 1/2 t coriander
2 medium onions = 1/2 lb
3/4 t salt
12 threads saffron
2 T vinegar
4 eggs
(Egyptian beans)
(yeast)
4 T butter (or oil)
more pepper

Slice onions. Put lentils, water, oil, pepper, coriander and onion in a pot, bring to a boil, and turn down to a bare simmer. Cook covered 50 minutes, stirring periodically. Add butter in lumps, and cook while stirring for about 5 minutes. Add salt, saffron (crushed in 1 teaspoon water), and vinegar and bring back to a boil. Put eggs on top, cover pot and keep lentils at a simmer; stir cautiously every few minutes in order to scrape the bottom of the pot without stirring in the eggs. We find that if the heat is off, the eggs don't cook; if the heat is up at medium, the eggs cook, but the lentils start to stick to the pot. A larger quantity might hold enough heat to cook the eggs without leaving it on the flame. When the eggs are cooked, sprinkle with a little more pepper and serve. Makes 5 1/4 c.

-- From the electronic version of Cariadoc's Miscellany, available on-line at:
<http://www.pbm.com/~lindahl/cariadoc/miscellany.html>

notes: I did not use the eggs on top due to the scale of the recipe for a feast.

I sfanakh Mutajjan

al-Baghdadi p. 206/12

Take spinach, cut off the lower roots, and wash: then boil lightly in salt and water, and dry. Refine sesame oil, drop in the spinach, and stir until fragrant. Chop up a little garlic, and add. Sprinkle with fine-ground cumin, dry coriander, and cinnamon: then remove.

1 lb spinach
1 T sesame oil
1 clove garlic
1/4 t cumin
1/8 t coriander
1/2 t cinnamon

Boil spinach in salted water about 2 minutes.

-- From the electronic version of Cariadoc's Miscellany, available on-line at:
<http://www.pbm.com/~lindahl/cariadoc/miscellany.html>

notes: We used frozen spinach. Be sure that the sesame oil that you use is the Arabic variety. It's made from untoasted sesame seeds, and is nearly flavorless. It's also pretty pricey - about \$12 a quart. Do not substitute Chinese sesame oil; the flavor is very different.

deserts

Pastfeli

Here is something sweet to round out the meal.

honey
sesame seeds
orange flower water

Use equal weights of honey and sesame seeds. In a heavy skillet bring the honey to a very firm ball stage (250° to 256° F). Stir in the sesame seeds and continue cooking until the mixture comes to a bubbling boil. Spread the mixture 1/2" thick on a marble slab or tray moistened with orange flower water. Cool and cut into small diamonds or squares.

Sweet Wine Cakes

450g self-raising flour
1 tbls sweet white wine
pinch aniseed
pinch cumin
50g lard
25g grated cheese
1 beaten egg
12 bay leaves

Moisten the flour with the wine and add the aniseed and cumin. Rub in the lard and grated cheese and bind the mixture with egg. Shape into 12 small cakes and place each one on a bay leaf. Bake in the oven at 200°C for 25-30min.

Stuffed Dates

dates
shelled almonds, hazelnuts or pine kernals (one per date)
pepper
salt
2 tbls honey

Stone the dates and stuff with the nuts and a little pepper. Roll the dates in salt and heat the honey in a frying pan. Fry the dates briskly and then serve.

Savillum (Roman Cheesecake)

Original Recipe

Savillum

Cato 84.

Make a savillum thus: Mix 1/2 libra of flour and 2 1/2 librae of cheese, as is done for libum. Add 1/4 libra of honey and 1 egg. Grease an earthenware bowl with oil. When you have mixed the ingredients well, pour into the bowl and cover the bowl with an earthenware testo. See that you cook it well in the middle, where it is highest. When it is cooked, remove the bowl, spread with honey, sprinkle with poppy, put it back beneath the testo for a moment, and then remove. Serve it thus with a plate and spoon.

