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Cooking across the Ages

Course Guidebook

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Ken Albala is a Professor of History at the University of the Pacific in Stockton, California, where he has been teaching food history and the history of early modern Europe for 25 years. He holds a BA in European Studies from The George Washington University, an MA in History from Yale University, and a PhD in History from Columbia University. In 2009, he won the Faye and Alex G. Spanos Distinguished Teaching Award at the University of the Pacific.

Professor Albala is the author or editor of 25 books on food, including *Eating Right in the Renaissance*; *Food in Early Modern Europe*; *Cooking in Europe, 1250–1650*; *The Banquet: Dining in the Great Courts of Late Renaissance Europe*; *Pancake: A Global History*; and *Beans: A History*, winner of the 2008 International Association of Culinary Professionals Jane Grigson Award.

He also coedited *The Business of Food: Encyclopedia of the Food and Drink Industries*; *Human Cuisine*; *Food and Faith in Christian Culture*; and *A Cultural History of Food in the Renaissance*.

Professor Albala served as the editor of several food series with more than 100 titles in the past two decades, first for Greenwood Press and later for Rowman & Littlefield. He also edited the four-volume *Food Cultures of the World Encyclopedia* and the three-volume *SAGE Encyclopedia of Food Issues*. He was also a coeditor of the journal *Food, Culture & Society*. His *Three World Cuisines: Italian, Mexican, Chinese* won the 2013 Gourmand World Cookbook Award for Best Foreign Cuisine Book in the World.

Professor Albala coauthored a cookbook titled *The Lost Art of Real Cooking* and its sequel, *The Lost Arts of Hearth and Home*, a handbook of kitchen and home projects. His most recent book is *Noodle Soup: Recipes, Techniques, Obsession*.

Professor Albala's other Great Course is *Food: A Cultural Culinary History*.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction

Guides

Supplementary Material

Cooking across the Ages

This in-depth, hands-on cooking course will take you on a culinary tour of the past—from ancient times to the 1980s. You will learn how to make authentic historic recipes in your own kitchen using familiar ingredients and equipment but taking no shortcuts and making no substitutions. You will explore the flavor profiles of distant times: the sweet-and-sour, spiced, and brightly colored dishes of the Middle Ages; the rich, complex stews of ancient Rome; and the exquisite handmade tortillas of Aztec Mexico. The course will cover the well-known apogees of culinary history, including Renaissance Italy, imperial Russia, and France at the court of Louis XIV, as well as lesser-known sites of gastronomic interaction, such as West Africans in Brazil, the Portuguese in Japan, and German immigrants in the American Midwest.

This course will also teach you some basic culinary procedures that are relatively unknown today, including fermentation, making pasta by hand, and even making vegetarian dishes from India that are 500 years old. You will discover the ancestors of many well-known dishes, the way seasonings changed over time, and the reason some kitchen equipment became obsolete. You will consider why some cultures prefer wildly exotic ingredients and complex procedures while others love homey, simple, and traditional dishes. You will be introduced to the food of kings and the common working classes, the haute cuisine of professional restaurant chefs, and the ordinary dishes women cooked for their families in 17th-century England.

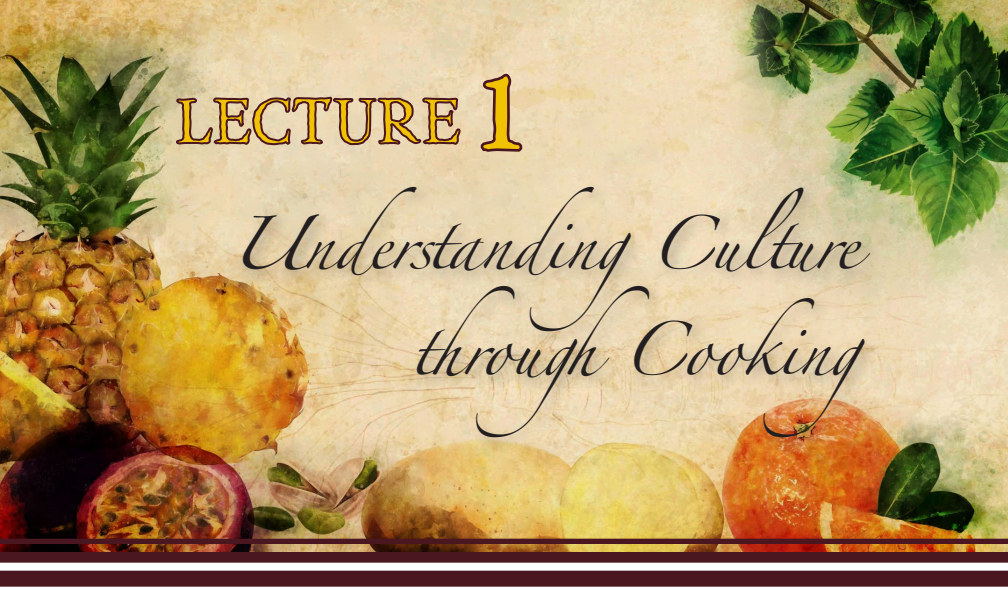
Each lecture will feature a single cookbook from the past, and you will learn how to interpret old recipes and how to cook confidently without measurements, cooking times, or oven temperatures. Our forebears cooked intuitively, by using all of their senses to judge when a dish was ready, when a dough should be rolled out, and exactly how to season food—all according to experience. This course is designed to get you in the kitchen and get your hands dirty to explore what is essentially a completely unknown gastronomic

landscape. You will be introduced to new ingredients, spices and herbs that can be easily found, and unfamiliar kitchen tools and techniques, as well as new ways of eating.

The idea is that you will cook along with the professor, gathering all of your ingredients ahead of time and stopping whenever necessary to let a pot simmer, a pie bake, or something in the oven brown to perfection. The recipes have not been modernized or adapted. You will discover why it is only when you veer from the provided instructions that recipes fail. Everything discussed in the course can be cooked in an ordinary kitchen, and most importantly, everything is eminently delicious.

Imagine serving your guests an entire aphrodisiac meal from the 16th century, an exquisite spiced *tourtière* from 19th-century Montreal, or a surprising relative of hummus from medieval Egypt. Tasting dishes from the past is a form of gastronomic time travel. You will learn how to make Viking beer without any special equipment, ferment beans to make the ancestor of soy sauce, and make an early American form of corned beef. Some ingredients are traced through several lectures to show the evolution of tastes and techniques, so there are a number of chicken dishes, pies, and complex stews. There are elegant appetizers, grand presentation pieces, and combinations of flavor that will surprise and delight you.

Each lecture includes some background information for contextualization, a discussion of the cookbook for the lecture, its author and intended audience, and the aesthetic preferences of the culture. You will learn about the cooking technology employed and the flavor and textures intended in the dishes. You will also learn how to present the dishes and eat them, whether with the hands, chopsticks, or a fork and knife. By the end of this course, you may be surprised by how many of these recipes become standard in your own cooking repertoire.



LECTURE 1

Understanding Culture through Cooking

WHY DID PEOPLE EAT WHAT THEY DID IN THE PAST, AND WHY DID THEY THINK IT TASTED good? The only way to find out is by cooking and tasting the recipes firsthand. One of the reasons to cook historic recipes is it's fun to explore unfamiliar cuisines—as a kind of gastronomic time travel. On a deeper level, exploring the food of the past gives us not only insights into the values and flavor preferences of people of the past but also an idea of the labor that went into daily tasks.

Click to go back to Table of Contents

Learning from Historic Recipes

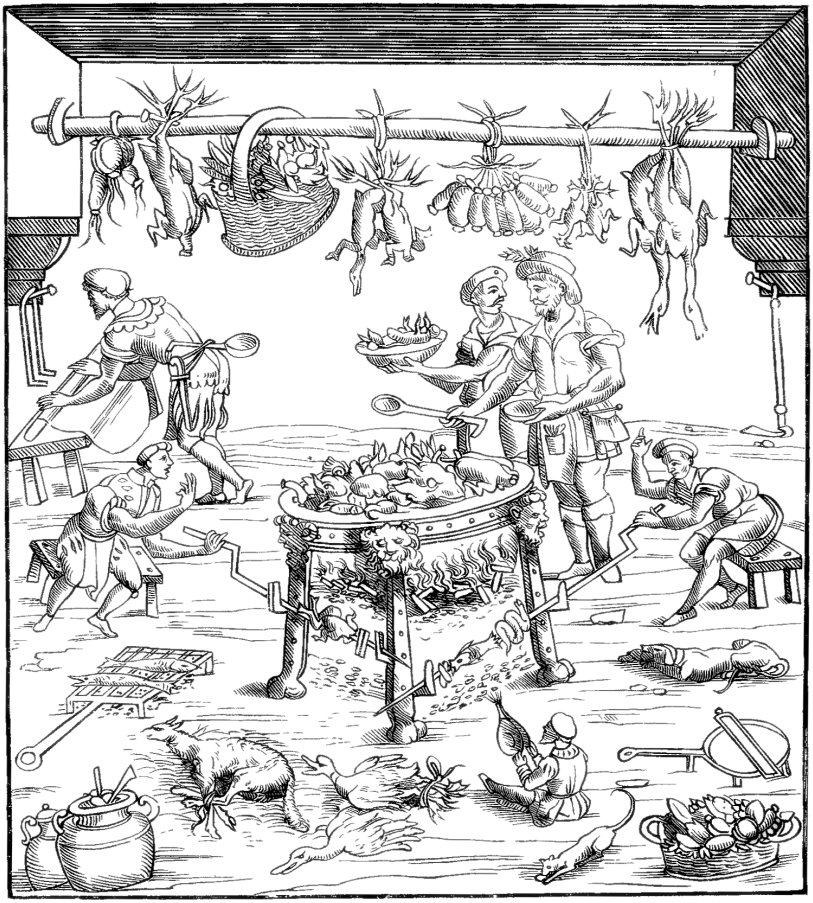
We can experience exactly what our forebears did when we cook directly—without substitutions or adaptations—from their cookbooks. We can learn about the past through embodied experience and through the act of seeing, smelling, and tasting the food.

We don't learn anything about the past when we adapt historic dishes to our tastes, and we don't need to translate the recipes into modern formats that list cooking times and precise measurements. People in the past didn't need these because in the vast majority of cases, it really doesn't matter whether you add a little more or less of an ingredient or cook something for more or less time. (Baking is an exception, but even with baked goods, there was much more leeway than we imagine.) Through practice, people in the past learned to use their sensory experience to judge how much salt to add to a dish, how long something should cook, or how to make it visually appealing in service.

We are much less adept cooks today precisely because we depend on very exact—almost scientifically rigid—recipes that in some ways take the fun and creativity out of cooking. They don't let you improvise.

So we should take the imprecision of old recipes as an invitation to learn by doing and experimenting. If you follow a recipe as closely as you can, the results are almost always wonderful. It is only when you take shortcuts, make substitutions, or fake it that you have disasters.

That is not to say that there aren't obstacles. Modern equipment can sometimes yield very different results. For example, one Elizabethan recipe for a rabbit cooked in a pipkin, a rounded clay vessel with legs, doesn't work in a steel pot on a modern stovetop.



There is also the question of ingredients. Some have completely changed in modern times. For example, we breed pigs to be much leaner, so a recipe written even a century or two ago for pork chops might turn out dry and overcooked if we followed the directions exactly. The solution is to find a heritage breed closer to those used in the past or simply make whatever adjustment might be necessary, such as cooking time, to make the recipe edible.

Many fruits and vegetables have also changed since modern cultivars and hybrids are usually larger, sweeter, and developed to meet modern taste expectations. For example, corn is very different today than it was centuries ago.

But these hurdles are not insurmountable. As long as you are using the same species, you are probably going to come quite close to the finished dish. And the variability is no greater than it is with ingredients we purchase today, which are always slightly different every time we buy them, from season to season and year to year.

However, some ingredients are simply not available. For example, the silphium plant the ancient Romans loved has gone extinct. There are other ingredients that you can only get nowadays if you hunt or have a friend who does. Some wild game that people loved in the past is illegal to hunt now.

Other ingredients can be difficult, though not impossible, to find, such as bitter rue and pennyroyal. But most ingredients are now obtainable through the internet.

This course offers recipes that you can actually cook with the ingredients available to you and using a modern kitchen. When cooking over an open fire is preferable or finding an obscure ingredient, you'll be told. Sometimes it does make a big difference, and the little added effort will be worth the time. On occasion, a historic technique or technology will be demonstrated, but a different, comparable way to make the dish today will be suggested.

Interpreting Cookbooks

When we look at a recipe or full cookbook, there are several ways to interrogate it as a subject of historical study. There is the artifact itself, which might be a cuneiform tablet impressed with a wedge of wood, a vellum manuscript inscribed with a quill and ink, a printed and bound book, or even an electronic posting on social media.

Cookbooks—whatever form they take—are an imprecise way of transmitting information about a technique, and it is important to remember that it is a very flawed medium for teaching. For the vast majority of humans in the past, learning how to cook was accomplished in the kitchen by watching. You could ask questions, the teacher could gauge the level of expertise of the student, ingredients could be explained, and the novice could use all of the senses—judging the heat of the pan with the fingertips, smelling the aromatic spices, listening for the sound of spattering oil, tasting to test doneness, and looking for visual cues like browning.

The cookbook is an analogue of this learning process in the form of words. Beginners need more precise verbal cues to hone their own sensory acumen, but more advanced cookbooks will assume that the reader knows how to read and execute the procedure. The most advanced cookbooks may simply list ingredients with a few technical directions.

A recipe was more like a medical prescription than a teaching tool. The word *recipe* comes from the Latin *recipe,* meaning "you take," as in mixing a pharmaceutical concoction—the Latin abbreviation for which, *Rx,* we still use.

For the past century, TV, videos, and other media have complicated the definition of a cookbook, and they do more closely approach the hands-on form of teaching that one would get in a kitchen. For this course, we will look at the cookbook—from the earliest forms in the ancient world right up to the present—and primarily at the written word as a set of directions to execute a particular dish.

There are many questions one can bring to analyzing a cookbook. They are not unlike those any historian would bring to reading a primary-source document, but they are a bit more specialized and focused.

To start, one must ask *who* is involved in this interchange of instructions. The author, if known, is very important. Is this a professional chef communicating his or her expertise? Is this a woman offering household advice to like-minded householders? Is this a celebrity or an unknown food amateur?

Who writes the cookbook will determine the level of complexity in the instruction, and who the intended audience might be is equally important. Usually, the cookbook author doesn't know that audience directly, so he or she has to imagine the skill level of the reader, the availability of ingredients and cooking utensils, and the way this book will be used.

Is it for family dinners, entertaining guests at a party, or serving romantic meals for two? The cookbook title will often reveal the intended audience, but sometimes the historian must read between the lines to figure out who the author was trying to reach.

Sometimes authors miss the mark or reach an unexpected audience, and it's also important to remember that cookbooks are often read as a form of literature, and people buy them with no intention of ever cooking the recipes. There are many big coffee-table cookbooks coming out of high-end restaurants that are never used in the kitchen—they are a form of entertainment.

Also keep in mind that cookbooks are rarely descriptive; they are usually prescriptive, a suggestion of what the reader should do. And even if someone cooks the recipe, that person might substitute ingredients, switch around a procedure, or simply take the instructions as inspiration for his or her own invention.

Again, the cookbook is a very poor record of what people actually ate in the past. On the other hand, in a community cookbook where an author says that a particular recipe was tried and approved, we can be pretty sure that it was actually enjoyed, or when a book on banqueting lists the guests and provides a menu and date, we can be fairly certain the author is not lying.

After consideration of the author and projected audience, the historian must ask *what*: Specifically, what kinds of ingredients are called for, and how would they have been obtained? Are they homegrown and plucked from the garden or purchased at a specialty shop or source mentioned by the author? Have they traveled around the globe as a rare and exotic import?

Digging even deeper, we can consider who grew these ingredients and how. Was the labor forced under slavery? Was it a small artisanal producer or a large industrial food corporation? In other words, if a recipe calls for chocolate, there is likely a backstory that the author and reader might not even have been aware of but is nonetheless integral to fully understanding the recipe.

Moreover, the social meaning of the ingredient might change over time. Chocolate in the 17th century was a rarity reserved for the very wealthy, who drank it out of small cups sweetened with sugar and imported spices. It was a very different context than Montezuma drinking chocolate out of his golden cups—and very different from a packet of instant hot chocolate with marshmallows in the 21st century. What is elegant and exotic in one time and place may later be ordinary in another.

We can also look at the cooking utensils. What kind of heat source was used? What kinds of pots and pans and cooking gadgets were used?

Making toast in the 18th century was a very difficult affair when done in front of an open fire with a special device that could be swiveled around to brown both sides of the bread. A slice of toast in the 21st century went into an electric pop-up toaster that could be made by anyone easily. The meaning of the food changed precisely because the cooking technology changed.

It is not only that cooking in the past was harder and took longer. That's not always the case. But modern technology is certainly intended to make cooking more convenient and quicker. Sometimes that comes at a certain price, though.


New England Society
Instituted A.D. 1805
In the City of New York
Annual Dinner
Relics from the Mayflower
Dec 22nd
1881
MENU
Huîtres
POTAGES
Consommé régence
Tortue verte
HORS D'OEUVRE
Timbale, périgourdine
RELEVES
Aiguillettes de bass, hollandaise vert-pré
Pommes duchesse
Eperlans désossés, sauce tartare
Filet de boeuf, piémontaise
Epinards à l'espagnole
ENTREES
Ailes de volaille, Madeleine
Petits pois
Mignons de chevreuil à la royale
Haricots verts
Côtelettes de ris de veau, tomates, Condé
SORBET
à la Dalmatie
ROTIS
Canvas-backs & perdreaux
Salade de laitue
Pâté de foie-gras
SUCRES
Pouding semoule, impératrice
Crême Colbert
Petits fours
Pièces montées
Glace-Nougat Montélimart
Dessert
Café
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Two Similar Recipes That Are Two Centuries Apart

Here's an example of two similar recipes for chicken with wine that are about two centuries apart. The first comes from François Massialot, who was a chef to French royalty in the age of Louis XIV in the early 18th century. The recipe is from his book *Le nouveau cuisinier royal et bourgeois.*[*]

Poulets en fricassée au vin de champagne

Instructions

Take your chickens, gut them, and remove the skin. Cut the legs beneath the joint and the little tips of the wings, remove the thighs, and chop where the bone meets the thigh and remove the bone.

Place the thighs in water and remove the wings and the stomach. Then, clean the rest of the carcass and cut it all around. Wash the chickens two or three times in water and blanch[†] them on the stove.

* Vol. II, published by Joseph Saugrain in 1748, p. 246.

† The birds are blanched in hot water to retain whiteness; all the impurities would be removed. It's a technique that's still done in Chinese cuisine but rarely in French cooking today.

Once blanched, place them in cold water and clean well over a sieve or on a plate; place them in a casserole with a little melted lard and a bit of butter and a bouquet garni, an onion stuck with two or three cloves, some small mushrooms, some truffles cut in slices, and some cockscombs‡ seasoned with salt.

Put the whole mixture in an oven, and once cooked, sprinkle with flour, and pass two or three times on the stove and moisten with a little bouillon. Boil two glasses of champagne,§ put into the fricassee, and let cook on a low fire.

Mix two or three egg yolks with a little veal stock¶ and a bit of parsley. When the fricassee is done, reduce a little, mixing the liaison you have prepared with the egg yolks and veal stock.

Once mixed, see that it has a good flavor and dress properly on the plate on which you will serve it. Serve hot as an entrée or hors d'oeuvre.

This dish takes some labor and can be easily ruined. But the overall aesthetic is one of elegance, subtlety, and concentration of the flavor of the chicken by means of tasteful yet discreet garnishes and simple, straightforward balance of flavors. It's a spectacular example of French haute cuisine.

‡ Cockscombs are the red squiggly bits on top of chickens' heads. They don't have much flavor, but the texture and visual appeal can be arresting.

§ Champagne was the favorite drink of the upper classes and a fairly recent invention. Buying champagne to add to your chicken dish was for middle class readers a way to show off by imitating the court.

¶ The way to do this is to add a little hot stock slowly into the egg yolks while stirring and then add that mixture into the pot of stock. Otherwise, the yolks will cook and harden. This way, they thicken the stock.

A very similar recipe, written two centuries later, comes from Poppy Cannon's *Can-Opener Cookbook*.** This book is about fully embracing modern technology as well as speed and convenience. Cooking from scratch is not important, and neither is freshness of ingredients or optimal taste.

Chicken with White Wine and White Grapes

Ingredients

- ☐ canned chicken fricassee
- ☐ dry white table wine
- ☐ curry or turmeric
- ☐ seedless white grapes††

Instructions

Open and empty a can of chicken fricassee with its gravy into a pan. Rinse the tin with 4 tablespoons dry white table wine, such as Riesling, Hock, Rhine wine, or Moselle.

Add ½ teaspoon curry powder or turmeric.‡‡ Season with a little extra salt and freshly ground black pepper. Mix thoroughly.

Bring to a boil and simmer about 2 minutes but do not boil. Add ½ cup tiny white seedless grapes. If canned seedless grapes are used, drain them first and heat for a minute in 2 tablespoons of butter.

At serving time, for the utmost in elegance, serve with wild rice, which can be bought canned and ready for heating, or saffron rice. Serves 2 or 3.

** Published by Thomas Y. Crowell Company in 1953, p. 131.

†† fresh or canned

‡‡ To the baby boom era, the curry or turmeric would have seemed exotic and adventuresome.

This recipe reflects a completely different set of social values than the French version. The fact that both books were best sellers attests at least in some measure to the probability that people cooked this way. They are both aspirational to some extent—the former because it seeks to eat like the king. The latter comes from a much more egalitarian society, one where it is more important for the cook in the household, in all likelihood a woman, to have time to work or pursue her interests outside the home than spend time gutting a chicken.

Opening a can for dinner was socially acceptable and represents a perfect encapsulation of the values of this time and place.

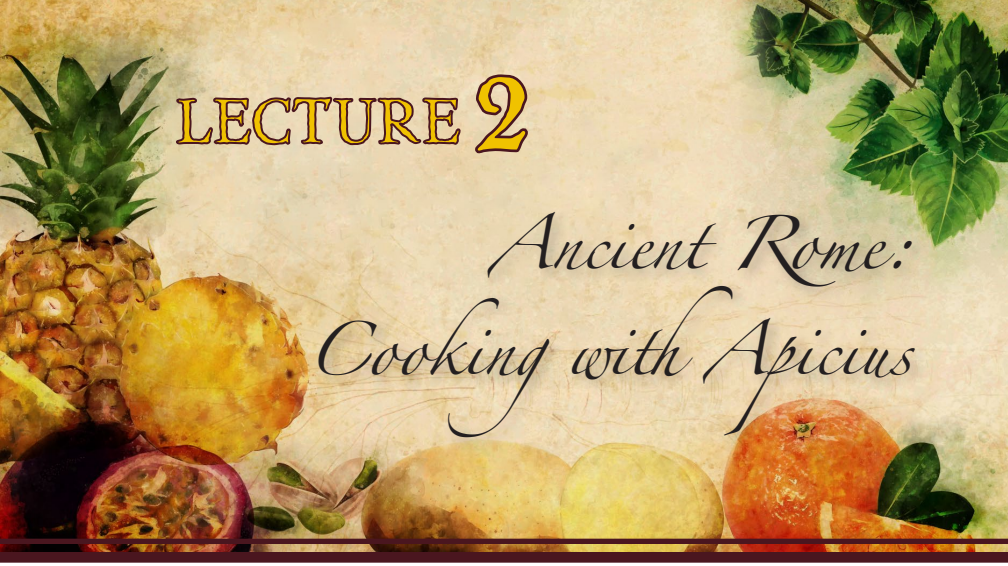
In comparing these two recipes, we also ask a number of questions in addition to *who* and *what*.

When the recipe was written is very important because aesthetic preferences change over time. The cockscomb would have been almost unthinkable in the 1950s, as the canned chicken was impossible in the 1750s.

Where is also a critical distinction here, and French cooking is quite different from American.

The more interesting question is *why*. There are major differences that apply even if we were comparing contemporaneous recipes. The French might assume a fresh chicken is one that you clean yourself. They might pay more attention to the provenance, even going so far as to purchase a Bresse bleu chicken, considered the best. If there are serving sizes, the French might involve smaller portions than the American. Random spices like turmeric probably wouldn't be thrown in for dazzle. These all reflect very deep cultural differences.

And, of course, once we ask *how*, it's apparent that a range of skills is inferred by the first recipe and practically none by the second, except how to use a can opener.



LECTURE 2

Ancient Rome: Cooking with Apicius

Despite what you might think, the majority of recipes in ancient cookbooks are actually not that weird. And in many ways, they are ordinary, delicious, and not at all difficult to prepare with common ingredients. A few key ingredients have disappeared, and some herbs are a little difficult to find today. And, of course, many common ingredients are missing in the past, including all the New World foods (tomatoes, peppers, corn, squashes, etc.). The recipes in this lecture represent the dishes Roman people ate on weekdays for *coenam* (the evening meal) and washed down with good, ordinary wine.

Attitudes toward the Past

When we imagine what life was like in the past, including its cooking, we usually bring a particular attitude to bear upon it. In other words, it's almost impossible to be indifferent about the past. We might imagine that the past was a thoroughly miserable place wrought with filth and disease, and we're happy to be living today, when everything is much better and will no doubt continue to improve in the future. This is a positivist attitude, named for the philosophy of Auguste Comte that envisioned a future that's infinitely better by means of scientific advances and technological breakthroughs.

On the other hand, if we feel general dissatisfaction with the problems created by the modern industrial world—the pollution, the chemical additives in our food supply, the general social disconnect between farmers and consumers, among many other ills—we might assume that the past was a happier, healthier time when people lived more simply but with closer connection to nature and our own natural selves, uncorrupted by capitalism and machines. This is a Romantic attitude, stemming in part from Jean-Jacques Rousseau's critique of civilization, and it projects a dissatisfaction with the present onto an idealized past.

Neither of these attitudes is correct nor incorrect. There are many positive things about the past we have lost, and there are many wonderful things about the present we have every right to be proud of. But in both cases, your attitude toward the past is a reflection of what you think about the present.

In tandem with these two polar-opposite approaches to the past, there is also a tendency to exoticize what our forebears ate. In other words, we assume that people ate really weird things in the past because they had to—and that can be seen either in a positive or negative light, just as we might look at the strange and exotic things people eat around the world today. To put it another way, you can look at eating unusual organ meats and think that it's disgusting or that it's exciting and interesting.

There is also a tendency to think that rich people ate strange, extravagant foods but ordinary people ate really monotonous, boring food—mostly grains and coarse vegetables and very little meat. While there may be an element of truth in the notion that diet changes radically according to social class, it's a mistake to assume that rich people always ate fancy food and poor people always ate really simple, bland food. The daily meals of the affluent could be quite simple, and the festive occasions for ordinary people could involve a kind of splurge that narrowed these seemingly distinct culinary styles.

There is probably no other cookbook about which more varied attitudes have been expressed than the oldest complete recipe book in the Western tradition. It went by several titles through the ages, most commonly *De re coquinaria* (*On Cookery*) or *De re culinaria* (*On Cuisine*). It has been attributed—almost certainly mistakenly—to Marcus Gavius Apicius, who lived in 1st-century Rome. In classical times, he was the prime example of profligate luxury, and the name Apicius became a byword for obscene gourmandism.

Ironically, the cookbook bearing his name probably has nothing to do with this historical figure. It was compiled in the 4th or 5th century, several hundred years after Apicius lived, and is written in a language that's very different from classical Latin. A few recipes in it are labeled Apician, so it was later attributed to him.

The cookbook was copied in two surviving manuscripts in Fulda, Germany, around 900 AD, one of which is at the New York Academy of Medicine and the other in the Vatican Library. Both of these disappeared during the Middle Ages and then resurfaced in the Renaissance, when they attracted the attention of scholars. Apicius was printed in the Renaissance and went through many editions right up into the 20th century, when it was translated into English several times.

The cookbook includes certain recipes that have baffled readers, such as stuffed dormice, flamingo tongues, and sow's womb—let alone the ubiquitous *garum*, or fish sauce, that goes into nearly everything. Readers looked at these with surprise and amazement. In the 15th century, the scholar known as Platina even commented that the ancients may have surpassed us in the arts, but they can't come close to our cooking.

Apicius was generally held to be an example of insane profligate waste. His name became a synonym for gluttony and perversion. Commentators, although often very interested in understanding classical foodways out of historical interest, had a hard time not looking at this era and this cookbook as bizarre and disgusting.

Then, at some point in the 17th century, the name Apicius took on a positive connotation, associated with luxury but also refinement and gastronomic elegance. There appeared Giovanni Vasselli's *L'Apicio overo il maestro de' conviti* in Bologna in 1647, Francesco Leonardi's *L'Apicio moderno* in Florence in 1790, and even William Kitchiner's *Apicius redivivus; or, the Cook's Oracle* in London in 1817.

In other words, there was—if not a tendency to idealize and romanticize the past—at least a desire to emulate its single-minded focus on the glories of the table. Even if they never went so far as to serve camel heels, there were comparable exotic delicacies in the repertoire of 19th-century chefs, and when histories were written, authors held up Apicius as the paragon of ancient refinement.

All this is to say that it's very difficult to read Apicius today and not think the recipes are either weird and disgusting or exotic and wonderful.

Sala cattabia

This is a fairly simple dish that still exists in Italy—or at least a form of it does. Bread has always been something cherished and never wasted. Without modern preservatives, it tends to go stale long before it gets moldy, so this dish was likely a way to use up old, stale bread. The kind you should use is a *panis quadratus*, a round, flat loaf divided into wedges. These exact breads were excavated from the ruins of Pompeii, completely charred from the volcanic ash but otherwise intact. They're also depicted in ancient Roman paintings of bread sellers.

Today, this dish would be called *panzanella*. In Ancient Rome, it was *sala cattabia*, and it's essentially a bread salad. The only ingredient that might be hard to find is pennyroyal, which is in the mint family, so spearmint would make a fine substitute. The other ingredient you may be unfamiliar with is *garum*.* There were several different forms, but the most typical is simply a fish sauce, not at all dissimilar to nuoc mam or nam pla or *patis*. It's usually made from small fish that are ungutted, salted, and left to ferment, the liquid of which is poured off months later.

sala cattabia

* There was an enormous industry centered in Spain, and amphorae of *garum* were shipped throughout the Roman empire.

Sala cattabia

Ingredients

- ☐ pepper
- ☐ mint
- ☐ celery seed
- ☐ dried pennyroyal
- ☐ cow's milk cheese
- ☐ pine nuts
- ☐ honey
- ☐ vinegar
- ☐ egg yolks
- ☐ fresh water
- ☐ chicken livers
- ☐ capers
- ☐ pine nuts
- ☐ *garum*

Instructions

Put pepper, mint, celery seed, dried pennyroyal, cheese, pine nuts, honey, vinegar, *garum*, egg yolks, and fresh water in a bowl.

Soak bread in diluted vinegar and squeeze out; add cow's milk cheese and cucumbers.

Add capers and little chicken livers. Pour the dressing over. Set the pot in a bowl of cold water and let it rest, in order for the bread to soak up all the flavors, before serving.

The flavor profile of this dish is fairly common in ancient Rome. The saltiness comes from the fish sauce, the sweetness comes from the honey, the sour comes from the vinegar, and the spicy comes from the pepper and hot herbs. Then, you add a smooth, fatty flavor from the cheese and savory from the chicken livers, all bound together by neutral bread. It might seem to us a riot of flavors, but actually they all come together in the end so that no one flavor dominates; they harmonize perfectly in a way that your palate doesn't get bored or tired, as it would with a dish where one flavor dominates. In other words, the Romans knew what they were doing. And there's really nothing extravagant or bizarre about this dish.

Minutal of Apricots

Another recipe with a similar flavor profile is a *minutal* of apricots. The technique is a little unusual for us because the sauce is made first in the pot and the ingredients are just added to it.

Minutal of Apricots

Ingredients

- ☐ oil
- ☐ *garum*
- ☐ raisin wine†
- ☐ chopped dry shallots
- ☐ chopped cilantro
- ☐ cooked pork shoulder,‡ cut into cubes
- ☐ crushed pepper
- ☐ cumin
- ☐ dry mint
- ☐ dill
- ☐ honey
- ☐ vinegar
- ☐ pitted apricots§
- ☐ *tracta*¶

Instructions

Put everything except *tracta* (cracker) in a pot and let it simmer until all cooked together.

Crumble in *tracta* to thicken.

† The raisin wine, or *passum*, is a sweet wine made of raisins. They made this in Valpolicella, Italy, in ancient times and still make it today. It's called *recioto*. The grapes are hung up in barns to dry and concentrate the sugars, and then they're fermented. Elsewhere in Italy, they make a *passito*, which is a kind of straw wine, meaning the grapes are laid out on straw to dry. Vin santo would also work well.

‡ The pork shoulder can be roasted first and then cut up. The juices are also used, so save them.

§ The recipe doesn't specify if the apricots are fresh or dried, but it's better to use fresh.

¶ This is a big thin sheet of dough that's baked. A dry, plain cracker will serve the same purpose if you aren't able to bake a thin sheet of dough.

Although the combination of flavors might suggest something strange-tasting, in the end, it is a very familiar kind of thick sweet-and-sour sauce with fruit that one would not be surprised to find in an Asian restaurant.

There are no measurements, so it's important to taste as you go along to make sure the flavors are balanced.

Botellum

This recipe for *botellum*** might sound very unusual or difficult, but it's actually very simple. The first thing you need is pig's blood, which can be bought in an Asian supermarket. You'll also need some sausage casings; use those that are fairly small in diameter, made from pork.

** *Botulus* was the classical Latin name for sausage, and we get our word *botulism* from it—presumably, it can be contracted from a sausage.

A blood sausage is actually much easier to stuff and much tastier, too. The blood has to be stirred so it liquefies.


botellum

Botellum (Blood Sausage)

Ingredients

- ☐ blood
- ☐ chopped leeks and onions
- ☐ yolks of hard-boiled eggs
- ☐ chopped pine nuts
- ☐ ground pepper
- ☐ casings
- ☐ wine
- ☐ *garum*

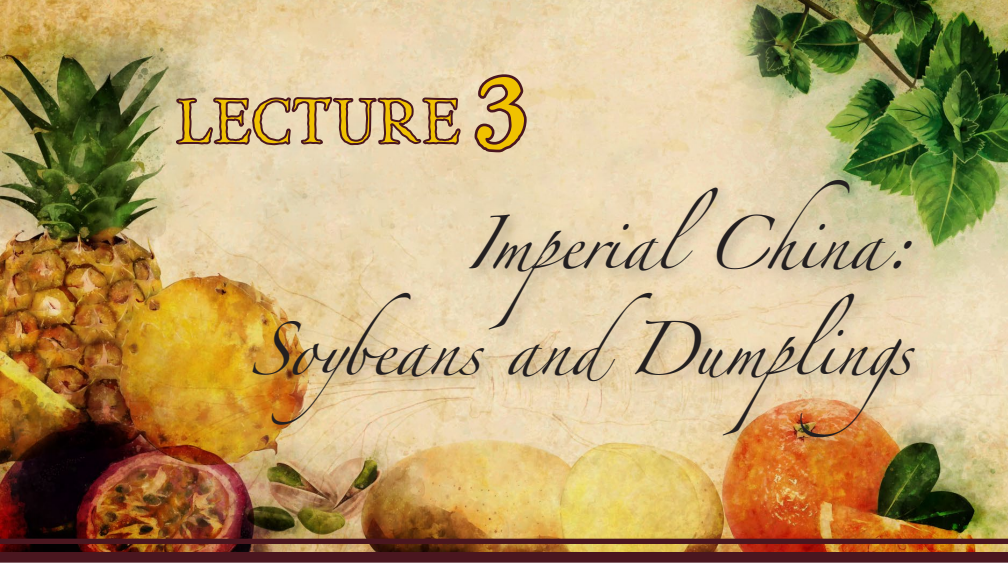
Instructions

Mix blood with chopped leeks and onions, the yolks of hard-boiled eggs, chopped pine nuts, and ground pepper.

Fill casing with stuffing†† and tie off.

Poach in wine and *garum* until liquid has reduced by half (about 30 minutes).

†† A funnel makes this easier.



LECTURE 3

Imperial China: Soybeans and Dumplings

In this lecture, we'll visit imperial China in about 544 AD at the end of the Northern Wei dynasty to examine an encyclopedic manual about "essential techniques to benefit the people," or *Qi min yao shu*, by Jia Sixie, who lived in the Shan-tung province. It's not a cookbook per se, but it includes many recipes. It also draws on many earlier works and thus offers a good example of Chinese agricultural practices going back to antiquity. The state was very active in sponsoring agricultural improvements, such as terracing, irrigation, fertilizing fields, and animal husbandry, that would help people prosper. We'll be looking specifically at fermentation, which is one of the oldest ways of preserving vegetables—and, in many cases, even increasing their nutritional value.

Early Fermentation

For the past century or so, since the discovery of pathogenic microbes, we in the West have been fearful of bacteria and fungi to such an extent that we have waged an all-out war to obliterate them. Pasteurization kills them in jars and cans, antibacterial soap kills them on our hands and countertops, and antibiotics kill them inside our bodies. And we have taken the attitude that the only good microbe is a dead one, because we tend to think of them as the source of disease, which some of them are.

Until recently, little did we know that the bacterial world inside our gut is crucial to our health—not only our digestion, but lymph function, brain activity, and things throughout our bodies that we are only beginning to comprehend now that the gut biome DNA has been mapped. Apparently, the microbes inside of us outnumber our own cells.

Why is this important for culinary history? Many of the most delicious preserved items we have historically consumed depend on microbes, not only yogurt and cheese with *Lactobacillus*, but cured meats, pickles, yeast in bread and alcoholic fermentation, and molds on cheese and salami.

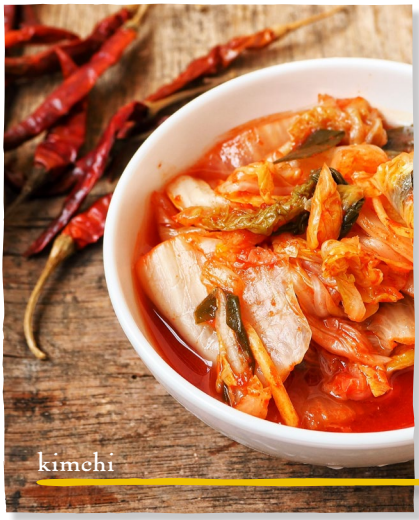
The flavors we have evolved to enjoy come from microbes that preserve food, make it taste good, and help our bodily functions. In many foods, they in a sense predigest the food so that we don't need a massive fermentation chamber of a stomach, like cows.

We do still consume many fermented products, but usually brewers or cheese makers or bakers use a single isolated strain of bacterial culture or yeast that gives them very predictable and quick results.

What they have lost is the depth and complexity of flavor that comes from the wild species that differ greatly from place to place. We have also lost much of the complex interaction between our bodies and the external environment that has always occurred through our food.

The simplest kind of fermentation uses vegetables and salt. If you shred cabbage and add salt, squeezing it, there's enough liquid in the cabbage to cover it, preventing exposure to oxygen. *Lactobacillus* bacteria will invade and lower the pH, making it taste sour and also keeping out all other microbes that would cause it to rot. So you have preserved the vegetable and made it good for you.

Other vegetables, such as cucumbers or radishes, can be pickled in brine, and virtually any plant can be pickled this way naturally. You do not need any kind of starter. In China, vegetables are often also mixed with flavorings, similar to Korean kimchi.


kimchi

There are also ferments that use mold—especially *Aspergillus oryzae*, or *koji*, as it's called in Japan. This is used to convert the starch in rice to sugar so that it can be fermented by yeast.

Equally important is fermenting soybeans, which are made into a kind of bean paste that's similar to miso paste. This process preserves the beans but also makes more nutrients available than would be in cooked soybeans alone. From this paste, the liquid drawn from it is soy sauce.

You can also ferment whole beans, and the oldest recipe for them comes from Jia Sixie. The only thing you'll need to purchase is *koji* mold, which Japanese grocery stores carry. It's rice kernels inoculated with the mold. In Chinese, this is called *shih*. According to later medieval scholars, it was invented in the Han dynasty around 200 BC. It is mentioned in texts from this era, and some was even discovered in an archaeological excavation of the Ma-wang-tui tomb.

Shih (Fermented Soybeans)

Ingredients

- ☐ soybeans (dried)
- ☐ *koji* mold

Instructions

Soak soybeans overnight.

Steam but do not cook completely.

Spread on a mat for 3 days.

Mix and leave out 3 more days.

Add some thoroughly cooked beans.

Add the *koji* mold.

Place in jar for 27 days.

What you have in the end is an intensely flavored fermented black bean that can be used as a flavoring in cooking. To use them, put a big wok on the highest-possible heat, add some oil, and stir the fermented soybeans in with some chicken or pork slivers and some fresh greens, and serve with white rice.

shih

Shrimp *har gow*

You might've had shrimp *har gow* before, but you may not have made the fillings completely from scratch. You may have purchased the wheat starch to make the dish, but this recipe involves making that, too.

Shrimp *har gow*

Separating Gluten and Starch—Ingredients

□ bread flour*

Separating Gluten and Starch—Instructions

Gradually mix flour with water to form a very firm dough.

Knead for about 10 to 15 minutes until you have a very smooth, springy dough.

Place dough in cold water and continue kneading until globs form.

Squeeze globs† until firm and remove from water.

Let the cloudy water sit for about 1 hour.

Pour off the clear water from the top and save the wheat starch‡ from the bottom.

* You can also use all-purpose flour.

† The solid globs are the gluten, or *mian jin*. You can fry this as is, or you can make *liangpi* noodles out of them.

‡ The wheat starch will be used to make the starch wrappers.

Shrimp Filling—Ingredients

- ☐ raw shrimp
- ☐ salt
- ☐ sesame oil
- ☐ scallions
- ☐ ginger

Shrimp Filling—Instructions

Peel raw shrimp (make sure they're dry).

Chop with a cleaver until you have a smooth paste.

Chop in salt, sesame oil, scallions, and ginger.

Starch Wrapper—Ingredients

- ☐ wheat starch

Starch Wrapper—Instructions

Add boiling water to wheat starch.

Mix with a spoon until it comes together as a dough.

While the mixture is still hot, knead until you have a smooth, round ball.

Use a rolling pin or cleaver to roll out starch wrappers on an oiled surface.

Assembly

Add shrimp filling to wrapper and pinch closed.

Steam until shrimp appear orange.§

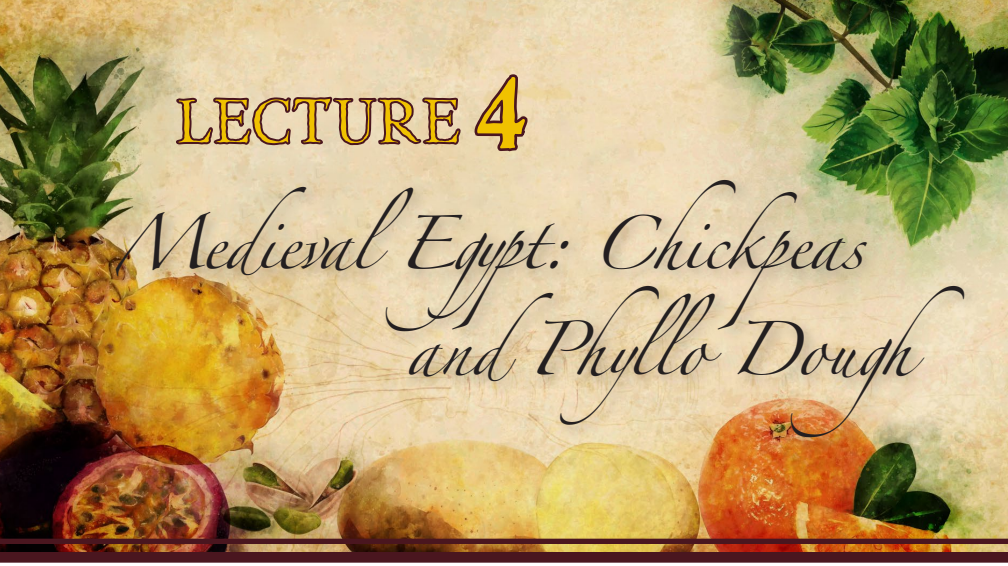
§ This should take about 5 minutes. You'll notice that the wrapper clings tightly to the shrimp filling.

The leftover wheat gluten, or *mian jin*, can be pinched off into little globs and fried in a neutral oil. The texture is remarkably like little nuggets of fried chicken. Serve it with a simple sauce.

Simple Sauce for *mian jin* (Wheat Gluten)

Ingredients

- ☐ dark soy sauce
- ☐ black vinegar
- ☐ sesame oil



LECTURE 4

Medieval Egypt: Chickpeas and Phyllo Dough

In this lecture, we are dropping down into 14th-century Egypt to taste a recipe that is very typical of the flavor preferences of this era but is easily made in your kitchen. It is also a surprising combination of ingredients that you are probably familiar with.

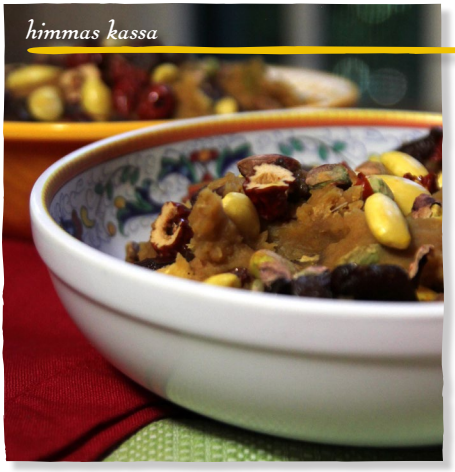
Himmas kassa

The time and place surrounding this recipe is Egypt under Mamluk rule. The Mamluks were technically purchased slaves, usually of Turkic origin, who formed the military elite ruling Egypt and most of the Levant. It was at this time that Cairo became the cultural capital of the Islamic world, replacing Baghdad when it fell to the Mongols in 1258.

The other fascinating part of culture in the eastern Mediterranean at this time was the military rivalry but also trade between Muslims and Christians—between Alexandria in Egypt, Venice, and Constantinople, which was still ruled by Christians. This recipe reflects that gastronomic interchange between cultures.

This recipe comes from an anonymous cookbook called *Kanz al-fawa'id fi tanwi' al-mawa'id*, or *Treasure Trove of Benefits and Variety at the Table*, which was written in the 14th century and translated in 2017 by Nawal Nasrallah. It almost certainly comes from Egypt, since the measures and many of the ingredients specify Egyptian provenance.

The etymology of the name of this dish—*himmas*—is not unlike *hummus*, though *himmas* comes out solid and you slice it, so it is more of a sweet halvah made of chickpeas. Interestingly, you find halvah all through the Middle East, often made with sesame paste, but there are other versions made with vegetables like carrots and a whole range of related sweets in India called *halwa*.


himmas kassa

Himmas kassa

Ingredients

- ☐ dried chickpeas, boiled
- ☐ saffron
- ☐ rosewater
- ☐ raw almonds
- ☐ wild honey
- ☐ white vinegar
- ☐ jujubes*
- ☐ raisins
- ☐ dates
- ☐ pistachios

Instructions

Mash and press chickpeas† through a sieve and add saffron soaked in rosewater.

Blanch raw almonds and remove skin.‡ Put almonds into a saffron-tinged pot of water to dye them yellow.

Heat the honey. Add rosewater and a splash of vinegar before the honey boils.

Cook chickpeas, honey mixture, and some of the fruits and nuts over low heat until thickened and comes together like a ball.

Spread on plates to cool thoroughly until solid. Garnish with remaining fruits and nuts.

To serve, just cut this into squares or diamond shapes and let people eat it with their fingers. It should be solid enough to hold together.