Ingredients:

Cheesecake:

1 15-oz. container whole milk ricotta
2 8-oz. packages cream cheese, softened
1/2 cup unbleached flour
1/4 cup whole wheat flour
3 eggs
1/2 cup honey

Topping:

1/3 cup honey
3 tablespoons poppy seeds

Preparation Steps

Sift flours together. Blend cheeses and mix well until no large lumps remain. Add flour, eggs, and honey and beat until smooth. Pour into a lightly greased 13" x 9" baking pan. Bake at 350°F for 30-35 minutes, or until the center sets up and the top is lightly browned.

In a small saucepan, heat topping ingredients over low heat to thin the honey out. Drizzle the topping over cooked cheesecake and return it to the oven for 3-5 minutes. Be very careful when removing the pan from the oven, as the honey becomes very thin and liquid, and can easily run off the top. Cut into 1 1/2" squares. Serve warm.

Yield

60 1-inch squares.

Notes

This recipe can also be made in two 8" pie pans. While best if served warm, it can successfully be frozen.

References

Giacosa, Iliara Gozzini (Herklotz, Anna, translator). [A Taste of Ancient Rome](#). The University of Chicago Press, Chicago and London, 1992. ISBN 0-226-29032-8.

Moretum (Cheese with Herbs)

Original Recipe

Moretum

Appendix Vergiliana

Four garlic cloves, celery, rue, coriander, salt grains, and cheese.

Ingredients:

1 1/4 cup fresh cheese

2 garlic cloves, peeled and finely minced

2 tablespoons celery leaves, finely minced

1 tablespoon fresh Italian parsley, finely minced (to substitute for rue)

1 teaspoon ground coriander

1/4 teaspoon salt (or to taste)

Preparation Steps

Combine all ingredients and shape into a round. Serve with bread or crackers.

Yield

Makes 1 1/4 cup.

Notes

Parsley was substituted for rue due to the fact that rue may cause adverse effects.

If possible, make the Moretum at least 24 hours in advance, to allow the flavors to blend. To mold into a round (or any other shape), line the mold with plastic wrap, then press the cheese into it, cover with more wrap, and chill. It will last at least two weeks in the refrigerator.

References

Giacosa, Ilaria Gozzini (Herklotz, Anna, translator). [A Taste of Ancient Rome](#). The University of Chicago Press, Chicago and London, 1992. ISBN 0-226-29032-8.

Lagana

Original Recipe

Laganon

Hesychius Dictionary[1]

"Laganon: a type of small cake, dry, made from the finest wheat flour and fried in a frying pan in olive oil."

Ingredients:

1/2 cup unbleached flour
1/2 cup whole wheat flour
1/2 cup water (scant)
1/4 teaspoon salt

Preparation Steps

Combine flours and salt in a mixing bowl. Gradually add water, kneading, until a smooth, fairly stiff dough is formed. If dough seems too sticky, add an additional tablespoon of flour; if too stiff, add an additional teaspoon of water. Break the dough into four pieces and roll through a pasta maker, setting the rollers closer and closer together, until thin sheets are formed.

Lay on a cutting board and poke all over with a fork to keep them from puffing up when fried. Cut into squares or lozenges about 1 1/2" on a side (a pizza cutter works really well for this). You should be able to get a dozen lagana from each sheet of dough.

Heat 1/4" of olive oil in a large skillet over medium-high heat. If the oil begins to smoke, turn down the heat a little. Fry the lagana until light brown and crisp, turning once during cooking. Allow to cool and serve with olive paste and/or cheeses.

Number of Servings

Makes 4 dozen.

Notes

Mark Grant writes that since modern flatware was unknown to the Romans, it is likely that they used lagana as an aid to eating. [2]

Although "finest wheat flour" is called for, I've found that mixing white and whole wheat flour gives a pleasing texture. Also, it is not likely that even their finest flour would have been as finely ground and as white as modern cake flour.

Salt is not called for in the original recipe; however, I found the lagana to be rather dry and tasteless without it, so I have added a small amount.

Footnotes

[1] As quoted in Grant, p. 65

[2] Ibid.