* Jujubes are an Asian fruit and, when dried, are similar to a small, not-very-sweet date. The dish doesn't suffer much if you simply leave them out, but if you can find them, all the better.

† You can soak the chickpeas first if you like, and if you are really short on time, this would probably work fine with canned chickpeas.

‡ Scald the almonds for about a minute in boiling water. Be sure to use raw, untoasted almonds.

Phyllo Dough


phyllo dough

The technique for this lecture involves a very simple ingredient manipulated in such a way as to create a superlight and flaky dough. It is very typical of the Turkic cuisine that dominated this region, especially under the Ottoman Empire.

The technique is very different from Western pastry making, where you want to use a soft, low-protein flour, gently layer it with butter, and then continuously roll out, fold over, and chill, etc., so that you get one micro-thin layer of butter between the layers of dough. This gives you a puff pastry.

In Middle Eastern cookery, you create one huge, superthin sheet of dough, brush it with butter, and then roll or fold it up. This gives you phyllo dough. Most people buy it in the freezer section of the supermarket, but it's very difficult to work with and tends to dry out and crack—or, even worse, stick together. It's a little labor intensive to make it by hand, but it's not difficult.

Phyllo dough is especially fun to make at parties. If you have the dough rolled out and ready to pull when people arrive, there's just a little baking time until it's ready.

Phyllo Dough

Ingredients

- ☐ bread flour (2 cups)§
- ☐ gluten (1 tablespoon)
- ☐ salt (1 teaspoon)

Instructions

Place ingredients in a bowl, sprinkle with water, and knead by hand.

Keep adding sprinkles of water. After a few minutes, the dough starts to come together.

Place dough on a wooden board and knead vigorously while adding more water.¶

Knead and break** the dough for about 30 minutes.

Coat dough in oil and let rest for at least 5 or 6 hours.††

Put a white tablecloth onto the largest table you have. Sprinkle it lightly with flour. Roll out the dough on the tablecloth. Then, slip your hands underneath the dough from both ends and very gently and slowly step back, stretching the dough. Try to avoid tearing it, which is why you're not grabbing it with your fingers. Ideally, you should have a huge sheet so thin that you can read through it.

§ Bread flour has a higher protein content (more glutens) than all-purpose flour, so it stretches better.

¶ You want this to be a really moist dough, but the more you knead, the less it will stick to the board, oddly.

** Breaking means to squash down with force using a stick or your hands. Don't be tempted to do this in a mixer; that takes all the fun out of it.

†† Cover the dough in plastic wrap while it rests.

Let the dough down onto the tablecloth and, as quickly as you can, brush melted butter over the surface. What you fill the dough with is up to you, but try a mixture of cooked greens like chard or kale with feta cheese and egg.

Chard and Feta Filling

Ingredients

- ☐ chard (or vegetable of choice)
- ☐ olive oil
- ☐ salt
- ☐ feta cheese, crumbled
- ☐ eggs
- ☐ butter (for dough)

Instructions

Finely chop chard. Cook down in olive oil.

Let cool; then, mix together with cheese and eggs.

Stretch, butter, fill, and roll phyllo dough. Bake for about 40 minutes at 350°F.

You're probably familiar with the spinach version of this from Greece (spanakopita), but you can use any vegetable. Either cut the dough into long strips and fold them into triangles to make little individual pies or, even easier, roll the entire sheet of dough with the filling and then coil it up, brush again with butter, and bake it.

spanakopita)

You can also lay several layers of the dough in a pan, sprinkle on crushed walnuts, and top with more layers. You bake this, and then when it comes out of the oven, drizzle a mixture of honey and sugar syrup (simple syrup) over it to make baklava. If you roll up the dough, shred it with a knife, and make little nests, you get one form of *kataifi*, which you can fill with cheese or nuts—or basically anything.

This kind of phyllo dough is most typical of Ottoman cuisine, which is the empire that ruled most of the Middle East through the late Middle Ages into the modern era, which is when these pastries spread through most of the Muslim world, which included Greece. It's only by chance that Americans are most familiar with the Greek versions of these, such as spanakopita, because the Greeks are the ones who introduced this food in the US.

chard and feta filling

LECTURE 5

Feast like a Viking with Meat and Beer

This lecture examines what is probably the oldest cookbook in medieval Europe. It exists in four different manuscripts: two in Low German, one in Danish, and one in Icelandic. They can be dated to around 1300. The title of this cookbook—*Libellus de arte coquinaria* (*The Little Book of Culinary Arts*)—as well as the recipe titles are in Latin. This suggests that the book is a translation of an older work that no longer exists and was written out for a variety of patrons who wanted to serve elegant meals with imported ingredients—in particular, spices that came from India and what's now Indonesia, such as cloves, cinnamon, and nutmeg. These traveled across the entire known world to get to Iceland, which had just been settled by Vikings a few centuries before. Clearly, they had kept up trade contacts with mainland Europe.

Chicken Pasty

In many respects, the recipes in *Libellus de arte coquinaria* resemble those of later, better-known medieval cookbooks, such as *The Forme of Cury* (*The Method of Cooking*) in England and even *Le libre de Sent Sovi* (*The Book of Sent Sovi*) in Catalonia. That's because medieval aristocratic cuisine was very international. There was a small landed military elite who mostly wanted to imitate each other. They were rarely educated, so these texts might have been copied by a clergyman or learned secretary and brought to far-flung courts with explanations for how to use the exotic ingredients.

The recipes themselves are terse and have no literary pretentions, so we have complete freedom with measurements and cooking times—exactly as would the medieval cook, who probably heard these read out loud and had to then figure out how to prepare them.

Interestingly, the recipes are all for meat, fowl, and fish, plus sauces for them. There are no fruits and vegetables. People sometimes assume that's because medieval people didn't eat them, and it is true that physicians warned people about the cold, phlegmatic humors that could arise from fruits especially. But their relative scarcity in cookbooks is likely more due to the fact that these were not items of any prestige or luxury, especially if you could grow them at home.

Chicken Pasty

Ingredients

- ☐ whole young chicken
- ☐ sage leaves
- ☐ bacon
- ☐ salt
- ☐ rye flour

Instructions

Cover chicken with salt and whole sage leaves and then wrap with bacon.

Mix rye flour, salt, and water to make dough for crust.*

Wrap the chicken in dough and bake in the oven.†

* Since there's no evidence of butter-based pie crusts yet, you use a simple flour-and-water paste here.

† Since no pan is mentioned and the recipe says to bake it in an oven like bread, you can bake it on the floor of a brick oven or put it on a baking stone to get the same effect.


chicken pasty

This recipe from *Libellus* will seem strange primarily because it's a pie with bones in it. But keep in mind that pies were meant to be a form of preservative; the sealed dough keeps out the oxygen. This recipe can be used to make pasties of fish or fowl—or really anything—but it specifies a young chicken, which we cut in half. Alternatively, a small game hen would make a pleasant serving for one.

The dough will take the shape of the half chicken. The beauty of this dish is that, normally, if you were to bake a chicken, all the juices would run out and you'd have to make a sauce from those runaway juices. But here, if you let this cool down to room temperature, the juices will remain in the chicken or be absorbed by the dough.

Beer

To accompany this recipe, let's walk through a fascinating archaic technique for making beer.

To malt barley, you need whole grains, not pearled barley. Nowadays, most people who do home brewing buy the malt or premade liquid wort, add very reliable yeasts and hops, and use all sorts of fancy equipment, with airlocks and such, to prevent the beer from going bad. But the beer that results is rarely as good as what the pros make.

In 13th-century northern Germany, Denmark, or even Iceland, the readers of *Libellus* would have used wild yeast. They didn't use hops at this point; more common was a mixture of herbs called *gruit*. It would usually contain mugwort (*Artemisia vulgaris*), which is bitter and acts as a preservative, and maybe also yarrow, henbane (which is hallucinogenic), and a whole series of other herbs that were kept a secret because someone was usually granted exclusive rights to sell *gruit* to beer makers.

Through most of the Middle Ages, beer was made in the home on a small scale, usually by women. In England, such a woman would be called an alewife, who might run a small operation out of her kitchen or even a small tavern. Gradually, commercial operations increased the scale, and once people started using hops, they could even ship beer farther, as was done among the Hanseatic League cities in Germany and up through the Baltic Sea. And then, the Dutch also got very good at large-scale professional brewing.

This is not the light lager you might be familiar with, which is bottom-fermented in a cold cellar. This is top-fermented, which would be called ale.

Beer

Ingredients

- ☐ whole-grain barley
- ☐ mugwort
- ☐ wild yeast (or commercial, if unavailable)

Instructions

Cover barley with water in a jar, soak overnight, drain, and leave in a tray to sprout. Keep barley moist but not too wet. Repeat process for 2 to 3 days.‡

Dry barley overnight in 200°F oven, toasting to desired flavor.§

Grind¶ malted barley and place in hot water** (140°F) for 1 hour.

Strain through cloth and then pour more hot water over the grain.††

Add mugwort (and whatever other herbs you'd like to use), boil for 1 hour, strain to remove the greens, and cool to room temperature in a large vessel, such as a wooden barrel.

Add yeast‡‡ and let ferment for about 5 days, or until fermentation has occurred.

The final stage will depend entirely on the temperature and how active the microbes are in your house. Eventually, you will notice bubbles rising and a beery aroma.

‡ When the sprout end (not the rootlets) of the barley is about the same length as the grain, you want to stop the process by drying them. In northern Europe, this would've been done over a very low smoke, which flavors the beer.

§ You don't want to cook the grains or you'll prevent the next stage from working properly. They should be just lightly toasty. You can also add to this darkly toasted oats or rye or wheat; this will give it darker color and deeper flavor.

¶ Grind the grain just into small pieces, not fine like a flour. You can use a hand mill, but it would need to be set very loosely. You can also just crush the grain in a mortar and pestle.

** This is called mashing, and the stuff itself is the mash.

†† This is called sparging and will extract more sugars from the grain. At this stage, what you have is called wort.

‡‡ Today, you would add commercial yeast for the specific kind of beer you want. In the past, they used the yeast from a former batch or let ambient yeast colonize the liquid.

You could bottle the product, but this was not commonly done in the past. In the Middle Ages, they drank beer at room temperature and flat. It's a surprising taste for Americans, who like cold, fizzy beer, but it's very appealing nonetheless. You'll also notice that it will be rather cloudy. They didn't filter beer in the Middle Ages, so the yeast and other particulates will still be in there. Think of it as a kind of very nutritious probiotic ferment of grain. This was the typical drink for breakfast before you go out in the field to work. Men, women, and children all drank beer. It was much safer than drinking water.

There's some argument among historians whether this was a low-alcohol "small beer," as it was called. You'll probably have 4 percent or 5 percent alcohol in this beer, depending on how concentrated the wort was. That's nowhere near the superstrong, hoppy IPAs one can find nowadays, but it's still enough to make you a little tipsy. But no one was driving to work or answering the phone, and having a little buzz while planting seeds or harvesting was entirely socially acceptable.

There were ritual occasions when you could drink much more than that. Carnival (pre-Lent festival) and feasts of saints' days involved beer drinking, and if you were a nobleman, then you might drink beer during the day and then switch to much more expensive imported wine later with dinner. The distinctions in patterns of consumption only increased the more trade expanded in the latter Middle Ages and more luxury goods were brought in. You might've even had a Malvasia from Greece or the Canary Islands.

LECTURE 6

Medieval France's Touch for Sugar and Spice

By all accounts, Taillevent, whose real name was Guillaume Tirel, led a long and illustrious career serving several kings of France, including Philip VI, Charles V, and Charles VI, in the course of the 14th century as master chef. He is often acclaimed as the first celebrity chef, since his name was well known and his coat of arms bearing three stew pots is good evidence that he was held in high esteem by his employers. He became famous at court and wrote a cookbook called *Le viandier*, which survives in numerous manuscripts.

Taillevent's Place in History

The 14th century has a terrible reputation for disaster. France was in the grip of the Hundred Years' War, in which the French suffered humiliating defeats at the hands of the English in the Battles of Crécy and Poitiers, at the same time that Taillevent was cooking for the court.

This was also the same time bubonic plague struck Europe, decimating its population. One third of all Europeans perished in wake of the Black Death. When Barbara Tuchman wrote her classic *A Distant Mirror* about this period, she subtitled it *The Calamitous 14th Century*. This hardly seems the setting for a landmark work of culinary literature. Was the court blithely carrying on its magnificent meals while the country fell apart?

The plague was obviously a horrible experience for those who met their demise, let alone those around them. If you were one of the lucky survivors, after the initial dislocation and economic turmoil, you might be fortunate enough to inherit wealth or property. If you were a worker, you would certainly have been able to demand better wages and working conditions because of the serious labor shortage. Even peasants, although not without a great deal of social unrest and rebellion, were eventually able to negotiate better terms with their feudal lords.

In other words, for the survivors, life became measurably better. People ate a greater proportion of meat in their diet and were able to buy more material goods. Rents were also much lower, because there were so many empty houses, demand was much lower, and prices had to drop to attract tenants. All this led to a certain degree of upward mobility.

It is only in light of this economic situation that we can begin to understand the demand for cookbooks like Taillevent's. There were people suddenly looking for ways to better themselves with higher-paying jobs. Being a professional cook would involve some kind of apprenticeship or starting at the bottom of the ladder, as Taillevent himself had. And knowing some techniques and having a decent repertoire of the most popular dishes of the day would be a good place to start in finding such a job.

Taillevent's book is not an introduction to cooking. It's more of a memory aide for people to recall classic dishes and how to construct them. The instructions are terse and assume a great deal of knowledge. It's made for someone who is already a professional. Most importantly, it's for a chef who wants to move up in the ranks, not start from the bottom, with no experience at all. It's for someone like Taillevent who wants to succeed among nobles and royalty. To do that, you need to know much more than the basics. You need some mastery of medieval haute cuisine, which is exactly what *Le viandier* is about.

Many of the recipes in Taillevent's cookbook existed in earlier manuscripts and were borrowed; most appear in other medieval cookbooks in some form or another, too. It's not original in any way, nor does it reflect Taillevent's own creative genius. Instead, it's exactly the opposite: These are the dishes professional cooks would need to know if they wanted a position in any European court.

The recipes were technically challenging—sometimes extraordinarily complicated—and used a wide variety of expensive and exotic ingredients, including the spices called

for so heavily in medieval cuisine that were imported from the other side of the earth, such as pepper from India, ginger from China, and cinnamon from Sri Lanka. These spices changed hands so many times on their way to Europe, from Chinese traders to Arab middlemen to Venetians, that their cost sometimes rose a hundredfold. And that's exactly why they were marks of social distinction in medieval society. It's also why people with newfound wealth suddenly decided to flaunt it a bit by buying some spices themselves.

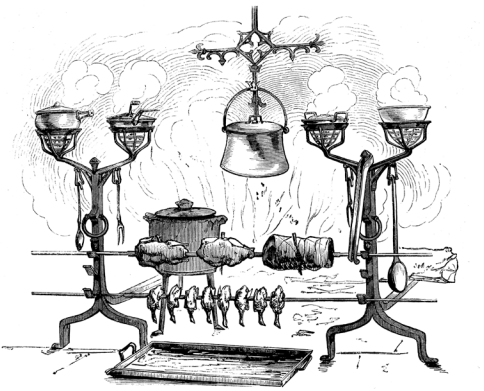
If spices were a rarity that only the wealthiest could afford, there would have been little need to record their use, except maybe to boast. But when you see them in a cookbook that someone of upper-middling ranks might be using, then you know that those fashions are being imitated more widely and spices are being sold in greater volumes—though some of the ingredients would only have been available to the nobility, such as hunted game.

Medieval chefs also liked a lot of color in their food. Saffron provided yellow whereas parsley added green, and a few exotics, such as alkanet, might be used to make purple in the presence of acid and green with an alkali. There were also a few unique preparations used specifically for times of fasting when no animal products (eggs, cheese, or dairy) could be eaten.

Most importantly, medieval diners liked surprises and marvels, such as birds taken out of their skins, cooked, and then restuffed into their feathers—or half-pig, half-chicken creations to remind them of griffins or other mythical creatures. Taillevent has a recipe for a chicken in a helmet with a lance riding a pig and covered in gold leaf. This was a cuisine intended to dazzle guests with the expense and rarity of ingredients, the ingenuity of the chef, and the bewildering profusion and volume of dishes.

Also, forks had not yet come into common use, so the food would normally be placed on thin slices of bread or trenchers and then eaten daintily with the fingers. You would have a large napkin draped over you to wipe your fingers. And if contemporary images of medieval banquets are any indication, there were dogs rooting around for scraps, pages ready to fill a wine goblet, and a

whole retinue of hangers-on waiting to please their master—plus musicians, entertainers, elegant tapestries, etc. This was meant to be a multisensory spectacle that could last many hours.



As for cooking techniques, there was roasting before a fire as well as many forms of soups and stews cooked in pots, but medieval chefs also liked to cook foods using two different techniques, so you might parboil and then roast a chicken or half-roast a cut of meat and then fry it in a pan.

The overall aesthetic was very much like the music, artwork, and even philosophy of the period. They liked sharp contrasts, such as sweet mixed with the sourness of vinegar or verjuice (the juice of unripe grapes) or the bitter of burnt toast to thicken a stew. Flavors and textures contrasted sharply rather than harmonized, and you would often find sweet, savory, spicy heat, and sourness all in one dish.

White Stew of Capons

A recipe that serves as a good example of this aesthetic is a *blanc brouet de chappons*, or white stew of capons.*

* A capon is a castrated male chicken, which grows larger and more tender, but a good chicken is very similar.

white stew of capons

White Stew of Capons

Ingredients

- ☐ whole capon or chicken
- ☐ white wine
- ☐ bacon fat
- ☐ ground almonds
- ☐ ground ginger
- ☐ cinnamon
- ☐ cloves
- ☐ white vinegar
- ☐ galangal
- ☐ long pepper
- ☐ grains of paradise†
- ☐ egg yolk
- ☐ *garum*

Instructions

Add equal parts wine and water to a pot, enough to cover the whole chicken. Bring it to a boil, reduce heat, and simmer until the chicken loses its pink color.‡

† Also called melegueta pepper.

‡ Cook briefly enough so the meat isn't raw—just a few minutes.

Separate chicken into parts and fry them in bacon fat.

Add to broth almonds, ginger, cinnamon, cloves, vinegar-soaked§ galangal, long pepper, and grains of paradise.¶

Add beaten, strained egg yolks to thicken.**

Apart from the recognizable pumpkin pie spice dominating, note also the creamy smoothness of the almonds, the acidity of the wine and vinegar, and the richness of the chicken and egg yolks. It's wildly complicated and unlike anything you would find in classical French haute cuisine.

Small Crepes

The name of this recipe is simply an older form of the word *crêpe* in French, but obviously it has come to mean a very thin pancake in modern times, completely forgetting that the word itself means "crisp." Rather than a flat pancake, it's actually a funnel cake.

small crepes

§ Soak spices in a little white vinegar to bring out the flavor of the spices but also so they don't congeal in a lump at the top of the pot.

¶ These should all be dried spices, not fresh.

** The trick here is to temper the egg yolks with some of the broth and then add it; otherwise, the eggs will scramble.

To start, you'll need a funnel or a bowl with a hole in the bottom. The recipe calls for a wooden bowl, but a paper one is fine. Just keep your finger under the hole after you pour in the batter or you'll have a mess. For the crepes, Taillevent calls for an iron pan.

Small Crepes

Ingredients

- ☐ eggs
- ☐ flour
- ☐ lard or vegetable oil
- ☐ sugar

Instructions

Beat eggs and flour together to form a thick batter.

Add batter into funnel or bowl pierced in the bottom.

Pour batter into hot lard or vegetable oil.

Let the crepes cook until they are rounded.

Sprinkle with sugar.

Millet Polenta

You might be under the impression that medieval food is all about meat and that people weren't interested in vegetables. It is true that most cookbooks don't contain a lot of vegetable recipes, and this one is no exception. It's also true that physicians of the era warned people not to eat vegetables because they were considered cold and moist and likely to have the same effect in your body—that is, they'll give you a cold. Cold cucumbers and lettuce were considered fine in the summer, when one's own body is very hot, but in other seasons, they were likely to throw off your humoral balance and make you sick.

On the other hand, most people—then and now—followed dietary advice only when they felt like it. It is also true that the lower you descend the social scale, the greater the proportion of vegetables in the diet. Thus, vegetables were more strongly associated with poverty or, at the very least, were not something that would confer status on a cookbook author or diner.


millet polenta

Surprisingly, some ingredients that we would until recently have considered fairly lowly, such as millet, were featured in Taillevent's cookbook. Apart from the very recent interest in millet in health-food stores and as a gluten-free alternative, it was usually reserved as bird feed and disappeared entirely from European cooking when maize was used to make polenta, but originally it would have been millet or barley.

Millet Polenta

Ingredients

- ☐ millet
- ☐ milk
- ☐ saffron

Instructions

Soak millet in water.

Add saffron to milk and bring to a boil with millet.

Reduce heat and simmer until thick, about 1 hour.

Parma Tart

The Parma tart, or *tourtes Parmeriennes*, is so named for the city of Parma, Italy, not the cheese (Parmesan). It can be made with cooked mutton, veal, or pork.

Parma Tart

Crust—Ingredients

- ☐ pastry flour
- ☐ salt
- ☐ lard

Crust—Instructions

Boil lard mixed with water.

Add salt and melted lard into flour until a firm dough comes together.

Set aside and let rest for about 1 hour.

Filling—Ingredients

- ☐ pork
- ☐ salt
- ☐ pepper
- ☐ dried currants
- ☐ pine nuts
- ☐ cinnamon
- ☐ ginger
- ☐ sugar

Filling—Instructions

Cut raw pork into bite-size pieces, season with salt and pepper, and then sear in fat.

Mix together the rest of the ingredients and add pork.

Assembly

Build†† and fill crust and bake at 350°F for about 1 hour.

Parma tart

†† Essentially, you make pastry shells the size of small plates and with higher sides than usual. The pastry is almost certainly not eaten, but decorative. You can glaze it with eggs (yolks and whites) with a little saffron and/or use gold or silver leaf.

LECTURE 7

Renaissance Italy's Sweets and Pasta

In this lecture, we are going to cook from the earliest printed cookbook, which was composed in Italy in the 15th century and printed around 1470, meaning that it appeared among the first generation of any books in print.

The Nature of Cooking from a Book

In the course of history, cooking from a book is an unusual phenomenon. Most people who ever lived learned to cook by watching and doing, receiving instruction in language, and with active questions and responses.

A book is a little stranger because it tries to replicate in words a set of instructions, but the author has to imagine the skill level of the reader, and no response is possible—no learning by watching and doing is possible. The poor reader has to make the best sense out of the words, and sometimes that's very hard to do.

A printed book was also very different from a manuscript because if it was written by hand, there were necessarily a limited number of readers. A manuscript was not likely to be brought into the kitchen, and who knows how many cooks could actually read. On the other hand, a book was mass-produced and relatively inexpensive, and we know that literacy increased dramatically in the Renaissance and Reformation eras, so people could indeed learn from a book.

Platina's Blancmange

The history of this particular book, *De honesta voluptate* (*On Honest Pleasure*), is so unusual that it surprisingly became a best seller and was translated into many languages. Indeed, its author's name became a byword for the art of cooking. The author was Bartolomeo Sacchi, but he was best known as Platina, a Latinized form of the town where he was born, Piadena.

Platina gained a measure of fame because he was a humanist scholar and the first librarian to the Vatican Library, but his popularity also came from this cookbook. This fame is surprising because Platina didn't write the recipes in the book. He took them from Martino of Como, who was a professional

chef. Martino became friends with Platina, and then his recipes were used in Platina's book—with his consent or otherwise.

The story is probably not so straightforward, though, since there are manuscripts elsewhere that are possibly even older that have very similar recipes to Martino's cookbook.* So, like many other early cookbooks in manuscript, it's more of a family of related recipes that was shared widely. Martino's name wasn't even on this collection; it was only in the 20th century that someone noticed that the recipes in Platina's cookbook are in Martino's manuscript, too.

There is also a definite similarity of many recipes in Martino's cookbook even to a Catalan cookbook written by Mestre Robert, or Rupert de Nola. One of these recipes was a fairly ubiquitous dish in medieval cookbooks: a blancmanger, a soft, white combination of pounded capon breast, rice flour, rosewater, sugar, and almond milk. It still exists in Turkish cuisine. Just imagine a sweet, soft, white, pudding-textured dish of chicken.

It is offered by Martino in two recipes,† one actually labeled Catalan. Comparison with Rupert's *menjar blanch* shows definite signs that Martino somehow learned of this recipe and then streamlined it for his Italian readers. There is no certain proof that the two cookbooks are directly connected, but there is some kind of direct influence.

Rupert's Catalan recipe was interpreted by Martino and translated to Italian. Then, Platina got it, and it was translated into Latin and combined with his own health advice and a generous seasoning of food history. Platina's recipe—which he called *cibaria alba*, or "white dish"—was then translated back into Italian and then into a French expanded version and into an English pirated version under another name. So, not surprisingly, some of it came out completely garbled in the end. Nonetheless, the recipe is still quite good.

* There's a closely related Neapolitan collection that looks very much like Martino's cookbook.

† Martino offers a Catalan *bianco mangiare* recipe that replaces the goat's milk with almond.

Blancmange

Ingredients

- ☐ boiled chicken breast
- ☐ goat's milk
- ☐ rice flour
- ☐ sugar
- ☐ rosewater
- ☐ candy garnish‡ (optional)

Instructions

Shred the chicken. Then, simmer the goat's milk, stir in rice flour, and let it boil.

Pound chicken into a paste.

Add chicken, sugar, and rosewater to milk mixture.

Cook, stirring continuously until thickened.

Place in dish to cool and sprinkle with sugar (and/or candies).

blancmange

‡ cardamom, anise, or clove

Fresh Pasta by Hand

Pasta in the Renaissance was made either of durum semolina, which is the yellowish dried pasta we use today, or of regular flour for fresh pasta. Of the recipes that survive, many include bread crumbs, so, perhaps surprisingly, they were not looking for an al dente texture. But they also had versions made with flour and eggs.

Professional pasta makers today use a very large table and a huge rolling pin, and the technique is to wrap the dough around the entire pin to work it into a large sheet. You don't have to do it that way, especially if you're only feeding one or two people.

Measurement is not necessary—in fact, it's a bad idea—when making pasta. Every flour behaves differently and will take a different amount of water, and there is never a strict proportion of flour to water or egg. As you make dough by hand, you will just get a feel for when it's right.

> All pasta was generically called macaroni, whether it was tubes, globs of gnocchi, or thin strips.

Renaissance Pasta with Simple Sauce

Pasta—Ingredients

- ☐ egg
- ☐ durum semolina flour
- ☐ salt

Sauce—Ingredients

- ☐ pancetta
- ☐ grated Parmesan cheese
- ☐ sugar
- ☐ ground cinnamon

Instructions

In a large bowl, mix together flour, egg, a pinch of salt, and water—drizzled in as needed—to form a dry dough.

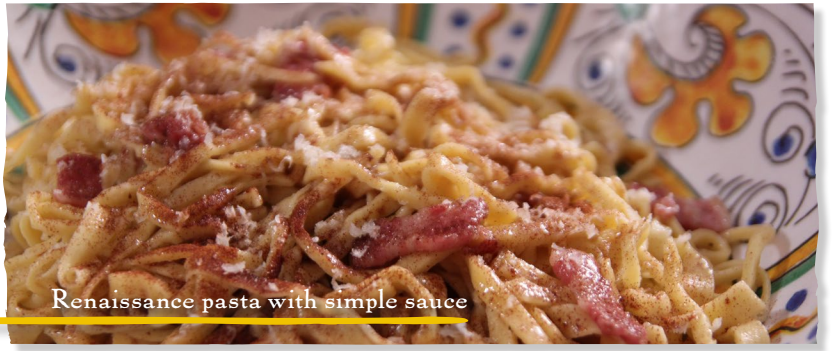
Transfer dough to a wooden board dusted with flour and knead§ dough by hand until smooth, for about 15 minutes.¶

With a tapered rolling pin, roll out the dough to form a large rectangle, making the thickness fairly even and dusting with flour throughout.

Cut with very sharp knife into thin strips.

Cook in boiling water for about 2 minutes.

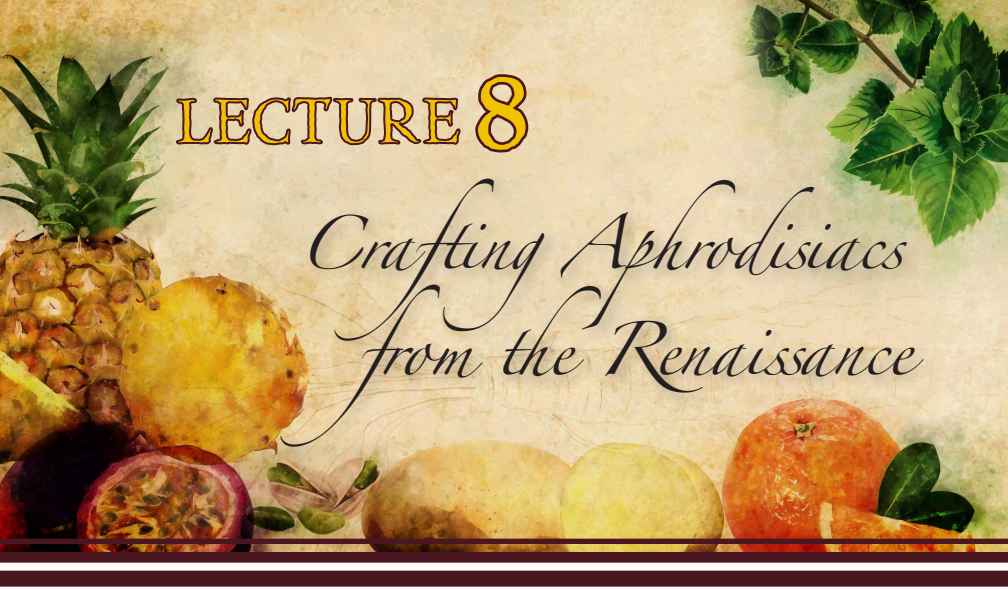
Render pancetta in pan and add cooked pasta, along with a bit of the starchy pasta water. Toss together with cheese, sugar, and cinnamon.



Renaissance pasta with simple sauce

§ Knead dough thoroughly by folding over and pressing down, turning the dough a half turn, and repeating. Be rough with the dough. You are building up glutens by doing this. And if you need a little more water, add it and knead it in. If it's a little too wet, add some more flour. It is very forgiving, unlike pastry dough or bread.

¶ Time will depend on your strength.



LECTURE 8

Crafting Aphrodisiacs from the Renaissance

In this lecture, we'll consider the idea of aphrodisiacs in Renaissance medicine and cook a few recipes that are meant to stimulate the libido. These recipes are found in Domenico Romoli's *Singolare dottrina* of 1560, one of the few cookbooks that combined both recipes and medical advice.

Aphrodisiacs versus Anaphrodisiacs

Renaissance physicians were remarkably open about discussing aphrodisiacs and foods that would promote Venus or stimulate coitus, to use their own terminology. They were also surprisingly not prudes about discussing sex. They wondered about the effects of excessive sexual activity, for example. The expenditure of radical moisture and vital heat would dry out the body, especially the moist organs, damaging the eyes first. This is the source of the idea that masturbation will make you go blind.

The brain was also especially susceptible, and advice for scholars often included abstinence, not only because amorous entanglements distract the mind from serious work, but because sex itself dries and enfeebles the brain.

Sex was also believed to prematurely age the body, since aging itself was thought to be a gradual process of cooling and drying. Girolamo Manfredi in 1474 agreed: "Therefore, philosophers say whoever has a lot of sex lives a short life and ages too soon." Avoiding sex was strangely a matter of health.

Physicians also discussed the best time to have sex, when the best offspring would be produced. Most agreed that one should wait until after digestion is complete—that is, when nutrients are completely converted into sperm. Sex too soon would involve humors that are still raw and underprocessed and might lead to an unhealthy fetus or, at the very least, a girl.

In the French version of Platina's cookbook, translated by Desdier Christol in 1507, he says, "The moment you feel that your meal is digested, the time is good to produce children." How one can tell the digestive process is complete is quite simple: One only listens to the urges prompted by the brain, because the abundance of sperm is what triggers the libido in the first place. From a purely gastronomic perspective, sex after a big meal, on a full stomach, is foolhardy.

The question of what properly serves as a stimulant was also open to question, largely because a lot of popular lore circulated, sometimes even in the professional literature. A good Galenist would insist that it can only be wholesome, nourishing food. In 1587, Laurent Joubert in his *Popular Errors* points out that people have all sorts of mistaken notions about what will stimulate sexual desire, and there might indeed be unnatural ways to do so, but the only proper way to increase true desire and concomitant virility is with nourishing, easily digested foods like chicken and veal, eggs, good bread, and wine. These are the substances that are most easily converted into us. They are all moderately hot and moist humorally and "subtle" in texture and consistency—and thus easily digested.

On the contrary, one cause for lack of desire is excess cold, and note that this is one and the same as the ability to reproduce, since the body is a psychosomatic whole. It is not coincidental that we still refer to this as frigidity. But in Renaissance minds, this was taken quite literally. In a cold body, the sperm remains in solid form like wax. Only with heat and friction is it able to melt and become fluid.

Although it may sound silly, this is precisely why physicians such as Platina suggest tying a sachet of hot (in humoral terms) herbs around the genitals. Exactly as they heat the mouth when eaten, they would likewise heat the solid sperm—in men and presumably women, too.

Quite simply, this is the real reason hot spices are recommended. Yes, they are sensual and exotic and expensive and come from faraway lands—that itself is a turn-on! But physiologically, they are heating.

Cloves, for example, says Baldassare Pisanelli, "augment miraculously the force of Venus."* He suggests 4 drams in a glass of milk. It is not because the clove bears some resemblance to the phallus in miniature form; it burns on the tongue and will also heat a cold, imbalanced body.


cloves

English author Thomas Cogan agrees that cloves "comfort the debilitie of nature, and stir up Venus." Cogan was a popular vernacular author after the Reformation, so this provides some evidence that prudery doesn't divide neatly along confessional lines.

But earlier authors are certainly more open, and they expect their learned readers to pass good information on. This was exactly why Benedict of Nursia in 1475 wondered what poor people would do who couldn't afford cloves from the Moluccas. He said that garlic is a fine substitute, for it not only heats but helps the circulation of the blood and mechanically extenuates the organs of reproduction. Too much, though, would overheat and dry out the body.

* "*aumento mirabilmente le forze di Venere*"

A similar problem can occur with unnatural clogs within the body, which also require heating, but aperitive herbs can cut through gluey humors and open the body's passages. Foods that are bitter are a good sign of aperitive properties (as in the aperitif before a meal).

For this reason, Hugo Fridaevallis suggests foods like hops (the sprouts, in this case), cardoons or artichokes, or, best of all, asparagus.† The wonderful aperitive force of asparagus was evidenced by the fact that it makes the urine stink, meaning that it scours out the body's passages, including those involved in sex. Again, it's not any phallic resemblance but the flavor of asparagus that makes it work.

Aphrodisiac herbs are without exception those that heat the body and dry it from the excessive moisture that would cause apathy or lethargy. These include parsley, arugula—probably the most common aphrodisiac due to its intense bitterness—and even mint, which proverbially you should never sow in time of war. Presumably, soldiers eating the mint will be distracted from the battle.

Another class of heating and drying foods includes salt, which may offer some explanation for the word *salacious*. Salt was used to dry meat in the process of curing. But this was a controversial issue in the dietary literature. Most authors agreed that salt is heating and drying, and it can cause stimulation of the genitals through a kind of mild irritation. But salty foods will actually dry out the body—and the sperm especially, as it does all fluids in the body. It is actually too drying and will perhaps tingle a bit but ultimately will destroy both the appetite for coitus and the ability to reproduce.

† Fridaevallis recommends asparagus for nervous newlyweds: "If you have conjugal difficulties at first, and if you are unable to please your wife, then sweet and loveable mate she will become [if you use asparagus]."

Actually, anything too heating falls into the same category, including rue, which is just about the most bitter herb that we can find palatable. It may be coincidental that it can cause abortion, but physicians did counsel to avoid it as a sex aid.

Just as hot foods can stimulate the appetite for sex, many authors were concerned about how to repress sexual desire, especially for bachelors, students, and clergymen. These would naturally be cold foods. Lettuce is the most common lust quencher. Thomas Moffett said, "If any student list to live honestly unmarried let him use often times this medicine." Physiologically, it prevents not only lascivious dreams but even nocturnal emissions.

Other chilling herbs function the same way, and this is probably why poppy and henbane are discussed in this context—not because they put you to sleep (although that, too, would do the trick) but because they chill the body and repress sexual urges.

Artificial Stimulants and Popular Remedies

Strangely, added to these humorally derived aphrodisiacs and anaphrodisiacs, there was also an entire class of foods considered artificial stimulants, which operate mechanically rather than through qualitative properties. Or, to use their language, they function via secondary rather than primary qualities.

Among these are foods that produce flatulence. As bizarre as this sounds, root vegetables like carrots and parsnips are classified as gas inducing—again, not because of any phallic resemblance but because they draw moisture directly from the earth, a moisture that is as-of-yet unrefined and crude (unlike leaves, whose moisture is refined by the sun).

The crass humors within them, despite cooking, end up causing a greater volume of by-products in our bodies. These gases accumulate not only in the stomach but through the whole body, since that crudity is usually passed through the liver and veins, then into all the parts, and ultimately into the genitals, which are inflated. Thus, artificially, they can cause an erection, through distension of all the body parts filled with gas.

The mechanical distension seems to have been considered a legitimate remedy among the late 15th- and early 16th-century authors. Gazius in 1491 says that arugula is good "to keep the rod erect."‡ Symphorien Champier repeats this in 1514, and so does Benedict, speaking of turnip greens in the same context. Later writers, however, say that while this might be useful for sex itself, it couldn't possibly produce viable offspring.

Apart from these aphrodisiacs, which follow standard physiological theory, there were also many popular remedies that seeped into the medical literature, most of which seem to have been drawn from Romoli's *Singolare dottrina*. This system was not foreign to scholarly writers, but it does follow a logic that is not really Galenic. This doctrine contends that all nature is imbued with colors, shapes, and textures that offer hints to their therapeutic values—placed there by a beneficent god that wants us to be able to cure ourselves.

‡ "*tenere instrumentum virge erectum*"

This is not exactly the same as the notion that eating rabbits will make you timorous. That is simply the direct transfer of properties of similar substances and qualities. By this logic, eating goat's flesh—or, better yet, mullet, which apparently are the most lecherous of fish—might make you lascivious.

Here, it is rather the shape, color, or some other secondary characteristic of outward form that bears the "signature" of its powers in pharmaceutical healing. Thus, yellow plants are good for curing jaundice, heart-shaped ones are cordials, and walnuts are good for the brain.

Once again, this is not the idea that phallic-shaped foods are good for sex—no Renaissance author makes any claim like that. In fact, whenever we might expect them to refer to similar shape or texture, they say something completely different. For example, when Alessandro Petronio goes out of his way to comment on the aphrodisiac properties of oysters, he says that this is simply because they are nourishing first, and then the salt content bolsters their effect. No one suggests any similarity to sex organs; that's a modern misconception.

Recipes from Romoli

In his cookbook, Romoli's comments are much like the aforementioned ones. About arugula, he says "cooked more greatly augments the sperm through its heat and humidity," and artichokes cooked with vinegar and pepper "incite coitus."§ Pine nuts "increase sperm,"¶ and "to increase the seed of the generation, the white chickpeas are better."**

Elsewhere in the book, Romoli has recipes. Each of them features at least one of the aphrodisiac ingredients and would have made an excellent banquet to arouse guests.

§ "*incitan il coito*"

¶ "*accrescono lo sperma*"

** "*per accrescere il seme della generatione son migliori i Ceci bianchi*"

Let's start with some chickpea fritters, keeping in mind that Renaissance diners were happy having sweet dishes at any point in a meal. They are called zeppole, which you might be familiar with from southern Italy as fried dough with powdered sugar.


chickpea fritters

Ceppolle di ceci (Chickpea Fritters)

Ingredients

- ☐ chickpeas
- ☐ cooked, peeled chestnuts
- ☐ peeled hazelnuts
- ☐ parsley
- ☐ bitter/aromatic herbs
- ☐ sugar
- ☐ cinnamon
- ☐ clove
- ☐ pepper
- ☐ yeast
- ☐ wine
- ☐ honey

Instructions

Pound together chickpeas, chestnuts, and hazelnuts.

Finely chop and add parsley and/or other herbs.

Add sugar, cinnamon, clove, pepper, yeast, and wine and pound everything together into a thick batter.

Use a spoon to shape fritters and fry in hot oil until browned.

Coat with honey and sugar; serve on top of honey.

In the following recipe, the beef should be molded into a breast shape on a plate, with the half-cooked egg yolk being the areola and the clove stuck in the top being the nipple.

Soffrito of Chopped Beef

Ingredients

- ☐ ground beef
- ☐ beef broth
- ☐ salt
- ☐ minced herbs
- ☐ pepper
- ☐ verjuice
- ☐ hard-boiled egg yolks
- ☐ whole cloves

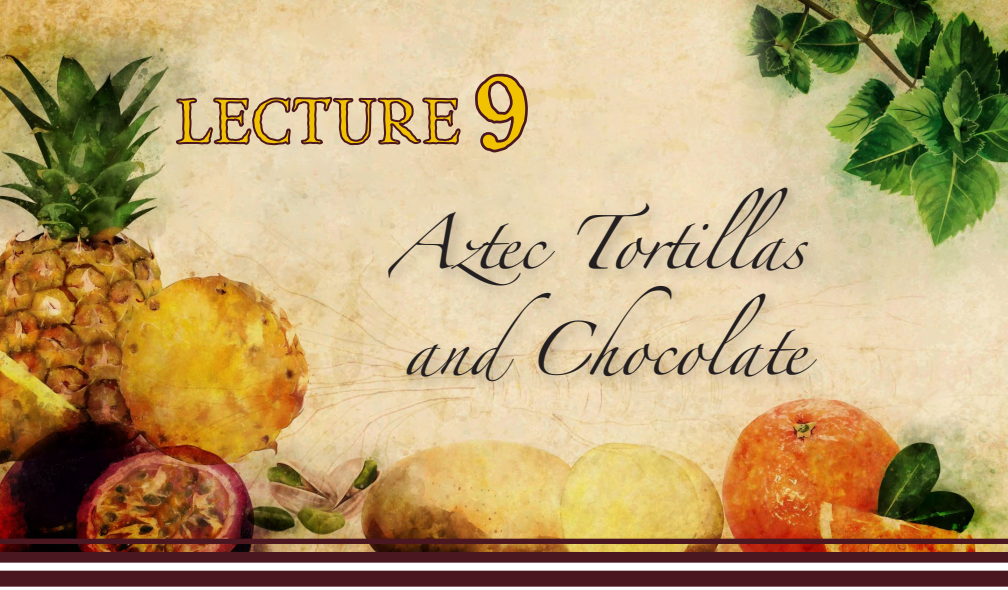
Instructions

Brown beef in a pan and then add salt and beef broth.

Add minced herbs, pepper, and verjuice and cook until dry.

Shape the beef, place the egg yolk on top, and stud with a clove.

soffrito of chopped beef



LECTURE 9

Aztec Tortillas and Chocolate

No written recipes survive from Aztec culture; those that might have survived were either destroyed intentionally by colonial invaders or accidentally by the passage of time.* Without recipes, we'll have to make inferences from the literature that does survive. We can also look to biology to be sure we stick closely to the species that would have been indigenous before the introduction of European plants and animals. And we can infer from modern but traditional techniques to gain information about how food would have been prepared.

* There is no reason to suspect that written recipes did not exist before the arrival of the Spanish in Mexico. This was, after all, a literate culture with extensive ideas about food and agriculture, dietary health, and the ritual role of food in religion. Cookbooks are usually found wherever such literature flourishes.

The Aztecs and Their Cuisine

Today, many people make tortillas on a steel comal, a slightly concave cooking surface on which you place a circle of corn dough and then flip it when it's cooked and lightly charred on one side. There was gold and copper metallurgy in the Americas but not ironwork of the sort that could cast or hammer cooking implements. Traditionally, a low-fired clay comal was used, and archaeology supports the idea that this was the typical flat cooking surface for the Aztecs and those before them.

The clay is burnished with a stone before firing to make it smooth; then, after low firing, it was seasoned with mined calcium hydroxide, which makes it nonstick. The clay comal would have been supported by stones and heated slowly over a fire. You could place vegetables or chilies directly on top to toast and then cook your tortillas on the surface, as well. It behaved very differently than metal, which heats evenly but very quickly, and it's easy to burn food on it unless you have a very sensitive gas range.

The clay comal, like most clay cooking, must be used gently so that the clay doesn't crack. In the end, the process yields a very different flavor and texture. The same can be said of tortillas, which are incidentally made with the same cal, or slaked lime.

When we describe Aztec cuisine, we should be acknowledging all the people who came before them in the region that is now Mexico: the Olmec, the people of Teotihuacán, the Toltec, and Maya civilization to the south. All these people contributed both ingredients and techniques to Aztec cooking. The Aztecs were relative newcomers to the region, arriving only a few hundred years before the Spanish.

Thus, indigenous food of Mexico was then—and still is—much broader than the Aztecs, who were simply the last empire before the 16th-century contact with Europe. Most importantly, the major foodstuffs were domesticated in prehistoric times, long before the Aztecs arrived, most likely from the north, where their linguistic cousins live.

Speaking of language, many of the words we have for food derive from Nahuatl, which Aztecs spoke: tomato from *tomatl*, avocado from *ahuacatl*, chili (which is exactly the same), and chocolate from *xocoatl*. Nonetheless, these plants were domesticated long before they got these names.

To this list of Mesoamerican plants, we should add squashes: both summer varieties like zucchini (which are anything but Italian) and all the hard squashes. Most of the varieties of beans we commonly eat, everything in what is now classified as the genus *Phaseolus*, are New World beans, including kidney beans, pinto beans, black beans, and navy beans.

Perhaps the most important of all these is maize, or corn, as it is called in the US. The word *maize* derives from Taino, a Caribbean language, but corn was domesticated about 10,000 years ago in Mexico. Maize is the staple grain—really the cornerstone of this civilization—though we should not forget cassava and sweet potatoes, which are also New World root vegetables.

Nixtamalization

Corn is among the few plants on earth that has enough calories and vitamins that it can support a large population as the staple. But many of the nutrients aren't available unless the grains are first nixtamalized, the root word of which is *tamale*. The dried corn is soaked in hot water containing calcium hydroxide, or cal, which is an alkaline chemical. It can burn you, much like lye derived from ashes, which was another way to make this. In fact, *nextli* means "ashes" in Nahuatl.

But why did they do this? Field corn is very hard and almost impossible to grind dry. That's unlike, for example, wheat or other grains, which you can pound into flour or on a large scale use an animal-driven millstone—but they didn't have draft animals in the Americas. That point may actually be more important than cattle as a source of meat, because the Aztecs had plenty of other sources, such as turkeys, ducks, rabbits, deer, peccaries, iguanas, and fish.†

To grind the corn, they soaked it in this alkaline solution, which causes the kernel to swell and loosens the hull, and after you rinse, the kernels can be rubbed off. What you now have is what in the US is called hominy, or posole in the Southwest. It's chewy and can be squished together to form a dough, or, as it's called in Spanish, masa.

The advantage of nixtamalization is that it kills the mycotoxins that might grow on the corn and, more importantly, makes niacin available to the body, so it's more nutritious this way than whole-ground corn, which, if you try to make it a staple, can lead to the vitamin deficiency pellagra, as happened in Italy and the US South. Naturally, people who used this technology of nixtamalization survived and reproduced at a greater rate than those who didn't, especially when it was combined with beans.

† Beef, pork, and chicken were introduced by Europeans after the 1520s.