Bibliography

Grant, Mark. Roman Cookery: Ancient Recipes for Modern Kitchens. Serif, London, 2000. ISBN 1-897959-39-7.

Melca (Fresh Cheese Curds)

Original Recipe

Melca

Bassus, Country Matters

The best method for making what are known as curds is to pour sharp vinegar into new earthenware pots and then to put these pots on a slow fire. When the vinegar begins to boil, take it off the flame so it does not bubble over and pour milk into the pots. Place the pots in a store or some other place where they will not be disturbed. The next day you will have curds that are much better than those made with a great deal of fuss.

Ingredients:

1 quart whole milk
1 cup heavy cream
1/4 cup + 1 tablespoon white wine vinegar
2 pinches salt (about 1/8 teaspoon)

Preparation Steps

In a saucepan over low heat, mix milk and cream and heat to just over body temperature (105-110 degrees F). Set aside. In a heavy saucepan, heat vinegar to boiling. Remove vinegar from heat and pour the milk into the vinegar pan. Let stand just until curds form (this should happen almost right away – if not, try stirring gently). Line a colander with heavy cheesecloth and strain the mixture through this. Tie up the four corners of the cloth and let hang for 2-4 hours to drain off the whey. Transfer cheese to serving dish and stir in salt. The cheese may also be mixed with herbs and spices (see Moretum). Serve with bread or crackers. Makes 1 1/4 cup.

Redaction Notes

This recipe also works well with goat milk, but the curds formed will be very fine (about the size of grains of salt), so you will need very fine cloth to strain the cheese. I used a linen napkin. You may also need to add another 1-2 teaspoons vinegar.

Note that in an emergency, you can use the cheap cheesecloth from the grocery store; however, you will need to use several layers or the curd will just strain through. I usually count on using an entire package of cheesecloth for a single batch of cheese.

Balsamic vinegar is too strongly flavored for this recipe. It will make an extremely sour cheese.

If possible, use a ceramic- or enamel-coated pan to make the cheese. Otherwise, the acid will leach metal into the cheese and spoil the flavor. If you don't have a ceramic- or enamel-coated pan, then remove the cheese from the pan as quickly as possible.

References

Grant, Mark. Roman Cookery: Ancient Recipes for Modern Kitchens. Serif, London, 2000. ISBN 1-897959-39-7.

Caeseus cum Recenti Fico (Cheese with Figs)

Original Recipe

Caeseus cum Recenti Fico

Pliny, Natural History

A recent idea has been to eat a fresh fig instead of salt with cheese. [Grant, p. 79]

Ingredients:

Fresh or dried figs

Cheese (recommended types include Feta, Asiago, Romano, and Ricotta).

Preparation Steps

Arrange figs on a plate with cheese.

Notes

Experiment with different types of cheeses and figs until you find the combination you like best!

References

Grant, Mark. Roman Cookery: Ancient Recipes for Modern Kitchens. Serif, London, 2000. ISBN 1-897959-39-7.

Dulcia Domestica (Honeyed Dates)

Original Recipe

Dulciaria

Apicius, #294

Little home confections (which are called dulciaria) are made thus: Little palms or (as they are ordinarily called) dates are stuffed – after the seeds have been removed – with a nut or with nuts and ground pepper, sprinkled with salt on the outside and are candied in honey and served. [Vehling, pp. 172-3]

Ingredients:

32 whole dates, pitted

32 almonds

1 tablespoon black pepper, ground (or a mixture of strong spices)

1/4 teaspoon salt

1/3 cup honey

Preparation Steps

Roll almonds in spices to coat them. Stuff one spiced almond into each date. Spread the dates on a greased cookie sheet, sprinkle with salt, then drizzle with honey. Bake in a 400 degree F oven for 10-15 minutes. Serve warm, if possible.

Number of Servings

16 servings (2 dates each)

Notes

Edwards suggests that Apicius may have used the word “pepper” to include any strong spice, such as cinnamon or nutmeg, hence the suggested substitution of those spices for the pepper. I have used a number of different combinations, including (most recently) a poudre fort containing black pepper, long pepper, cloves, and nutmeg.