This nixtamalized dough is used to make both tamales when slightly coarse and tortillas when finely ground. That happens on a metate, a saddle-shaped grinding surface that you kneel over and apply your weight with a stone mano to squish the kernels into a smooth mass. It is a lot of work, and it would take women of the household hours and hours every day of backbreaking labor. Today, people use instant masa or buy the dough when they make tortillas at home.

Nixtamalized Corn Tortillas

Ingredients

- ☐ calcium hydroxide (cal)
- ☐ field corn

Instructions

Be careful and wear gloves when handling calcium hydroxide!

Add package of cal to water and let the chemical settle.

Pour liquid, leaving chemicals behind, over field corn in a large pot.

Stir, boil for a few minutes, and soak overnight.

Rinse well, remove skins, and grind corn.

Place ball of corn between two sheets of plastic and press.

Cook tortillas on a comal or frying pan.

nixtamalized corn tortillas

Tamales and Tomates

When making a tamale, you can use an instant Maseca or other brand that's specifically ground for tamales. Nowadays, people use lard for flavor or shortening, which was once supposed to be better for you. But neither of these would have been available. You could use turkey fat or another animal fat.


tamales

Red Bean Tamales

Ingredients

- ☐ nixtamalized pounded corn (or prepared corn flour)
- ☐ lard or other animal fat
- ☐ salt
- ☐ green chili powder
- ☐ cooked red beans
- ☐ soaked corn husks

Instructions

Mix the fat, salt, and green chili powder into the corn dough.

Spread a small rectangle of dough inside a soaked husk and add a dollop of crushed red bean filling.

Enclose the beans in the dough and fold over the ends of the husk. Then, with a strip of husk, tie it closed and knot it.

Arrange filled husks in a *tamalera* or large steamer and steam for about 1 ½ hours.

Bernardino de Sahagún, the preeminent Spanish ethnographer of the Aztecs, offers a suggestion of how these were cooked. He mentions preparation of tamales like these:

> Among the ashes was the labor of the old women. They made tamales using dried grains of maize …. Some cooked tamales in an olla‡. Some washed the maize grains which had been cooked in lime. Some carried and drew water, or poured it.

He also says, "They also ate tamales of many kinds, some of them white and pellet shaped, neither round nor square, on their top they have a spiral, which is made by the beans with which it is mixed." He talks about white delicate tamales, reddish ones, and even one made of amaranth and ground cherry kernels. Overall, it doesn't seem like tamales have changed that drastically.

A sauce would also go nicely on these, and here we do actually have a recipe that might be pretty similar to the Aztec version. Ironically, it's in Italian, and it's the first recipe ever printed using tomato. It's found in Antonio Latini's *Lo scalco alla moderna*, published in the 1690s—200 years after initial contact!

Tomate molli

Ingredients

- ☐ ripe tomatoes
- ☐ finely chopped onion
- ☐ finely chopped chilies
- ☐ thyme
- ☐ salt
- ☐ oil
- ☐ vinegar

‡ a clay pot

Instructions

Take a half-dozen ripe tomatoes and put them over coals to char.

Once charred, carefully remove the skin and chop finely with a knife.

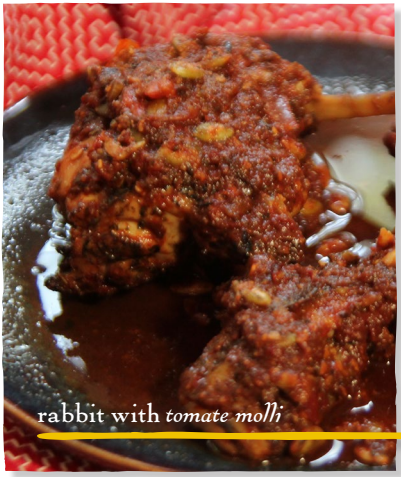
Add to that finely chopped onion and finely chopped chilies as well as thyme.

Mix everything together and season with salt, oil, and vinegar.

If you leave out the oil and vinegar and maybe use an American herb in place of the thyme, you will have a sauce that's almost exactly the same as the one the Aztecs used.

Rabbit with *Tomate molli*

To reconstruct another recipe with a protein base, we can use turkey instead of the rabbit used in the original recipe. Both Sahagún and Francisco Hernández describe the kinds of food that people ate or could buy in the market and consistently mention casseroles or stews that contain fowl, red chili, and tomatoes, sometimes with squash seeds. You can think of this as a kind of early mole poblano, but keep in mind that's a colonial-era dish.



rabbit with *tomate molli*

Rabbit with *Tomate molli*

Ingredients

- ☐ rabbit or other native meat, such as turkey
- ☐ dried ancho and guajillo peppers
- ☐ tomatoes
- ☐ toasted pumpkin seeds
- ☐ Mexican oregano (*Lippia graveolens*)

Instructions

Briefly toast peppers on comal to make them pliable and then shake out the seeds.§

Soak peppers in water for about 20 minutes.

Char the tomatoes and take off the skins.

Mash together with the rest of the ingredients¶ and cook down in a pot until thickened.

Pour the sauce on over rabbit or other native meat, such as turkey, and serve.

The Spanish observers often used the word *barbacoa*, which they learned in the Caribbean and from which the word *barbeque* derives, but apparently the Aztecs had a similar method of roasting meat on a wooden platform, which is what that word means. So a grilled turkey divided in parts would be perfectly suitable. For a rounded meal, a vegetable like chayote or jicama would be appropriate.

§ Remove the pepper's ribs if you'd prefer to temper the heat, but be sure to use gloves if you do.

¶ Nowadays, people whizz these ingredients in a blender, but in the past, it would've been pounded in a *molcajete*.

> The key to a good modern mole is that it has a balance of heat, sweetness from fruit, and mellowness from chocolate—though the Aztecs drank their chocolate. There's no evidence that it was used in cooking.

Aztec Drinking Chocolate

Nowadays, chocolate is mostly eaten as candy, but the Aztecs drank it—not with milk and sugar as we might drink hot chocolate, but as cacao colored red with achiote and spiced with chili. Montezuma was said to take 100 cups a day from golden goblets.

The Badianus Manuscript, originally written in Nahuatl, says that the Aztecs considered chocolate a medicine, and so did the Europeans at first. Hernández, in his *History of the Plants of New Spain*, wrote:

> *Chocóllatl* … made from *cacáhoatl* seed with the addition of nothing else at all, is commonly administered to the seriously ill, to mitigate heat, just as it is also given to those suffering from a hot disorder of the liver or of any other part.

Juan Cardenas also tells us that, unlike the Spanish, the Mexicans use ingredients such as *güeynacaztle* (*flor de oreja*, or *Cymbopetalum penduliflorum*), *mecasuchil* (*flor de cordel*, or *Piper sanctum*), *tlixóchil* (vanilla), and achiote (a yellow coloring agent, *Bixa orellana*), and each contribute their own particular qualities to the mixture.

Mexican drinking chocolate in tablet form is a colonial creation and contains cinnamon and sugar. You may also have seen a *molinillo*, a wooden device that you roll between the palms of your hands to froth up the chocolate, but apparently that's a colonial invention, too. The Aztecs preferred to pour it from a great height from cup to cup to get a froth.

Aztec Drinking Chocolate

Ingredients

- ☐ high-cacao dark chocolate
- ☐ vanilla bean
- ☐ achiote seeds
- ☐ chili powder

Instructions

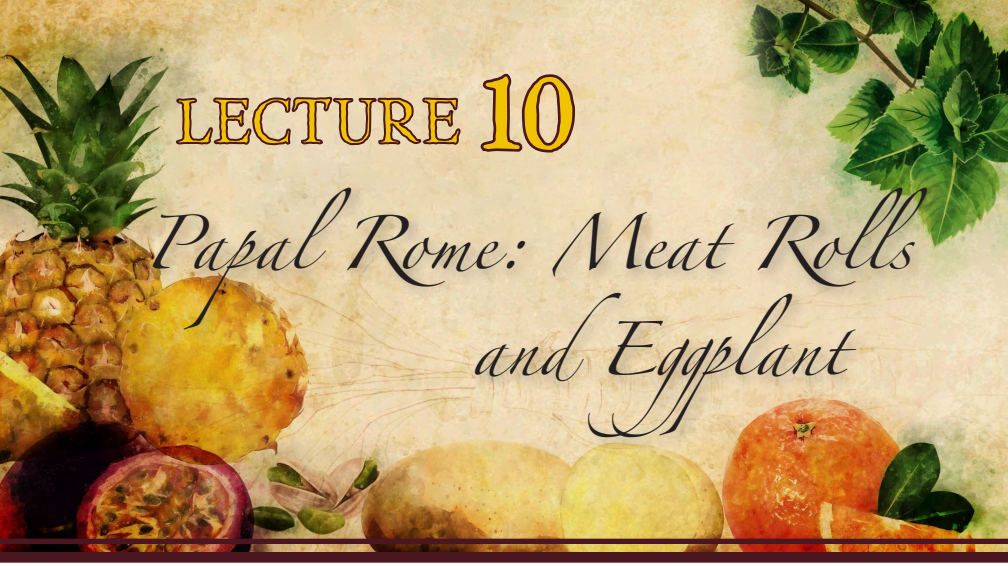
Soak the achiote in hot water.

Melt the chocolate in water.

Add vanilla-bean scrapings, water from the achiote, and chili powder.

Strain out the solid parts.

Pour from a height to create a froth.



LECTURE 10

Papal Rome: Meat Rolls and Eggplant

In the mid-16th century, the papal court in Rome witnessed some of the most spectacular meals. But the Catholic Reformation also initiated sweeping changes that had a notable impact on attitudes toward food. We will be looking in particular at Bartolomeo Scappi's *Opera*, published in 1570. It is an encyclopedic cookbook with detailed instructions that really teach the reader how to cook.

Scappi's *Opera* and Life

Bartolomeo Scappi was unusual among culinary writers up until the time of his *Opera* in that he was an actual cook and he did not write his cookbook as a memory aid for himself, nor did he borrow from other earlier cookbooks. Instead, it is a massive tome designed to teach someone how to cook. It includes directions for choosing ingredients and how to negotiate ideal working conditions. It also includes full menus.

Perhaps most importantly, it describes dishes for every ingredient known at the time and multiple variations for how to prepare them. He even has recipes for hedgehog, bear, and the newly introduced New World turkey. In most recipes, Scappi offers alternatives and various options to suit your own preferences, and there are even recipes for convalescents.

The *Opera* is also the first illustrated cookbook with the first depiction of a fork used as an eating utensil. There are scenes in various kitchens, with people rolling out pasta dough, cranking a turnspit, and doing various kitchen tasks. So, for the first time, we get a real glimpse inside a professional working kitchen, with detailed illustrations of all the pots, pans, knives, and other implements. We also know exactly what Scappi looked like from the portrait frontispiece of the book.

The cuisine itself is the height of late Renaissance style. Spices are still prominent, but we also see liberal use of herbs, garlic, and other ingredients that are definitively Italian. There aren't yet tomatoes or chili peppers; those wouldn't appear in a cookbook until the end of the 17th century.

But otherwise, these are recipes that most Italians would likely understand, even though they might not enjoy the profusion of sugar and spices in some of the dishes. Those largely went out of fashion in the 18th and 19th centuries.

In the late Renaissance, the cuisine was not only lavish but also made use of many contrasting flavors, so you would see sweet and sour or piquant and salty juxtaposed in ways that are very much reminiscent of the painting and music of the period.

Scappi came from a town in northern Italy called Dumenza that borders Switzerland, and his recipes reflect this region. In the course of his career, he worked for various cardinals, and by midcentury he was in Rome, eventually becoming private cook to Pope Pius V.

Unfortunately for Scappi, this particular pope was known for being ascetic. Pius V—actually, Saint Pius—was characteristic of a new attitude toward pleasure in the papacy. The naked figures in Michelangelo's *Last Judgement* would be painted over. The opulent banquets and parties of the Renaissance became more somber and decorous. And an entirely new spirit of reform led to a new kind of mysticism with people like Saint Teresa of Ávila and new religious orders like the Jesuits. Scappi would have been witness to these events.

There's a plaque to Scappi in the church of San Giorgio in Dumenza a few years after he died, in 1577.

Veal *Polpettes*

Today in Italy, if you are served *polpette*, it will be meatballs, and *polpettone* is a meatloaf. In Scappi's cookbook, they are meat rolls filled with chopped meat (*polpe*). Elsewhere, Scappi describes the rolls as a hand in width. They are made like *cialdoni*, which are little rolled, tube-shaped cookies, like *pirouettes*.

Veal *Polpettes*

Ingredients

- ☐ veal
- ☐ vinegar
- ☐ pepper
- ☐ salt
- ☐ coarsely ground fennel
- ☐ bacon or pancetta
- ☐ egg yolks
- ☐ cinnamon
- ☐ parsley
- ☐ rosemary
- ☐ oregano
- ☐ thyme
- ☐ sage
- ☐ prunes, dried cherries/ gooseberries, or unripe grapes
- ☐ grated cheese (optional)

Instructions

Cut veal into strips and then beat to flatten.

Sprinkle with vinegar, pepper, salt, and fennel.

Chop bacon, herbs, garlic, and veal; then, combine with egg yolks, cinnamon, and pepper.

Add grated cheese if desired.

Fill and roll the veal and then fry in lard.

Add broth and prunes (or other fruit) and then cover pan and simmer until cooked through.

Garnish with fresh herbs.

16th-Century Salami

This lecture's technique is also very Italian, and it's one for which no recipe exists from this period—but we know people ate it. Scappi mentions it but doesn't have a recipe for it. The papal court bought these from specialists, as they did wine and other foodstuffs. Nonetheless, we can get very close to a good 16th-century salami.

16th-Century Salami

Ingredients

- ☐ pork shoulder roast*
- ☐ salt†
- ☐ unrefined sugar‡
- ☐ Insta Cure #2§
- ☐ black pepper¶
- ☐ cinnamon
- ☐ ginger
- ☐ other herbs or spices, as desired
- ☐ untreated hemp or cotton string
- ☐ casings**

Instructions

With a cleaver or very sharp, sturdy knife, slice the meat into thin strips and then chop as finely as you can.

Add the rest of the ingredients and mix well with your hands.

Tie one end of the casing with string and stuff it tightly. Then, tie the other end.

Use a pin to poke holes all over the casing and squeeze out excess air.

* Pork shoulder has just about the right proportion of fat to meat, and a 5-pound roast is about as much as you will want to process at one time by hand.

† For 5 pounds of pork, use 3½ tablespoons of sea salt.

‡ For 5 pounds of pork, use 4 tablespoons of unrefined sugar (which is necessary to keep the bacteria happy).

§ For 5 pounds of pork, use 1 teaspoon of Insta Cure #2, which is specifically made for dry salami.

¶ Use about ¼ teaspoon of pepper, cinnamon, ginger, and other herbs/spices; otherwise, you'll overwhelm the flavor of the meat.

** Beef middles are strong, but hog works, too. They can be purchased online.

Hang the sausage somewhere that's about 55°F[††] and humid with good air circulation for about a month.[‡‡] You want the salami to be quite hard.

To eat, peel off and discard the casing and slice very finely.

16th-century salami

At this point in history, they didn't have meat grinders yet, and the few recipes for fresh sausages specify that the meat is cut by hand—with just a knife. Using this technique makes a very big difference in the final product. You want distinct, cleanly cut bits of fat suspended in the meat. And that's much easier to get with a knife and some elbow grease.

†† A wine fridge works perfectly, but so would a cool basement. Don't be tempted to use a regular refrigerator; it's too cold, and the right bacteria won't grow there.

‡‡ You can use larger casings, such as a beef bung, but that will take up to 3 months to cure.

Today, all cured meat products use nitrates. Even if they claim otherwise, companies that cure meat get the same chemicals from celery powder and then can label the bacon and salami and hot dogs as "uncured." They are most certainly cured. Otherwise, you would have raw, salted pork belly and fresh sausages. It's just a weird loophole in the legal terminology that allows this.

To get that pink color and solid texture and to prevent botulism—which comes from the Latin word *botulus*, meaning sausage—you have to use nitrates. Mined salt in the past probably contained it naturally, too, even if people back then didn't use curing salts like we have, so this is not a concession to modern protocol.

Notice that you are not using any premade bacterial starters. The lactic acid bacteria will grow entirely on its own—just like it does in bread starter, cheese, and pickles.

A typical way to serve salami in the Renaissance was to shred it finely, but they also would cook it in wine. Interestingly, however it was served, it would have been included in the starters, or antipasti, that were on the table when a banquet began, including cold vegetable salads, mostaccioli biscuits, pastries, and cold meat pies.

They were not prepared by the chef, but rather by the *credenziero*, who was in charge of a whole separate cold kitchen. Usually, hot and cold courses would be alternated so that when one kitchen was serving food, the other one would be getting ready, and then they'd switch.

The meal structure by Scappi's time was still fairly loose. There isn't, for example, a progression from comparatively bland foods to more powerful ones, with small palate cleansers punctuating each course and sweets banished to the end of the meal. On the contrary, you might have sweet dishes in any course. And at the end of the meal comes fruit and confections but also vegetables like artichokes.

And you would also have a wide variety of different types of food in each course. There would be perhaps fish, vegetables, and meat side by side in a course, all laid on the table together, and then each person could choose exactly what he or she likes. (During Lent and on fasting days, you would only have fish and vegetables.) The host would even send down dishes from his table to others as a gesture of hospitality. Then, the tables would be entirely cleared and another set of dishes would come out.

In Scappi's final years, a feeling of strict sobriety overcame the papacy, and a series of reforms intended to gather people back to the Catholic Church. These by and large succeeded, but they also took the emphasis off lavish dining, at least in Rome.

Fried Eggplant

This is the type of dish that Saint Pius would have been served. The sauce that is poured over the fried eggplant is sort of a pesto.

Fried Eggplant

Ingredients

- ☐ eggplant
- ☐ salt
- ☐ flour
- ☐ olive oil
- ☐ parsley, basil, or other herb
- ☐ garlic
- ☐ walnuts

Instructions

Peel and thinly slice the eggplant.

Salt the eggplant; then, dust it with flour and fry it in olive oil.

Grind parsley, garlic, salt, and walnuts together.§§

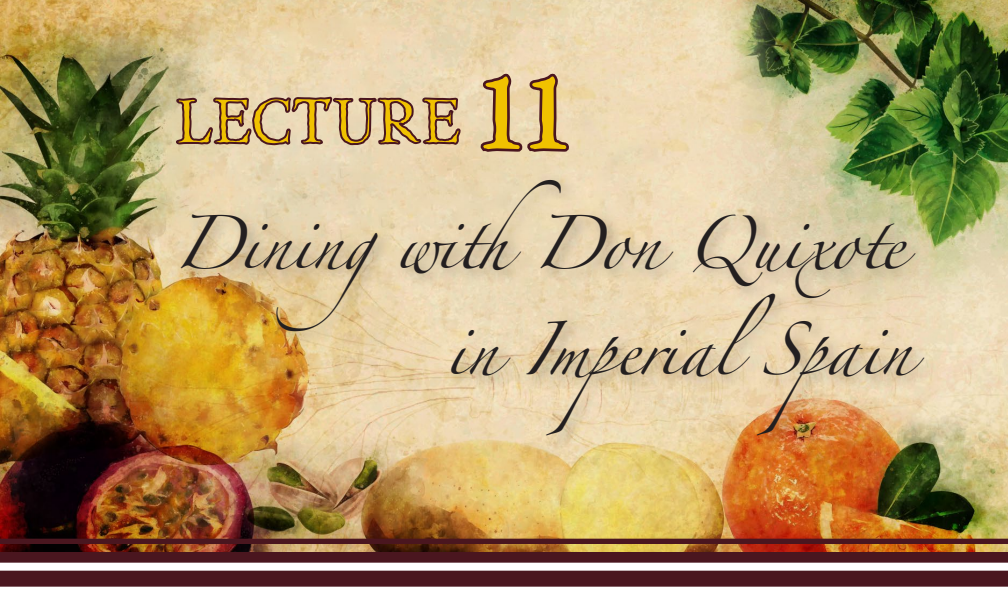
Pour sauce over fried eggplant.

It may be purely coincidental, but there are no cookbooks published in Italy for about another century. There are many banquet management books, but no cookbooks per se. It may be that Scappi's was so comprehensive and encyclopedic that no one could top it.

And it did come out in many further editions and was pirated in a Spanish translation attributed to Diego Granado, and some recipes appeared in a Dutch cookbook, too.

fried eggplant

§§ You could add a few drops of oil to emulsify this mixture.



LECTURE 11

Dining with Don Quixote in Imperial Spain

In this lecture, we will visit Spain in the early 17th century in the reign of Philip III. We will cook a dish called an olla podrida, which literally means "rotten pot." The dish is cooked long and slow, and the ingredients meld together. There is a wild riot of ingredients, including lamb beef, pig's feet, sausages, chestnuts, hare, turnips, and chickpeas or beans. It became very popular in the 17th century throughout Europe, even in England, where they called it an olio.

Don Quixote's Spain

The dish known as olla podrida is mentioned in the opening passage of Miguel de Cervantes's great novel *Don Quixote*, in which he tells us about Don Quixote's eating habits:

> *Una olla de algo más vaca que carnero, salpicón las más noches, duelos y quebrantos los sábados, lentejas los viernes, algún palomino de añadidura los domingos, consumían las tres partes de su hacienda.*

In English, this can be translated as follows:

> His pot contained more beef than sheep, a *salpicón** most nights, leftover beans and lentils from Friday, Saturday's scraps, sometimes a pigeon on Sunday, which used up three parts of his household income.

The implication is that Quixote ate one big, grand meal to show off but ate very frugally the rest of the week because he couldn't afford to do otherwise. The historical context of the time explains how Quixote ended up an impoverished nobleman imagining that he's fighting giants and rescuing damsels in distress.

In the 16th century, Spain conquered an enormous empire that included not only Mexico, Peru, and the Philippines, but also much of Europe, too—the Netherlands as well as Naples and Milan in Italy. The Spanish were receiving massive amounts of silver from the New World, but most of it was spent trying to hold onto their European possessions and trying to crush Protestantism.

The Spanish Armada sent to invade England was part of that larger scheme. The king, Philip II, borrowed a lot of money, taxed his subjects harshly, and

* ground-up meat, presumably also leftovers

still ended up bankrupting the Spanish government in the process. There were no cookbooks published during his reign.

After his death in 1598, the throne passed to his son Philip III, who was not very concerned about governing and fighting wars but was interested in throwing parties and patronizing artists. So the royal court became a dazzling place in the early 17th century. Courtiers flocked there and were fed in style. In fact, Philip's chef Francisco Martínez Montiño wrote a splendid cookbook called *Arte de cozina*, which was published in 1611 and went through many editions for the next two centuries.

While the court was living it up, drinking chocolate and eating pastries, the rest of the country fell into a serious economic depression. Trade with the Americas slowed down because the colonies grew increasingly self-sufficient.

There was serious depopulation, partly because of emigration, but also because many people went to the cities to find work, so the countryside especially became empty. Agriculture suffered and rural industries collapsed.

So that's how you can have a rural lesser noble with no money, losing his mind, yet still imagining Spain in its glory days, when the great chivalric romances like Amadís of Gaul inspired the conquistadors. That world had disappeared—Spain suffered military defeat—so the only refuge for someone like Quixote was to imagine slaying giants.

Paradoxically, at this time, Spain became the gastronomic model for much of Europe, in a sense taking that position from the Italians. This is also before the French would gain ascendancy in the arts and cuisine. To a great extent, the cooking of the early baroque is comparatively subdued, much as happens in the arts. Very gradually, the intense spicing and bold contrasts in flavors that were typical of 16th-century mannerism gives way to greater focus and intensity.

Olla Podrida

To get a sense of this change, let's look at a fairly humble cookbook from 1607 that was written by Domingo Hernández de Maceras, who was the cook for a college in Salamanca. The people here had money, but the recipes aren't lavish.

The impression we get from his olla podrida recipe is that you can use whatever you have on hand and make it as simple or complex as you like. There are a lot of varied ingredients in it but also a certain harmony of flavors.

> The word for this dish in French is *potpourri*, which also means "rotten pot," but for some reason, that term came to mean a mixed-up jumble, including of flowers and herbs that you tie in a sachet.