References

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Oranges dressed in cinnamon and rosewater

Thinly slice the oranges, sprinkle with rosewater

(more or less, depending on how well people in your audience will like it), and then lightly with cinnamon.

Fruited Rice

To ten cups of steamed Rice,

add about 2 cups of a mixture of sliced almonds, raisins, chopped dates, and apricots.

Hais (Date Kabobs)

(al-Baghdadi p. 214/14)

Take fine dry bread, or biscuit, and grind up well. Take a ratl of this, and three quarters of a ratl of fresh or preserved dates with the stones removed, together with three uqiya of ground almonds and pistachios. Knead all together very well with the hands. Refine two uqiya of sesame-oil, and pour over, working with the hand until it is mixed in. Make into kabobs, and dust with fine-ground sugar. If desired, instead of sesame-oil use butter. This is excellent for travellers.

2 c bread crumbs

2 c pitted dates -- about 1 lb.

1/3 c almonds -- ground

1/3 c pistachio nuts -- ground

10 Tbsp. melted butter -- or sesame oil
sugar

Grind nuts in food processor. Combine with bread crumbs. Chop dates in food processor; I found that they chop to a fine consistency when a half cup of the bread crumb-nut mixture was added to the bowl of the food processor with the dates. Mix it all together well. Melt the butter and add to the bread crumb-nut-date mixture. Form the mixture into bite-sized balls or ovals and roll in sugar.

Notes: We used commercial bread crumbs which I suspect are somewhat drier than the ones that you might make yourself. The type of breadcrumbs that you use will determine how much butter you'll need. Home made breadcrumbs will require less butter than this recipe calls for. We find that it holds together better if you let it set for an hour or more.

Khushkananaj (Almond Cake)

al-Baghdadi p. 212/14

Take fine white flour, and with every ratl mix three uqiya of sesame-oil (one part oil to four of flour), kneading into a firm paste. Leave to rise; then make into long loaves. Put into the middle of each loaf a suitable quantity of ground almonds and scented sugar mixed with rose water, using half as much almonds as sugar. Press together as usual, bake in the oven, remove.

2 c white +1 c whole wheat flour

1/2 c sesame oil (from untoasted sesame!!!)

6 oz almonds = 1 c before chopping

additional flour for rolling out dough

12 oz = 1 1/2 c sugar

1 T rose water

3/4 to 7/8 c cold water or 1/2 c water, 1/2 c sourdough starter

"Leave to rise" is a puzzle, since the recipe includes neither yeast nor water. The recipe does not seem to work without water; perhaps the author took it for granted that making a paste implied adding water. We originally developed the recipe without leavening, but currently use sourdough, which is our best guess at what the original intended (and also seems to work a little better). The two versions are:

Without leavening: Mix the flour, stir in the oil. Sprinkle the water onto the dough, stir in. Knead briefly together.

Sourdough: Mix the flour, stir in the oil. Mix the water and the sour dough starter together. Add gradually to the flour/oil mixture, and knead briefly together. Cover with a damp cloth and let rise about 8 hours in a warm place, then knead a little more.

We also have two interpretations of how the loaves are made; they are:

Almost Baklava: Divide in four parts. Roll each one out to about 8"x16" on a floured board. Grind almonds, combine with sugar and rose water. Spread the mixture over the rolled out dough and roll up like a jelly roll, sealing the ends and edges (use a wet finger if necessary). You may want to roll out the dough in one place and roll it up in another, so as not to have bits of nuts on the board you are trying to roll it out on. You can vary how thin you roll the dough and how much filling you use over a considerable range, to your own taste.

Long thin loaves: Divide the dough into six or eight parts, roll each out to a long loaf (about 16"), flatten down the middle so that you can fill it with the sugar and almond mixture, then seal it together over the filling. You end up with a tube of dough with filling in the middle. Bake at 350deg. about 45-50 minutes.