Olla Podrida

Ingredients

- ☐ lamb
- ☐ *longaniza* sausage†
- ☐ whole quail‡
- ☐ rabbit or hare
- ☐ beef tongue
- ☐ bacon§
- ☐ pig's feet¶
- ☐ raw garbanzo beans
- ☐ whole, peeled garlic cloves
- ☐ peeled turnip
- ☐ salt
- ☐ parsley

† You could use chorizo here, but not soft Mexican chorizo.

‡ Specifically, squab is called for.

§ If possible, the bacon should be a Spanish *tocino*, or a slab of good smoked bacon, not sliced until after it is cooked.

¶ A few pig's feet make this gelatinous, but this is not required.

Instructions

Parboil, peel, and chop the beef tongue.

Layer ingredients in a pot.

Cover with water, add salt, and simmer at the lowest-possible temperature for about 6 to 8 hours.** At the end, the stew should not be watery, and the meat should be extraordinarily tender.

Sprinkle with parsley and serve.

This is essentially a simple, slowly simmered stew of whatever is on hand. Ideally, it should be cooked in a large, covered earthenware pot, which is said to give the best flavor, but any pot will work fine. Nothing should be browned or boned.

When serving this dish, each plate should have a small morsel of every ingredient if you can, though they will probably be difficult to distinguish.

olla podrida

** Cooking this on hot coals is ideal.

Curing Olives

The technique for this lecture—curing olives—is also quintessentially Spanish. There are many different ways to do this, and, interestingly, you can cure the exact same olive when it's green, slightly mottled purplish, or fully ripe and black. They aren't necessarily different varieties but can be just different stages of ripeness.

Most modern methods use a form of alkali, such as lye. It draws out the bitter oleuropein in a few days, and then you continually soak and resoak to remove the lye. You can get a very tasty and even firm olive this way, and most olives are processed like this today because it's quick. In the past, perhaps they had more time. In any case, there are historic quick and slow types.

Cured Green Olives

Instructions

Wash olives and place them in a sealed ceramic vase or glass jar with brine at about 4-percent to 5-percent salinity.

Seal without any air and leave for a year in a cool place.

You can change the brine every few months to remove bitterness and add water to decrease salinity.

There is a quicker but equally delicious way that is uniquely Spanish.

Spanish Olives

Instructions

Take fresh olives that are just beginning to turn purple.

Very gently crush†† each olive, only cracking it slightly.

Soak the olives in ordinary water, changing it every day until the bitterness is gone, tasting as you go.

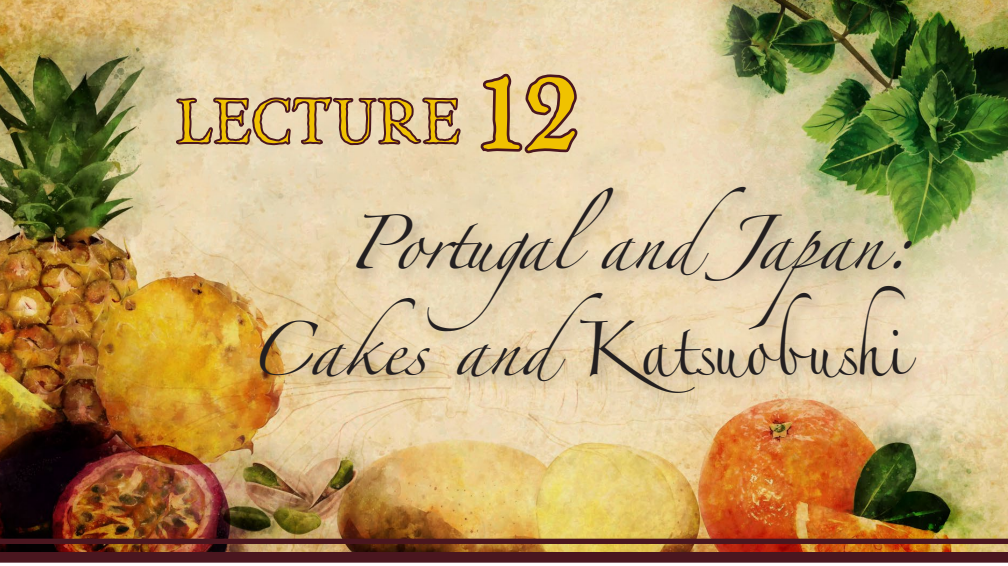
Put the olives in brine, seal, and leave for about 2 to 4 weeks.

Before serving, douse olives in olive oil with fresh herbs, a little garlic, a bay leaf, and pepper and let them marinate for at least a day.

You can serve these olives as a snack with a cold glass of very dry fino sherry and a hunk of Manchego cheese.

These olives are an indispensable part of the tradition of tapas, which are little plates served at a bar with sliced *jamón* (ham)—which is a serious obsession in Spain—and maybe anchovies, shellfish, salt cod, or stewed beans.

†† For this, you will need a small mallet. Wear an apron and cover everything in proximity, because this creates a mess. The juices will squirt out and then turn black.



LECTURE 12

Portugal and Japan: Cakes and Katsuobushi

In this lecture, we will visit imperial Japan in the 16th century, when Portuguese traders and missionaries arrived. There were a fascinating few decades of exchange before the Japanese decided to close their doors to outside interference. That isolation lasted from the 17th century to the mid-19th century. This is known as the Edo period, when the capital was moved from Kyoto to Edo—what is today called Tokyo—and there, classical Japanese cuisine developed. Sushi took its final form here, as did the tea ceremony and many other features of the food culture.

The Exchange between Portugal and Japan

The exchange between Portugal and Japan started with Henry the Navigator, prince of Portugal in the early 15th century. Although he himself never went to sea, he did formally sponsor oceanic exploration, the development of the seaworthy ship called the nao, and new astronomical navigation techniques—all of which were designed to bring profit into the country through trade.

At first, these voyages went down the west coast of Africa, where they picked up ivory, gold, and slaves in exchange for horses and firearms. Eventually, Bartholomeu Dias sailed to the south tip of Africa, opening up a direct sea route to the spices of India and Indonesia via the Indian Ocean. And that's exactly what the Portuguese were after, along with Chinese silks and porcelain, perfumes, and gemstones—any luxury items they could sell to affluent Europeans.

Vasco da Gama made it all the way to India, where the Portuguese set up trading posts in places like Goa in India, then Malacca on the Malay Peninsula, and then Macao in China. From there, they hopped over to Japan.

During these initial encounters, the Portuguese were very impressed with the hospitality of the Japanese and their elegant ways of eating. The Japanese had very refined table manners, whereas the Portuguese were still eating with their hands—forks had not yet become popular there. Here's a reaction to a Japanese meal from the Portuguese explorer and Jesuit missionary João Rodrigues*:

> Far from being excessive and abundant, the banquet is very sober and moderate; each guest eats and drinks soberly as much as he pleases without having to be persuaded. Nor do the guests converse among themselves while eating, but they say only what is necessary in a low voice. Great modesty and tranquility are observed in everything.

This would have struck the priest as very different from a European banquet, where there would have been music, a lot of noise, and plate after plate of food piling up on the tables. Early 17th-century food was extraordinarily lavish, so this meal struck Rodrigues as very somber and elegant. He also said that there was no pomp or splendor involved and that cleanliness was attended to above all else.

Sweets from Portugal

There were a few Portuguese foods that the Japanese found particularly appealing, especially the sweets. One formal recipe introduced by the Portuguese that's still popular today in Japan is *kasutera*, which is a form of the Spanish *pan de Castilla*, a sweet, yellow sponge cake. The Portuguese also made this bread, which came from nearby Castile, and served it with any food in Renaissance cuisine, but the Japanese preferred to pair it with tea. To this day in Japan, there is also still *karumera*, or caramels, and *konpeito*, which is comfits, or candies.

* Rodrigues gives a description of a dish of raw fish cut in small pieces with a tart sauce and a condiment that burns like mustard—probably wasabi.

A few of these early introductions are recorded in a cookbook called the *Nanban ryōrisho*, or *Southern Barbarians' Cookbook* (that's what the Japanese called the Portuguese). One version of a recipe from the cookbook for a very early form of *kasutera* called *kasute boro* is found in *Food and Fantasy in Early Modern Japan*, translated by Eric Rath.

Kasute boro

Ingredients

- ☐ eggs (10)
- ☐ sugar (about 5 cups)
- ☐ all-purpose flour (about 5 cups)

Instructions

Add eggs to sugar and flour and mix together.

Put parchment paper in the bottom of the pan and sprinkle with flour.†

Pour the batter into the pan‡ and bake at 350°F for about 30 to 40 minutes.

What you have in the end is like a fluffy, very spongy pancake that complements tea perfectly. This is sort of an ancestor of pound cake. What's missing is the fat. That would definitely be included in modern Japanese versions, but presumably butter wasn't available in Japan at the time.

kasute boro

† The floured paper on the bottom of the pot prevents it from sticking.

‡ Because the Japanese didn't have ovens at the time, this cake was baked in a pot, with the heat—provided by hot coals—on top and below.

Katsuobushi

A central ingredient in Japanese cuisine is *katsuobushi*, which is a dried skipjack tuna. The shavings are used to make dashi stock, which you've likely tasted in miso soup, though it has uses in other contexts as well. It's as ubiquitous as soy sauce.

A dark, hard wedge of skipjack tuna is shaved on a box fitted with a sharp blade called a *kezuriki*. What you get are translucent, ultrathin, dry shavings of pink fish, which can be eaten directly or used to garnish other foods but most often go into a stock made with kombu seaweed. The former provides the glutamates while the latter provides the iosinate, together providing a burst of umami. Thus, the stock enhances the flavor of whatever it's put in, such as a sauce or egg custard and many classic Japanese dishes.

You can buy *katsuobushi* flakes in any Japanese grocery store, but most often people use an instant dashi powder, which you don't have to strain. But for real traditionalists, the freshly shaved *katsuobushi* flavor is incomparable.

katsuobushi flakes

To make *katsuobushi*, you start with an enormous 40- to 50-pound tuna, which is set on a wooden table. With several specialized knives, the bottom of the fish is opened and a triangle is removed from the belly, the head is chopped from the top of the fish, and all of the organs are removed.

Then, with a 2-pronged device, the dorsal fin is removed. The fillets are then carefully sliced off of the spine and bones, removing as much meat as possible in one clean cut. The fillets are then cut down the middle, leaving 4 long wedges per fish.

The wedges of fish, unsalted, are lowered in a big metal cage into a huge vat of boiling water in which the fish bones had been steeped. It was like a spa-size court bouillon. Then, the wedges are arranged on a large wooden slatted frame and smoked over a pit that goes down several meters, at the bottom of which is a gentle oak fire.

The master touches each one until it feels right. Next, each piece is picked clean of bones with large metal tweezers and then smeared with a paste of raw and cooked tuna to fill in the gaps in the flesh—a meticulous procedure.

Then, the wedges are smoked again and then allowed to rest. This process is repeated for a few months, at the end of which the wedges are sanded smooth. Lastly, when quite hard, they are inoculated with mold[§] and put in wooden buckets in a special humidified room. The mold is *Aspergillus glaucus*, not *koji* (*Aspergillus oryzae*), which is used to make sake and miso.

The *katsuobushi* are taken outside and then put back in the room each day, and the color shifts from greenish to blue and finally to dull grey. The purpose is to draw moisture from the center to the exterior, where it will evaporate. This is *hongare katsuobushi*, the most deeply flavored, but there are also types that have no mold, called *arabushi*.

§ The idea of consuming mold shouldn't seem strange; the white powdery exterior of brie or naturally fermented salami is mold.

The whole process takes six to nine months! You can tell they're done when the *katsuobushi* make a high-pitched clacking sound when knocked together. These hard-as-wood blocks are shaved at home or in a restaurant on the *kezuriki*. The result is fine, evanescent wisps of fish that dance on top of a hot dish when dropped down as a garnish.

Normally, *katsuobushi* go into a dashi stock. If you add miso paste to the following recipe, it makes miso soup.

Dashi Stock

Ingredients

- ☐ *katsuobushi*
- ☐ kombu seaweed

Instructions

Simmer kombu in water.

Add shaved *katsuobushi* and simmer until it sinks to the bottom, about 5 minutes.

Strain through a coffee filter or strainer.

The Aesthetic of Japanese Food

The overall aesthetic of Japanese food today is very different than it was in the past century, when so many influences came from the outside. But you can still find an appreciation for traditional *washoku*, which is the local historic cuisine. It's not necessarily what Japanese people eat every day today; in fact, they like curry rice and pizza. But this traditional cooking is more or less unchanged from the past.

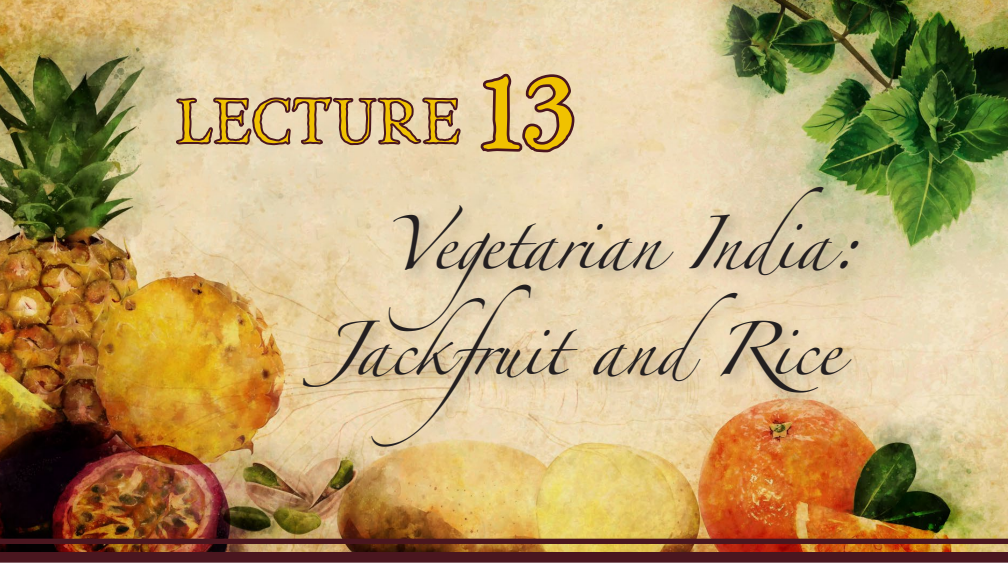
First, a traditional meal always includes rice—even breakfast. The protein is almost always fish; meat eating was something that was introduced from the West. And there are usually some kind of pickles, though they're often quite different from the pickles that are familiar to people in the West. In Japan, they ferment them in a bed of rice bran, called *nuka*, which gives them a salty, not-quite-so-sour flavor but a magnificent texture that's both springy and crunchy.


wakame

Seaweed plays a very large role, not only the nori that goes on the outside of rolled sushi, but wakame and *hijiki* and other forms treated as vegetables. Mushrooms are also highly appreciated, including shiitake, enoki, and especially matsutake.

In a formal meal, there is often a range of dishes, each cooked in a different manner—such as a steamed dish, a fried dish, a simmered dish, etc. And as a rule, the quality of the ingredients is the most important thing, so their natural flavor and aroma is preserved and accentuated rather than hidden with the cooking method.

Japanese cooking is very simple and straightforward, but the labor that goes into the preparation—and especially the presentation—is phenomenally subtle and evocative. It may recall a particular season, or time of life, or even an emotion. It's a poetic approach to food.



LECTURE 13

Vegetarian India: Jackfruit and Rice

In this lecture, we're going to cook a number of recipes from a unique and vibrant culinary tradition. We are traveling to the southwest of India in what is today the state of Karnataka but was the tiny kingdom of Kallahalli in the early 16th century. Unlike perhaps anywhere else examined in this course, in this culture, it was customary for men of social standing to cook for guests on important occasions. And the cookbook for this lecture, the *Soopa shastra*, was commissioned by Mangarasa III, the local magnate of this area.

Ethical Vegetarianism

The *Soopa shastra* was written on palm-leaf paper in metrical verse of 358 stanzas in the classical Kannada language, which had a rich tradition of poetry. Remarkably, it's not a gastronomic treatise or book of connoisseurship, which might be expected from a literate, elite ruler, but an actual cookbook with very workable recipes.

The sense one gets from the range of ingredients and techniques in the book is that it is not filled with exotic imports or rare, expensive delicacies (which might also be expected from a royal court), but rather uses a limited range of local ingredients employed to their best advantage in fairly simple recipes.

A good number of the recipes also insist that they will be very tasty or better than what you might be accustomed to. In other words, they are straightforward but nonetheless sophisticated recipes in their own way.

It may be that this court was simply far afield from the trade routes that would have certainly carried exotic spices across the northern part of India from East Asia to Europe, or it may be that the culture made a conscious decision to use whatever—rather humble—ingredients were on hand, such as eggplant, mango, plantain, rice, wheat, beans, and jackfruit. Such ingredients may seem a little exotic to us, but they are indeed all indigenous.


jackfruit

Note that these are all fruits, vegetables, and grains. The cookbook is indeed vegetarian and hails from one of India's oldest religious traditions, the Jains,* who embraced the most rigorous and logically consistent form of the ancient concept of ahimsa, or nonviolence. Although it is believed that the religion extends back in history indefinitely, it took its current form under the influence of Mahavira, who lived in about 500 BC, contemporaneous with Buddha.

At this time, India had various indigenous populations that were subjugated by the arrival of Indo-European people (Aryans), whose relatives were the Persians in what is today Iran and the Hittites in what is now Turkey, as well as with the Greeks, Latin peoples, and Celts.

Common to many of these Indo-European people was the sacrifice of cattle. The Greeks had enormous public barbecues that all citizens were expected to enjoy. When the Aryans arrived, they had lighter skin than the local population, and this, as well as their profession as warriors and priests, eventually developed into distinct castes based on profession.

In other words, the Brahmin priests and ruling elites were kept permanently segregated from manual laborers and, indeed, all other professions in a hierarchical range of castes that were inviolable. You couldn't eat with people from a lower caste or even be served food by them. And if you married someone of a lower caste, you were immediately put into that caste. There was no social mobility. These were not classes based on wealth, so it was impossible to make a fortune and then rise into a higher caste. Their ranks were fixed.

There are several theories of how the diet of these people and their religion of Hinduism changed. One theory posits that it was the advent of Buddhism and its vegetarian principles that influenced Hindu vegetarianism.

* The word *Jain* comes from the Sanskrit word *jina*, which means "victor," referring to conquering one's own inclinations toward malice.

Whatever the details of how it came to be, this was the context of the development of Jain thought. Buddhism ultimately spread to much of the rest of East Asia, while it mostly died out in India, and apart from monks, it is often not vegetarian. Hinduism does remain vegetarian in much of the south, but for many Hindus, fish and even forms of meat other than beef are OK. The only religion that keeps strictly vegetarian for all followers is Jainism.

Moreover, Jainism takes the principle of nonviolence to the most logically consistent practice. Since killing everything is wrong, no living, sentient being may be harmed for the benefit of humans. Even plants that sprout into multiple lives—things like onions and root vegetables as well as mushrooms—are not acceptable to kill.

Fermented foods, because they contain millions of microbes that would be destroyed by ingestion, are not permissible, and that includes risen bread and all forms of alcohol. It is not, however, a vegan diet, because an egg can be eaten without harming a chicken, and milk can be consumed without harming a cow. Honey, on the other hand, does destroy the hive and harm the bees. A seed from a plant doesn't destroy the life of the plant, nor does a fruit.

Obviously, we would perish without any food, so the idea is to cause the least amount of violence to other life-forms. The diet is strictest for those who take religious vows; monks cover their mouths so as not to accidentally ingest insects and sweep the floor with a broom before they step. There is also a strong ascetic tradition in Jainism, with monks taking vows of chastity, poverty, intense fasting (*upavasa*), and physical mortification.

This is the most rigorous form of practice, and what might be surprising to modern Jains is that this cookbook does include onions and fermented foods like yogurt. Like all religions, there were probably different degrees of devotion and variations in practice from place to place and over time.

Recipes from the *Soopa shastra*

Composed in 1508, the *Soopa shastra* is contemporaneous with the Renaissance cookbooks in Europe and with the mixing of European and New World cuisines in the early 16th century, as well as the massive movement of ingredients and people around the world in the wake of Christopher Columbus. But, as in cookbooks composed everywhere in the early 16th century, there's no evidence of transcontinental movement of food yet.

We are going to cook some relatively simple recipes that feature ingredients that are not very difficult to find and techniques that may be surprising but are actually quite easy. The main way of eating would be with your hands, so think of that when you're trying to achieve a final consistency in these dishes. There is one soup that requires a spoon, but otherwise the food should be thick enough to eat with your fingers or scoop up with bread.

To start, let's cook what is called a stuffed cake. It's really a kind of fried bread, not a sweet cake, with a texture that's chewy and was probably used much like other flatbreads to soak up juices and bring food to the mouth. Mangarasa says they are delicious hot or cold.

Stuffed Cake

Ingredients

- ☐ flour†
- ☐ gram dal, or split beans
- ☐ sugar or jaggery‡
- ☐ cardamom powder
- ☐ ghee

† The recipe starts with washing and drying wheat and then grinding it finely. You can do that if you have a small hand mill, but starting with ground flour is also fine.

‡ Jaggery is unrefined, evaporated cane juice that has a much more complex flavor than white sugar.

Instructions

Add water to flour and form into dough.

Knead for a few minutes, intensely pressing on the dough so that chains of gluten proteins form.§

Roll the dough into small balls. Closely wrap the balls of dough in a clean cloth to keep them from rising.

Boil some dal, or beans, until soft; then, drain and add the jaggery and cardamom.

Using a rolling pin or your fingers, roll out the dough balls until flat and add bean mixture to the center.

Fold edges over the beans and roll out again to flatten.

Fry flat breads in ghee on both sides in a hot pan.

stuffed cake

§ This will give the bread a chewy texture.

Next up is an exquisite sour rice dish. Mangarasa says this dish is "fit for a royal treat, giving a pleasant aroma and pungent taste." It does indeed provide a very refreshing foil for the other dishes.

Tamarind Rice

Ingredients

- ☐ tamarind¶
- ☐ basmati rice
- ☐ coconut oil
- ☐ asafetida**
- ☐ black gram (toasted chickpea flour)
- ☐ ginger powder
- ☐ salt

Instructions

Crack open tamarind pods and break into pieces.

Pour boiling water over tamarind and let it soak.

Rinse rice and then bring it to a boil in a pot filled with water.††

Heat coconut oil and add asafetida.

Crush tamarind; then, remove seeds and pulp from tamarind water.

Add tamarind water, black gram, ginger powder, and salt to rice and mix well.

Cover, lower heat, and simmer rice for about 20 minutes.

¶ The tamarind juice offers a fruity, sour flavor. Sometimes it comes in blocks or even as syrup, either of which will work if you don't want to take the time to extract the juice.

** This is a funky-smelling latex from a plant that's distantly related to celery, but when it's cooked, it takes on a very mild oniony flavor. In most Indian shops, it's called hing.

†† The water should be barely one finger's width above the level of the rice.

This next recipe begins with a plantain, which is a kind of starchy banana that can be eaten underripe (green) or ripe (yellow with brown spots). The recipe doesn't explicitly specify which to use, but it does hint that it should be a ripe plantain, and it's tastier this way.


plantain curry

Plantain Curry

Ingredients

- ☐ plantain
- ☐ ghee (Indian clarified butter)
- ☐ onion
- ☐ fresh ginger
- ☐ cilantro
- ☐ sesame seeds
- ☐ pepper
- ☐ grated coconut‡‡
- ☐ dried fenugreek
- ☐ dried turmeric
- ☐ dried cumin

Instructions

Peel and slice plantain, chop onion, and peel and slice ginger.

Heat ghee in a pan; then, add plantain, onion, and ginger.

Add chopped cilantro and season with sesame seeds, pepper, and grated coconut.

Add fenugreek, turmeric, and cumin.

Cook until soft.

‡‡ Either fresh or dried coconut works; just don't use sweetened coconut.