Notes: At least some of the almonds should be only coarsely ground, for texture. The sesame oil is the Middle Eastern version, which is almost flavorless; you can get something similar at health food stores. Chinese sesame oil, made from toasted sesame seeds, is very strongly flavored and results in a nearly inedible pastry. We do not know what scented sugar contained.

-- From the electronic version of Cariadoc's Miscellany, available on-line at:
<http://www.pbm.com/~lindahl/cariadoc/miscellany.html>

Notes:

We used commercial bread dough due to the scale of making this for a feast; here is the recipe as adjusted for this:

2 loaves commercial white bread dough
6 oz ground almonds
flour for rolling out dough
1 ½ c sugar -- 12 oz
1 Tbsp. rose water

Divide each loaf in two parts. Roll each one out as thin as possible on a floured board. Grind almonds, combine with sugar and rose water. Follow directions as for "Almost Baklava," above (spreading mixture over dough, and rolling as a jelly roll.)
Bake at 350 deg. about 20 minutes.

This is really good! But I didn't pay attention to the "seal the ends and edges" part. All the filling ran out.

Cheese and flour cake

al-Andalusi no. 79 p. C-2 (Good)

Knead the necessary quantity of flour, one time with water, another with oil, and to it add yeast and milk until it has the same consistency as the dough of fritters, and leave it until it has next risen. Next grease with oil a large earthen pot, stretch in it a piece of dough, and over it a bit of cheese, and over the cheese a bit of dough, and so a little of one, and a bit of the other until the last of the dough and cheese. Next cover it with dough as you did in the previous recipe and cook it in the same way in the oven. Afterwards, drizzle it with honey, sprinkle it with sugar and pepper and eat it.

2 c flour (1/3 whole wheat)
1/2-3/4 c water
3 T oil
1 1/2 t yeast
3 T milk
12 oz cheese
6 T honey
1 T sugar
1/4 t pepper

Knead flour and water to a very dry dough, mix warm milk and yeast, let sit five minutes, add oil to dough, knead in. Knead milk and yeast into the dough for about 5-10 minutes, until fairly uniform. Leave 45 minutes to rise in a warm place. Divide dough in about 8 equal portions, flour and pat, stretch, or roll out to size of pan (about 4"x7"); if you roll it out you can use 12 equal portions. Layer with sliced cheese. Bake 45 minutes at 350deg. . Drizzle the honey over it. Serve with mixed sugar and pepper for the guests to sprinkle over to taste. This should probably be done with sourdough instead of yeast, but we have not tried it that way yet.

-- From the electronic version of Cariadoc's Miscellany, available on-line at:
<http://www.pbm.com/~lindah/cariadoc/miscellany.html>

Notes:

Once again, we used commercial bread dough due to the scale of making this for a feast; here is the recipe as adjusted for this:

2 loaves Commercial frozen bread dough
12 oz cheese
6 Tbsp. honey
1 Tbsp. sugar
1/4 tsp. pepper

Follow directions above from "Divide dough in about 8 equal portions..."

I baked this in a large pan, expecting to cut it into bite-sized pieces. Boy, was I wrong! If you're going to make this, use a smaller pan, maybe 8" x 8". The center of my big pan never did get beyond doughy. I recommend using farmer's cheese) for the cheese; it's a good modern equivalent to period cheese. Use white pepper in your pepper-sugar mix. It sounds a bit weird, but it really is good!

Syrup of Lemon

(An Anonymous Andalusian Cookbook of the 13th Century)

Take lemon, after peeling its outer skin, press it and take a ratl of juice, and add as much of sugar. Cook it until it takes the form of a syrup. Its advantages are for the heat of bile; it cuts the thirst and binds the bowels.

1 cup lemon juice

1 cup sugar

Strain lemon juice to remove pulp and small seeds. Combine juice and sugar in a sauce pan; bring to boil and cook it down to a syrup consistency. Mix one part syrup to eight parts water for a drink.

notes: Thirty lemons made about 8 quarts of syrup, which wasn't enough for the 100 or so people that we served. They liked it a lot.

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