Last is this remarkably intriguing recipe that uses fresh jackfruit. Buy one if you can afford it and have a lot of people to feed. It's actually the largest fruit on earth that grows on a tree and can weigh 100 pounds. Buy a smaller one if you can or buy pieces that have already been cut up. Resist using canned jackfruit, though.

Jackfruit Soup

Ingredients

- ☐ jackfruit
- ☐ onion
- ☐ dry ginger
- ☐ cumin seeds
- ☐ turmeric powder
- ☐ rice flour
- ☐ ghee
- ☐ mustard seeds
- ☐ yogurt[§§]

Instructions

Peel the skin and chop up the flesh of the jackfruit (seeds and all).

Boil jackfruit until tender, which means you can prick it gently with a fork.

Mix together chopped onion, ginger, turmeric, cumin, and a slurry of rice flour.

Heat ghee in a pan and toast mustard seeds.

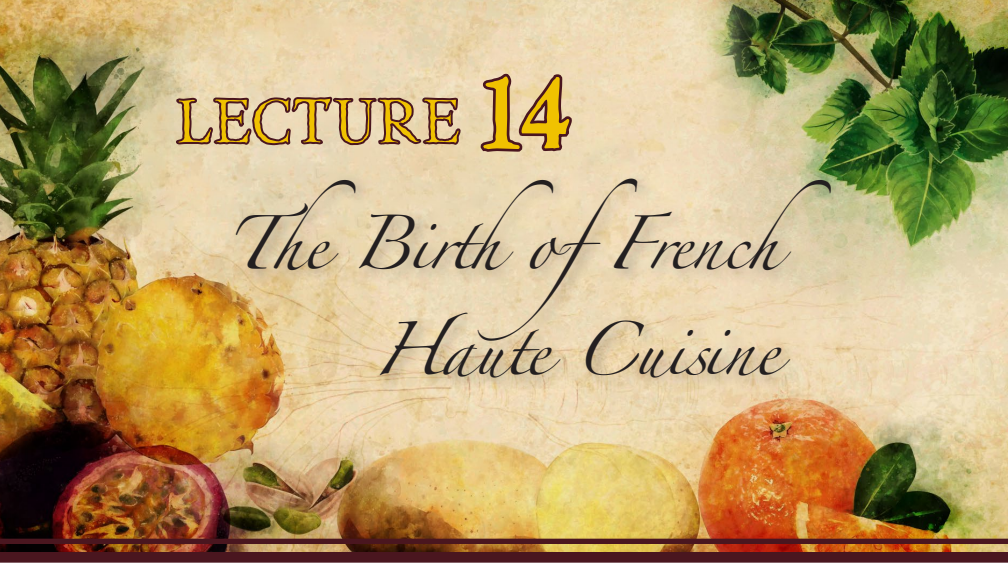
Add onion mix and yogurt to jackfruit and boil[¶¶] until consistency is soup-like.

Garnish with mustard seeds.

§§ Use an entire large container of full-fat yogurt.

¶¶ Boiling causes the yogurt to break, and the liquid forms a pleasant sour soup.

When you put all of these dishes together, you'll see that the flavors are complementary: The neutral, chewy bread contrasts with the sour rice, which cuts through the richness of the soup, which then balances off the sweetness of the plantain. These dishes are great examples of late medieval Indian Jain cuisine.



LECTURE 14

The Birth of French Haute Cuisine

In every account of the birth of French haute cuisine, a pivotal figure is said to chart the course of the future greatness of French dining: François-Pierre de La Varenne. Even if every aspect of classical cooking had not yet come into full flower, the basic flavor combinations and culinary logic of the French kitchen emerged in the 1650s with his pivotal cookbook, *Le cuisinier François*.

Innovations of La Varenne

A number of innovations are credited to La Varenne, but perhaps the most important of these is the roux: a combination of fat and flour used to thicken a sauce (though his included lard rather than butter). This replaced the more common bread-crumb thickener of the Middle Ages. In addition, spices and sugar were generally banished to the end of the meal, where they remain to this day, rather than liberally sprinkled on every dish, as they would have been in preceding centuries.

Above all else, the idea that food should taste of itself comes to the fore—whereas before, most dishes included vivacious contrasts in flavor, an interplay of sweet and sour and savory and spicy that would dance in counterpoint across the palate. In contrast, classical French cuisine harmonizes flavors. The sauce is made of an extract or essence of the main ingredient; it is merely complemented by garnishes that don't detract from the main flavor in each dish.

This requires a series of stocks on hand that serve as the fond, or base, from which other sauces can be made. The idea is that beef should have a sauce based on beef stock, veal on veal stock, chicken on chicken, etc. Spices, if present at all, are replaced with a bouquet garni* of herbs that is removed before assembling the dish. In addition, fat-based sauces replace the spicy medieval sauces. Many classics, such as hollandaise, beurre blanc, béarnaise, mayonnaise, and béchamel, were invented in the classical period of French gastronomy.

* La Varenne is often erroneously credited with inventing the bouquet garni; it existed in the late Middle Ages, too.


Louis XIV

When considering this classical period, think of the court of Louis XIV at Versailles; the balanced, symmetrical gardens of André Le Nôtre, with their finely clipped hedges; the graceful classical statues; and even the plays of Pierre Corneille and Jean Racine, which reintroduced the ancient Aristotelian rules about the structure and form of dramatic performance. These are called the classical unities: There should be one principal action, and it should take place in one day and occur in one location.

The same happens in the philosophy of René Descartes: In order to arrive at truth, a careful set of logical rules should be followed in every inquiry. This methodological approach reigns in science as well.

In this period, all the arts were classical not only because they looked back to antiquity for inspiration, but because they were fundamentally rulemaking in their approach to artistic expression. The philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche described this approach as Apollonian, prizing above all else reason and order.

La Varenne and the chefs that followed him in the latter 17th century were most interested in making rules governing taste: how ingredients should be

combined and how "classical" recipes should be made. And once perfection or truth was achieved, the rules must be adhered to without experimentation, whim, or playfulness. To some extent, the tendency to strictly define French recipes likely has its roots here.

The order of courses also begins to be codified. So, rather than a jumble of every sort of dish in multiple courses, you have the most subtly flavored foods emerge first, and you gradually build toward stronger and stronger flavors—and only at the end do you find sweetness and perhaps some spice.

These courses might be punctuated in various ways, perhaps by an appetite stimulant to start or by amuse-bouches to titillate between courses or even to refresh the palate. But making rules about the order of courses that is so ingrained in the way of serving food in the Western tradition begins here.

Starting a meal with ice cream or ending it with soup seems completely illogical to us—as illogical as putting cinnamon and sugar on your chicken or serving fish with a meat-based sauce. In other words, even though Westerners might not be eating French food per se, these various rules have become ingrained in Western dining, and they stand in stark contrast to the rest of the world, where there are no such rules.

All these elements gradually emerge in La Varenne's cookbook but also in the cookbooks of authors that follow, including François Massialot, the enigmatically named L. S. R., and then Menon in the 18th century. And to a great extent, one can trace this influence directly through to the early 20th century with Auguste Escoffier.

In the end, we should consider La Varenne a transitional figure. After all, the cookbook authors who followed him made fun of all the backward dishes he included, such as turkey with raspberries and larks in hippocras (a medieval spiced, sweet wine). There are elements of modernity in La Varenne's cookbook, and some of the dishes he made survive to this day in classical haute cuisine.

Bouillon

Let's start off as any classical French chef would, with a good bouillon. In fact, it's the first recipe in La Varenne's book, and it's made of several different kinds of meat, which makes it quite different from what we would consider a stock (such as beef or chicken). Mixing all these meats results in a much greater depth of flavor. The bouillon will later become the basis for other recipes.

Bouillon

Ingredients

- ☐ beef shank
- ☐ lamb neck bones†
- ☐ chicken, whole or parts
- ☐ round of beef
- ☐ parsley
- ☐ chives
- ☐ thyme
- ☐ clove
- ☐ salt

Instructions

Add meats into a large pot of water.

Tie together a bouquet of parsley, chives, and thyme and add to pot along with cloves and salt.

Cook gently for at least 6 to 8 hours (preferably 12 to 24 hours‡), skimming the top so the bouillon is clear.

Strain when it is done.

† You can use mutton instead if you can find it.

‡ La Varenne's instructions say to keep hot water nearby to top off the pot.

Pottage of Chicken with Asparagus Garnish

Next, we're going to make a pottage—or thick soup—of chickens garnished with asparagus.

Pottage of Chicken with Asparagus Garnish

Ingredients

- ☐ whole chicken
- ☐ bard§ or bacon
- ☐ bouillon
- ☐ salt
- ☐ pepper
- ☐ bread
- ☐ asparagus
- ☐ mushroom
- ☐ cockscombs or giblets
- ☐ pistachios
- ☐ citron

Instructions

Truss the chicken and then blanch¶ in boiling water.

Pour off water and place bacon on top of chicken.

Fill pot with bouillon and season with salt and pepper.

Peel the asparagus and then cook in a pan with butter.

Cook mushrooms in butter.

Cut some chicken and bacon and place on top of bread; then, add bouillon.

Garnish with asparagus, mushrooms, citron,** and pistachios.

§ a slice of pork fat

¶ Blanching removes any of the impurities; it's still a common practice in Chinese cuisine.

** It's not clear whether La Varenne means candied citron or just slices of lemon to decorate the plate, but the latter seems more in keeping with the overall style.

Garnishes are a kind of obsession in 17th-century cooking, where the final elegant look of the dish is just as important as the taste. It's decoration for its own sake. Cockscombs—the little squiggly things on the head of a chicken—are relatively tasteless, but they're beautiful. The pistachios and citron are also just for decoration.

pottage of chicken with asparagus garnish

Artichoke Hearts

One of the vegetables that came into fashion in the French Renaissance was the artichoke. La Varenne offered several recipes for them, but the recipe that seems to have the greatest legacy in classic French cuisine and is also the most elegant includes just the heart.

Artichoke Hearts

Ingredients

- ☐ artichokes
- ☐ bouillon (or water)
- ☐ butter
- ☐ salt
- ☐ vinegar
- ☐ nutmeg
- ☐ egg yolk

Instructions

Cut off the base of the artichokes and rub the bottoms with lemon juice.

Cut off all the leaves of the artichokes, including bottom leaves.

Boil artichokes in bouillon or water; then, take them out of the liquid and remove the choke.

Make a sauce for the artichokes by melting butter in a pan with vinegar and nutmeg and then whisking in an egg yolk to thicken.††

artichoke hearts

Soft Cakes without Cheese

This recipe actually comes from another book, called *The French Pastry Chef*, which is often attributed to La Varenne, but there's no direct evidence that he wrote it. In any case, it offers what seem to be some very classic recipes.

†† This makes a kind of hollandaise sauce.

Before this, sweet dishes would have been spread throughout the meal, including cakes. In the middle of the 17th century, sweet dishes have been banished there. But this isn't a sweet cake—in fact, there's no sugar in it! It's actually salty. There's no indication that this must be a dessert, and the fact that the recipe appears in a section that has cakes with cheese that aren't sweet suggests that it's just eaten during the meal. And if this is the case, then there's nothing really very modern about it.

Soft Cakes without Cheese

Ingredients

- ☐ flour (about 1 ½ pounds)
- ☐ unsalted butter (about 1 pound)
- ☐ cream (about 1 ½ pints)
- ☐ salt
- ☐ eggs

Instructions

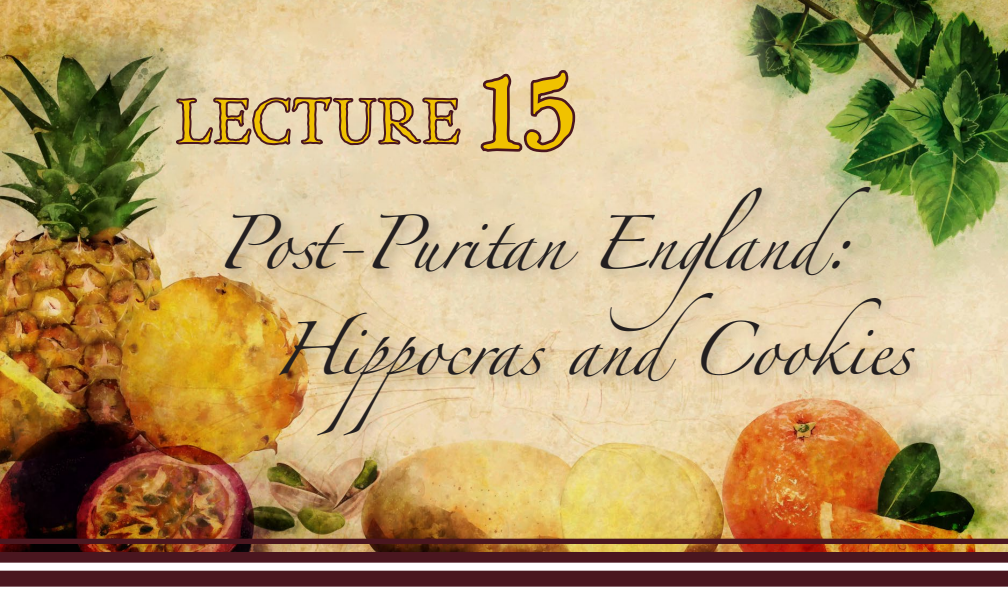
Mix together flour, butter, cream, salt, and eggs to form a firm dough.

Drop onto buttered parchment paper.

Brush the tops with egg yolk.

Bake at 325°F until golden brown.

soft cakes without cheese



LECTURE 15

Post-Puritan England: Hippocras and Cookies

This lecture features a rather different type of cookbook that originated in England in the latter 17th century. It is a manuscript with some of the recipes attributed to a woman named Lettice Pudsey, who owned the book for some time, but also a number of other hands—perhaps as many as 14! The bound book appears to have been owned and added to by various people; it was even commented on by one of them by striking out recipes and writing "good for nothing!" Today, it's owned by the Folger Shakespeare Library in Washington DC, along with many other manuscript recipe books of this era.

Printed versus Manuscript Cookbooks

Unlike printed cookbooks, we can be more confident that people actually used a manuscript recipe book to cook from, partly because they took the effort to copy down the recipes and partly because there are stains in the book from cooking. With printed cookbooks, sometimes people buy them, and even read them, but never use them.

Historians have often assumed that the women who owned these cookbooks never did the cooking themselves but rather read the recipes and then instructed their servants to do the actual cooking. People may have gotten this impression from watching too much *Downton Abbey*, when there was a rigid separation of the aristocracy from their household staff in the 19th and early 20th centuries. But the women who owned these manuscript cookbooks in the 17th century likely cooked from them. The recipes are a little too difficult to make without reading them as you go along.

It's not unlike today, when people might spend time making something by hand, sharing it with their friends and neighbors, and getting praise for their efforts. Women in the past often even sent their friends things they made as presents. Being homemade carried more personal value than something store-bought.

There are many times through history that people are less interested in expensive or rare gifts and more in crafts that are made by hand and show personal effort. And that's likely what was going on with Pudsey's recipes. These are foodstuffs she wanted to be known for, earning the esteem of her peers and gaining social capital from her skills.

The recipes in Pudsey's manuscript are not only culinary but medicinal as well. This suggests that although there were pharmacies where you could buy drugs, female heads of households often concocted remedies themselves,

either because they were in rural places without access to apothecaries or because they got personal satisfaction from curing ailments themselves. Some women dabbled with distillation, sometimes even with alchemical recipes that might require an alembic still or other equipment. Lettice had her own still, because it's called for in making a plague water. The current interest in home brewing and distillation is similar to what was going on in the 17th century.

Pudsey's recipes are not necessarily original; in fact, sometimes they're copied directly out of printed sources. At the time, people borrowed recipes freely from each other without attribution, which we would consider plagiarism today. But in the case of manuscript cookbooks, they're more like notebooks. The recipes were written down because the owners of them wanted to remember them and perhaps pass them down to their children and future generations. This means that the recipes inside might span several decades and reflect very different styles and aesthetic sensibilities. In that respect, these manuscripts are living testimonies of people's taste preferences and lived experience in the kitchen.

Furthermore, if we look closely at some of the recipes, we can get a sense of what the kitchen looked like and where it was. For example, if a book has directions for preserving meat, especially if killing animals is involved, you can be fairly certain it's a rural household—though not always, as you could purchase live animals in many cities. But Pudsey's manuscript specifically has directions for feeding chickens, geese, and ducks, so Lettice likely had a pen or pond to keep them. There are also many recipes for preserves, which suggests that she had fruit trees and probably a fair amount of space to keep jars.

Hippocras

Hippocras is a kind of spiced wine—usually white—that goes back several centuries. There's an excellent recipe in Taillevent's *Le viandier*, but most late medieval cookbooks have one. They usually contain sugar, cinnamon, ginger, and grains of paradise (which is melegueta pepper from the west coast of Africa) and sometimes nutmeg and galangal (which is a thick root similar to ginger but a little tougher and spicier). Some contain cloves, spikenard, or long pepper. Hippocras is not exactly the pumpkin spice we use today, but it's similar, if a little spicier.

Hippocras isn't served hot and thus is not mulled wine. The broken spices are steeped in the wine, often overnight, and then the wine is filtered through a sleeve-shaped bag, the invention of which was attributed to Hippocrates—hence the name. A paper coffee filter over a strainer works fine.

Pudsey's recipe might seem old-fashioned, but in fact, it's cutting-edge in that it's more of a milk punch than a traditional hippocras.

Hippocras

Ingredients

- ☐ white wine (3 pints)
- ☐ sack* (1 pint)
- ☐ sugar (1 to 4 cups)†
- ☐ sliced nutmeg (¼ ounce)
- ☐ cinnamon sticks (¾ ounce)
- ☐ sliced dried ginger (½ ounce)
- ☐ grains of paradise (1⁄16 ounce)
- ☐ coriander seeds (1⁄16 ounce)
- ☐ cloves (a few cloves, all bruised)
- ☐ milk (½ pint)

Instructions

Add sherry and all of the spices to the wine and let it sit in a jug for 12 hours.

Then, add hot milk‡ and let it stand for at least 1 hour.

Strain through a jelly bag or a fine mesh or sieve to get a clear liquid.

If you're in the mood to experiment, try this same recipe with red wine; it strips out the color and makes the drink light pink. It also removes many of the tannins, so you get a much softer, more drinkable, much more aromatic wine.

* sherry

† 4 cups to make the authentic version, but 1 cup makes the drink plenty sweet

‡ The milk curdles and gathers all the solids into the curds.

Boiled Capon in White Broth

The flavor of this recipe is astounding, and the technique is equally surprising.

Boiled Capon in White Broth

Ingredients

- ☐ capon or chicken§
- ☐ mace
- ☐ currants
- ☐ prunes
- ☐ raw whole almonds
- ☐ dried orange peels

Instructions

Boil the chicken whole; then, remove it and place in another pot.

Add equal parts chicken broth and white wine and boil together with mace.

Blanch almonds (or soak overnight); then, drain and rub off the brown skins.

Crush¶ almonds and pour hot broth over them, let soak briefly, and then strain and add liquid** to pot with chicken.

Lay the fruits on top of the chicken.

Because this recipe is for capon in broth, serve it in a bowl like a soup. The capon can either be sliced or pulled apart with a fork and portioned into the bowls.

§ preferably a large one rather than a young spring chicken

¶ If you don't have a mortar and pestle, you can use a blender, but try not to liquefy the almonds completely.

** This is a light, milky, almond-flavored stock—almond milk. This procedure was very common in medieval and early modern households and was originally intended to be a substitute for dairy milk during Lent and days of fasting.

Shrewsberry Cakes

This is a recipe for very simple but delicious cookies or biscuits, rather than what we would today call cakes. These would normally be served in a banqueting course outside or in a special banqueting house in the garden as a kind of dessert. They go very nicely with the hippocras.

shrewsberry cakes and hippocras

Shrewsberry Cakes

Ingredients

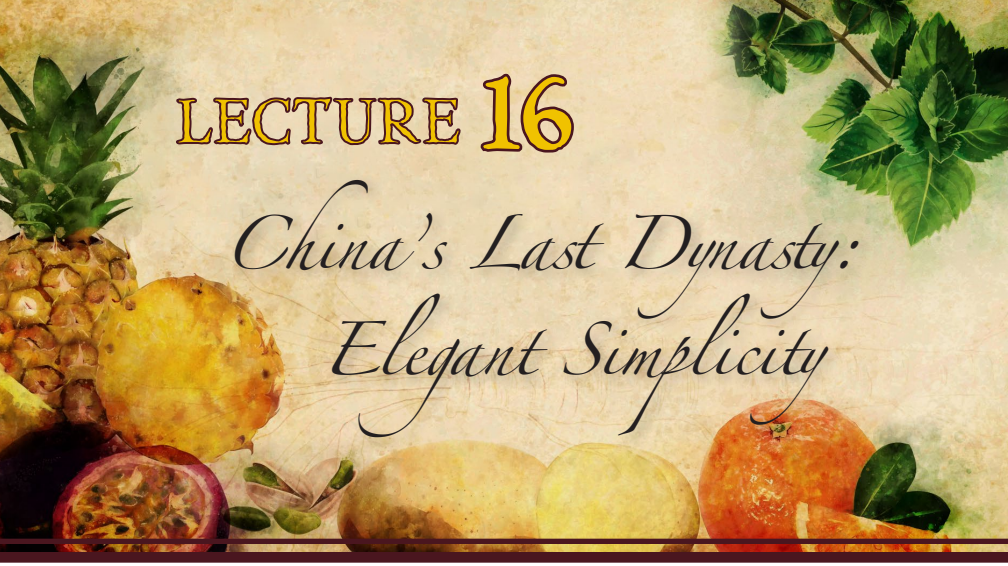
- ☐ flour (about 4½ cups)
- ☐ sugar (about 4½ cups)
- ☐ egg (1)
- ☐ cloves
- ☐ mace
- ☐ cinnamon
- ☐ butter (¼ cup)
- ☐ rosewater (a single drop)

Instructions

Combine flour, sugar, and butter; then, add egg, spices, butter, and rosewater to form the dough.

Roll the dough very thin and cut cookies into desired shapes.

Prick them and bake on parchment paper at 350°F until crisp.



LECTURE 16

China's Last Dynasty: Elegant Simplicity

Chinese cuisine is not only technically very different from cooking in the West, but the flavor combinations are completely different. While European cooking by the 18th century had mostly banished sweetness to the end of the meal, Chinese chefs use sugar in main courses. They also use spices that had gone out of fashion in the West. Most importantly, while European cooking depended on seasonings and stocks that were made from the main ingredient and were intended to harmonize with it, Chinese cooking had no qualms about mixing completely different categories of food in one dish.

Opposing Gastronomic Approaches

There are two fundamentally opposed approaches to gastronomy that are evident in various periods through history. In general, cuisines, groups, or sometimes even individuals tend to lean toward an entire set of values that strive toward increasing either complexity or simplicity.

Of course, there are exceptions, but certain periods do tend to favor exotic and expensive ingredients, complex recipes that require some intellectual discernment, and magnificent displays of food that show off wealth. This is food that is meant to be thought about as much as tasted, so naturally there is focus on presentation, colors, varied textures, and even poetic associations with food meant to titillate diners' imaginations.

These cuisines tend to be difficult to get—and that's exactly the point. They are often meant to keep out social climbers and upstarts who have the money to imitate their superiors, so these complex cuisines try to maintain a distance by creating evermore fantastic and improbable dishes. Think of the era of so-called molecular gastronomy in the late 20th and early 21st centuries.


dish made using molecular gastronomy

In contrast, there are periods that react to the "high art" of expensive restaurants, court cuisine, or whatever the elites are doing, and they appreciate handcrafted, or traditional recipes, with ingredients that are local and perhaps sustainable. But most importantly, such dishes are relatively simple ones that come from specific places, and connoisseurship is less a matter of extravagance than expressions of authenticity. The food can even be inexpensive, as long as it's made with care and respect.

This approach tends to be more populist, too, and is often an explicit rejection of the profligacy of the preceding period. It may also focus on health, sustainability, and animal welfare. The West is in a period like this now. That's not to say there's no extravagance and waste or that high-end, modernist cooking goes away, but the general trend is more toward what we might call artisanal or craft—and that goes for beer, cheese, authentic barbecue, banh mi, etc.

The place and time this lecture focuses on are a perfect illustration of this tension between extravagance and simplicity—complexity and letting superior ingredients stand out—and between exotic and local. This is 18th-century China in the Qing dynasty, specifically during the reign of the Qianlong emperor.

Qing Dynasty Extravagancy

The Qing dynasty was founded in the 17th century through conquest by people who were ethnically Manchu, which means that they came from a region in the northeast of what is today China and spoke a different language than the majority of Han Chinese. It appears they felt like outsiders and consciously went out of their way to win the support of the majority population by supporting traditional Chinese culture, meaning poetry, painting, gardens, cooking, and even traditional Buddhist religious practices and Confucian organization in statecraft.

This was also a multiethnic empire that included not only Han Chinese and Manchus but Mongolians, Tibetans, and an array of other ethnicities. So the promotion of the arts appears to have been an intentional way to make people feel like part of a common culture. The Qianlong emperor commissioned a collection of classic Chinese literature, philosophy, and history, although admittedly he did have anything critical of his dynasty censored.

China was at the time the largest, most prosperous, and most populous empire on earth. The Middle Kingdom traded with the West but really didn't want much from Europeans. They were happy to sell them silk, porcelain, and tea for silver but were not interested in the new manufactured goods the Europeans had to offer. They even limited the places Westerners could trade to a few ports. This meant that the culture of China, although wealthy and vibrant, was largely unaffected by the scientific and social changes that were happening elsewhere. They were isolationist.

The emperor himself was quite a connoisseur of painting, poetry, and cooking. Perhaps he was trying to impress the people at court with his appreciation of Chinese culture, so naturally he threw extravagant banquets. He set up a whole second kitchen staff just to serve these feasts and sacrificial rites. He had several palaces, but the primary residence was indeed the Forbidden City in Beijing that housed the entire court of several thousand people in an enormous complex of buildings. And all of these people had to be entertained and fed.

During his reign, exotic delicacies like shark's fin, bird's nest, and sea cucumbers come into vogue. Accounts of palace meals are consistent in describing the incredible profligacy of the emperor's table, and we can safely surmise that this culinary aesthetic spread down the ranks through the court to wealthy merchants, officials in outlying provinces, and everyone who wanted to eat something that approximated the extravagant tables of the emperor—except for one important person in this period, Yuan Mei, whose cookbook is the focus of this lecture.


bird's nest soup

Yuan Mei

The great Qing dynasty poet Yuan Mei, who lived from 1716 to 1798, was an almost exact contemporary of the emperor. But unlike the emperor, Yuan was turned off by the extravagant waste of court life and even the way the food was made up of so many jumbled-up and, in his opinion, tasteless dishes that ruined the ingredients.

At age 32, Yuan bought a garden where he could focus on his poetry and on gastronomy. He didn't cook himself but appears to have traveled widely and tasted many dishes and hired cooks whom he could personally instruct. One of these, named Wang Xiaoyu, was his personal chef for a decade. They appear to have been gastronomic soul mates, as the chef believed that the quality of ingredients—treating them with respect so that their natural flavors stand out—is far more important than expense or rarity.

Having honed his aesthetic sensibilities, traveling, and contemplating cooking in his garden for 40 years, Yuan decided to write a cookbook, which is a classic of Chinese gastronomy called *Suiyuan shidan*, or *Recipes from the Garden of Contentment*. It is to a great extent a reaction to the elite dining of the court, because it is relatively simple, homey, and traditional, and most importantly, it doesn't mess with the natural state of the ingredients but highlights them.

Yuan seems fascinated by technical precision—cooking foods just to the right point—as well as choosing the ingredients in season and keeping the kitchen clean. But like other great gastronomic writers, for Yuan, the most important thing is years of tasting experience, travel, and knowing where to find the best-quality products. Gastronomy and food writing in general are as much about recording taste memories and experiences as they are knowing about food, just as it is with poetry.

Pork Tenderloin in Shrimp Broth

The key in Chinese cuisine is accentuating each ingredient so that each can stand out without one overpowering the others, but it doesn't mean sticking to one large slab of meat with a sauce on it. Food is usually finely cut up and then treated with a technique that will bring out its natural flavor, texture, and aromas.

The technique is called velveting. Essentially, you take a very delicate protein, cut it very thin, and then dust it with starch. This recipe is for pork tenderloin.

Pork Tenderloin in Shrimp Broth

Ingredients

- ☐ pork
- ☐ salt
- ☐ white pepper
- ☐ rice starch*
- ☐ soy sauce
- ☐ Shaoxing rice wine (*jiu*)
- ☐ ginger juice†
- ☐ shrimp shells‡
- ☐ green onion
- ☐ salt
- ☐ shiitake mushrooms (dried or fresh)
- ☐ laver§

* You can use potato or arrowroot, but rice starch would be more fitting for this time. It's labeled "rice flour" in Asian groceries, but the texture is very chalky and starchy—not like flour at all. Don't use a generic Western rice flour, but you can use tapioca starch.

† You make this by grating ginger and squeezing the juice out.

‡ with the heads on if you can find this

§ red algae, a kind of seaweed

Instructions

Thinly slice pork tenderloin across the grain, removing any sinews or silver skin.

Dust pork with salt, white pepper, and rice starch or marinate it in soy sauce, rice wine, ginger juice, and rice starch. (If you choose to make the marinade, let the pork slices sit in it for about 20 minutes.)

Add shrimp shells to a pot of boiling water, along with salt and green onion.

Simmer gently for about 30 minutes; then, strain, pressing on the shells to extract all the flavor.

Add shiitake mushrooms to the shrimp stock and some fine strips of laver.

Slip the slices of pork one by one into the broth and cook for about a minute.

pork tenderloin in shrimp broth

The meat will be extremely tender, as the starch gelatinizes and seals in all the flavor, which then contrasts with the delicate shrimp and seaweed flavor, which is in turn accentuated by the umami of the mushrooms. It's a strikingly delicious soup.

Braised Wheat Gluten

The next recipe involves wheat gluten—an important part of Chinese cuisine. It provided a meat substitute for devout Buddhists, especially monks who developed an entire cuisine that, along with vegetables and rice, often replicates the flavor and texture of meat made from plant sources. Wheat gluten succeeds wildly.

Yuan's recipe isn't actually vegetarian, but you could easily make it so. He assumes you have bought the gluten (which you still can buy today), but this is how it would have been made.

Wheat Gluten

Ingredients

- ☐ flour (2 cups)
- ☐ salt (a pinch)

Instructions

Add salt to flour and then add water bit by bit until you have a pliable dough.

Knead for 30 minutes, constantly pressing down on the dough as forcefully as you can, folding over, and squashing again.¶

Plunge the dough into a bowl of cold water and continue kneading against the side of the bowl. The starch will seep out of the dough and sink to the bottom.

After a few minutes, you will have a stretchy, gloppy mass. Pull it into little bits and let them dry on a towel.

¶ What you're doing is lining up the tough glutens into long chains that will make the dough stretchy.

Yuan offers three different ways to prepare wheat gluten, but perhaps the best is his first method, which involves frying the pieces in a hot wok. The result is not only texturally and visually remarkably like chicken, but you could fool someone easily with the flavor, too.

Braised Wheat Gluten

Ingredients

- ☐ wheat gluten
- ☐ chicken or vegetable stock
- ☐ mushrooms

Instructions

Cook wheat gluten pieces in hot wok until crispy or use store-bought wheat gluten.

Add wheat gluten and chopped mushrooms to stock and braise until tender, about 15 minutes.

Yuan believed that real gastronomic pleasure comes from the simplest of ingredients cooked perfectly and then appreciating its true flavors.

Congee

Naturally, Yuan lavishes his gastronomic sensibilities on what is at the center of every meal in China: rice. He describes different types and the care that must be taken in washing the rice—rubbing it with your hands until the water flows clear. He also describes how you start with an aggressive heat and then bring it down to a gentle simmer and leave it to rest. This is all still excellent advice.

Congee** is a simple rice porridge that's typically eaten for breakfast. In China, you'll see the rice cooked in rich chicken stock and then garnished with chili oil, fried shallots, peanuts, pork floss, coriander leaves, or scallions. But Yuan wants us to taste the rice alone. He concedes that it's OK to add mung beans in summer or millet in winter but really doesn't want the rice flavor to be hidden.

Congee

Ingredients

- ☐ long- or short-grain rice
- ☐ salt

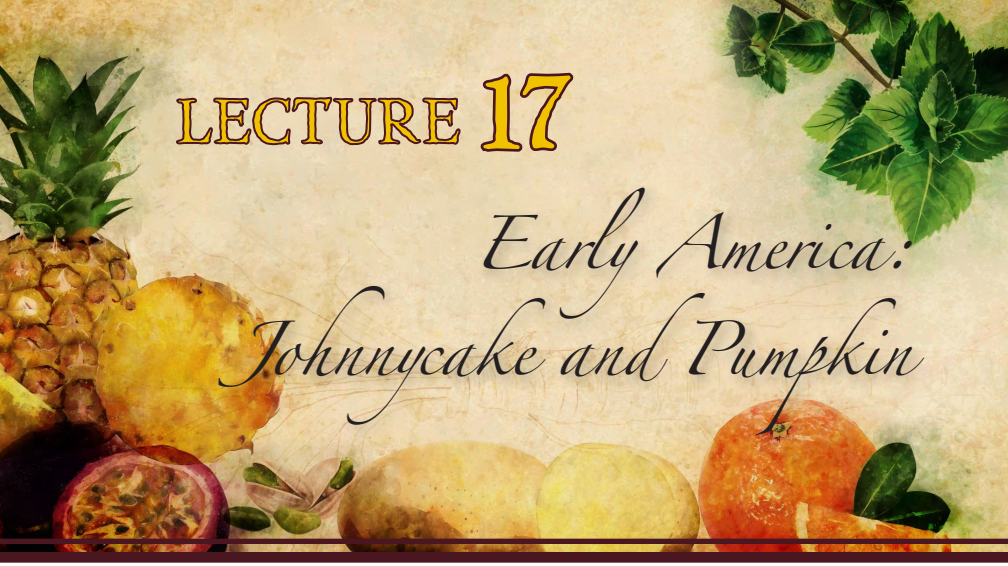
Instructions

Rinse the rice, cover it with about 5 times the amount of water, and add a pinch of salt.

Let simmer for 1 to 2 hours, until you have the consistency you like. Stir less often to get bits of discernable rice grains in a creamy mass; stir more often to get a smoother texture.

Taste it first unadorned and add toppings as desired.

** In Mandarin, it's called *báizhōu* (white porridge), and in Cantonese, it's *pak jook*. Congee is a Tamil word that came into English via Portuguese.



LECTURE 17

Early America: Johnnycake and Pumpkin

In this lecture, we venture into the early years of the newly independent United States of America in the late 18th century. This was naturally an outgrowth of colonial American cuisine, which was itself a fascinating amalgam of disparate traditions combining native ingredients; English, Dutch, and French cooking methods; African expertise; and a few inventions that were almost completely indigenous.

The Eastern Coast of North America

The earliest European settlements in North America were the Norse, who came first to L'Anse aux Meadows in Newfoundland around the year 1000, but that colony was abandoned. The first permanent settlement was in what is now the northeast coast of Florida and the fort of San Marco in Saint Augustine, dating to 1565. The Spanish presence there was to thwart efforts of the French to the north, which succeeded, and ultimately other nations with whom the Spanish were at war at the time—namely, the Dutch and the English, who at this time were successfully preying on Spanish shipping through privateering.

It was in this context that there were failed attempts to found a colony in Virginia, named for Queen Elizabeth, the virgin queen. And by the early 17th century, a handful of semisuccessful colonies in Jamestown in 1607, Plymouth in 1620, and others were attempted. At the same time, the French were settling the St. Lawrence Seaway in what would become Quebec, and the Dutch settled in New Amsterdam and up the Hudson River to Albany. Even the Swedes entered the fray for a while in southern New Jersey and Delaware.

This was rarely anything but a calm and peaceful transplant of cultures. Most faced serious hardships and either depended on Native Americans for food or displaced them violently to access their resources. So from the very start, there was a necessary mixing of culinary cultures.

Colonists stopped at Plymouth mainly because they ran out of beer. They eventually began experimenting with making beer out of corn or pumpkins because malted barley was impossible to get. So from the beginning, American cooking was a hybrid.

Within a few years of settling Virginia, colonists had begun to import African slaves, and that would be a regular pattern that permanently influenced the cuisine of the Southern US. This was partly because ingredients were brought from Africa, such as okra, black-eyed peas, watermelon, and eventually rice in the Carolinas, but also because the people doing the cooking were African. A plausible argument could be made that the prevalence of fried food in American cuisine has its roots in East Africa.

On the other hand, if we look at the historical record, we might be misled into thinking that colonial cuisine was simply a transplant of English cookery. For one, the cookbooks that were used in the colonies were English. E. Smith's cookbook was printed in Williamsburg in the mid-18th century, and we know that many people used Hannah Glasse's cookbook, which was one of the more popular cookbooks on both sides of the Atlantic. There was an aspiration, especially in the South, to eat like their aristocratic English cousins, but the reality is that the cuisine had already absorbed many different traditions.

It might seem surprising, then, that the first truly American cookbook only appears in 1796 in Hartford, Connecticut, and Albany, New York, in two separate editions. Its author was Amelia Simmons, about whom we know practically nothing. Judging from the ingredients she uses and the scale of the recipes, her cookbook is not intended for large-scale or even very wealthy households. In fact, it appears that the book was intended to be read by young women who hoped to find employment in households as cooks.

Amelia is universally recognized as the first truly American cookbook author. She justly earns this title partly for the incorporation of native ingredients—corn in particular—but also for a uniquely American approach to cooking. There's not a lot of fuss here. The recipes are solid, dependable, and generally no-nonsense. That's not to say that other cookbooks don't veer away from this aesthetic in other periods of US history, but there is something very appealingly plain about this book and, arguably, much American cuisine hereafter.

The title page of the book proclaims that the recipes (still quite English) are "adapted to this country, and all grades of life"—meaning that cooks of any social class, from elegant households to the humblest farmers, would be able to execute these recipes. The democratizing spirit of these years is evident both in the political culture of the early republic and also in its cuisine.

The Hudson River Valley

We don't know precisely where Amelia came from, but food historian Karen Hess made a good argument that because most of the early editions of the book were in New York, clustered around the Hudson River valley, and many words of Dutch origin appear in the book, this is probably where she came from. That's not terribly important, because New England is adjacent to the valley, and the culture of western Massachusetts and New York State are also closely aligned—in ways that are more than merely geographical.

The Puritans who founded the Massachusetts Bay Colony were Calvinists who had escaped England for religious freedom in the 1630s. The Dutch who settled New Netherland were also Calvinists, and the Dutch Reformed tradition is much like the Congregationalist tradition, sharing close adherence to the word of the Bible and a similar liturgy. The French Huguenots who came to New Rochelle and New Paltz were also Calvinists.

Calvinists insisted not only on following the Bible closely but removing the accretions of tradition that had accumulated in Christianity over the centuries regarding food—namely, the fasting practices that dictated fish and vegetables during Lent and other times. Calvinism rejected the fast-and-feast mentality in favor of a year-round sobriety and moderation—and, frankly, plainness. They didn't reject alcohol but certainly did not encourage riotous celebrations that one might see in Mardi Gras in medieval Europe.

The Calvinists did actually fast, but rather than on set days through the calendar, they did so for emergencies and to atone for sins, much as had the Hebrews in the Old Testament. They also feasted, and Thanksgiving was one such celebration, though it was certainly very different from the modern holiday, which only dates back to the middle of the 19th century. Calvinist Thanksgivings were far more religious in nature. This particular theology had an influence on the culinary culture of the Northern Atlantic states—not perhaps as dour as the stereotype might suggest, but certainly plain.

Another discernable quality is the simplicity and efficiency of the recipes. Cooking quickly to save fuel was certainly on Amelia's mind. For baking, many recipes use pearl ash, which was an early form of baking soda that allows you to make quick risen breads, pancakes, muffins, and cookies. It was used in England, but baking soda or powder in various forms is distinctively American and, to this day, far more common in the US than anywhere else.


potash

In fact, the very first US patent was granted to Samuel Hopkins in 1790 for potash, which was used as fertilizer but also as a chemical leavener. It's an alkali, so when mixed with acid, it creates gas that leavens a light dough.

Johnnycake or Hoecake

There are countless false etymologies of both the terms *johnnycake* and *hoecake*. The johnnycake, or journeycake, has nothing to do with going on a journey but is most likely a version of the word *jannekin*, or *jannock*, which is an oat cake related to the Scottish *bannock*, both of which seem to come ultimately from the Latin word *panis*, meaning "bread." So the form of the bread has nothing in particular to do with Indian meal, a.k.a. corn or maize. But that's what it comes to mean in the US.

The word *hoecake* has led many people to suspect that a lump of dough was baked by farmers over a fire on a hoe. Actually, *hoe* is just a word for a small iron pan. So it's essentially a cornmeal-based cake, related to what we call cornbread today.

Johnnycake could also be cooked on a wooden plank or barrel stave propped up before a fire in the hearth. The batter is supposedly stiff enough that it doesn't slide off the plank, but it still sounds like hard work to position the board so the cake cooks evenly. This apparently was a cooking method learned directly from Native Americans. There are versions in the South that use rice instead of corn.

johnnycake

Johnnycake or Hoecake

Ingredients

- ☐ milk (1 pint)
- ☐ Indian meal (3 pints)
- ☐ wheat flour (½ pint)

Instructions

Scald the milk and mix in Indian meal and flour.

Bake on a plank in front of the fire.

If you don't happen to have a hearth to bake on, try the Indian slapjack, which is a fried pancake.

Indian Slapjack

Ingredients

- ☐ milk (1 quart)
- ☐ Indian meal or cornmeal (1 pint)
- ☐ eggs (4)
- ☐ flour (4 spoonfuls)
- ☐ salt
- ☐ suet, lard, or butter

Instructions

Mix together cornmeal, salt, and flour; then, add milk and eggs.

Heat suet in a pan and then spoon in batter.

Since we haven't seen the chemical leavener yet, these are not yet fluffy pancakes or light cornbread as we know it.

Round of Beef à la Mode

Despite the fancy-sounding name of this dish, it's actually a kind of corned beef, which has roots in earlier English cooking. Intriguingly, the recipe includes saltpeter, which gives the beef its pink color and distinctive texture. It's rather more elegant than Yankee pot roast and also includes a few other interesting ingredients.

Round of Beef à la Mode

Ingredients

- ☐ round of beef (4 pounds)
- ☐ saltpeter (¼ ounce)
- ☐ ground beef (6 ounces)
- ☐ salt pork (2 ounces)
- ☐ grated bread (½ pound)
- ☐ butter (2 ounces)
- ☐ salt
- ☐ pepper
- ☐ cayenne
- ☐ summer savory
- ☐ thyme
- ☐ flour
- ☐ ketchup
- ☐ wine

Instructions

Cure beef with saltpeter for at least 48 hours.*

Slice the beef open to make a pocket.

Mix thyme, summer savory, cayenne, butter, and bread crumbs with ground beef and salt pork.

Stuff the mixture into the round of beef and tie it up.

* You could also add peppercorn, fennel, coriander, and bay leaves.

Place round of beef on skewers and lay over a large pot of water, which is continually replenished, and steam for 4 to 5 hours over moderate heat.

Brown the roast in butter.

Take the drippings that have fallen into the water below and thicken with flour and butter.

Add ketchup and wine to taste as a kind of glaze.

round of beef à la mode

Pumpkin Pie

Lastly, we need a vegetable. There aren't any greens in the book; it's mostly cakes, pies, preserves, and the like. Maybe vegetables were too simple to need recipes. But there is a pumpkin recipe that is an ancestor of modern pumpkin pie.

Pumpkin Pie

Puff Paste—Ingredients

- ☐ flour
- ☐ butter
- ☐ egg whites

Puff Paste—Instructions

Rub butter into flour and then add egg whites.

Roll out the dough and then place in pie plate.

Pumpkin—Ingredients

- ☐ kabocha squash (1 quart)
- ☐ milk (3 pints)
- ☐ eggs (6, beaten)
- ☐ sugar†
- ☐ mace
- ☐ nutmeg
- ☐ ginger

Pumpkin—Instructions

Cut squash, remove seeds, and boil in water until tender.

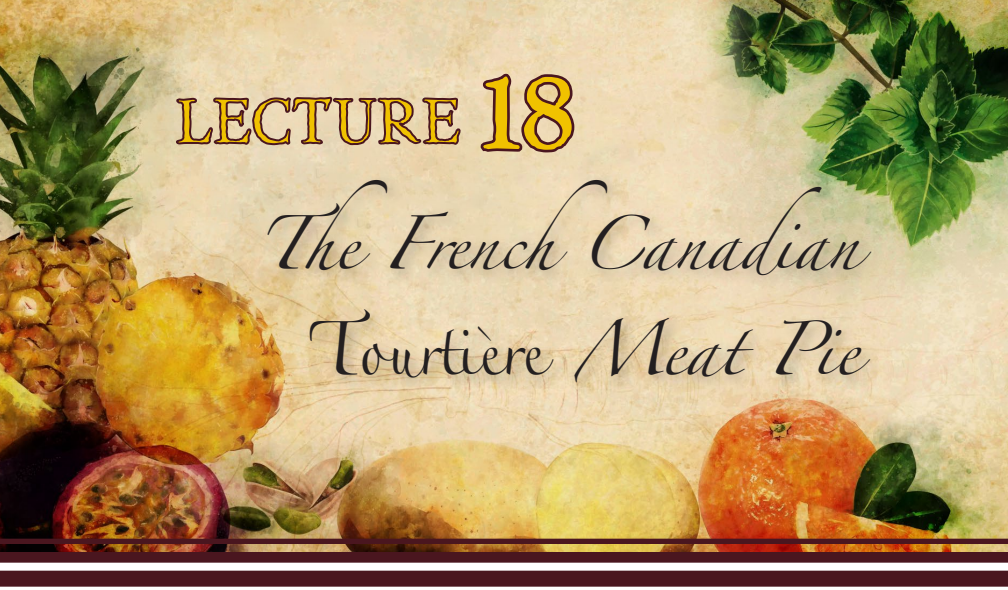
Remove peels and mash squash or use a ricer.

Mix eggs, mace, ginger, nutmeg, sugar, and milk into squash.

Assembly

Pour mixture into pie crust and bake at 350°F for 45 minutes, or until set.

† Quantities of sugar and spices aren't specified, so they're to taste.



LECTURE 18

The French Canadian Tourtière Meat Pie

In this lecture, we are traveling to 19th-century Canada to cook a French Canadian recipe called *tourtière*, which is very popular and traditionally served for Christmas or New Year's Day. We will specifically examine the first Canadian cookbook, published in 1840, called *La cuisinière Canadienne*. The recipe is basically a big pie filled with ground meat—which can be pork or beef but traditionally was game—and potatoes that's cooked in a pot.

Quebecois Cuisine

Quebecois cuisine contains numerous rudiments of 17th-century cooking that have somehow frozen in time from the point of original settlement, surviving long after they had disappeared back in France. Most notably, there are a lot of spices in savory dishes but also cooking techniques that are characteristically medieval.

As is typical of colonial cuisines, we find odd substitutions and the use of indigenous ingredients in place of those available in Europe. In other words, cuisines always evolve, especially when transplanted. They are the product of their history and interaction with a new environment, peoples, and economic forces. But sometimes they also stop evolving because people want to preserve traditions.

This phenomenon is not unusual among emigrant cuisines. Often, a set of classic dishes will become fossilized in a colonial setting and remain as a mark of identity long after the repertoire had changed back in the mother country. This is partly a function of being cut off and retaining antiquated usage, as happens in language and dress.

In cuisine, it occurs most frequently among expatriate communities that are surrounded by other cultures in the majority, such as the Portuguese in Macao or Goa, the Dutch in South Africa or in what is today Indonesia, the Spanish in Mexico and Peru, and the French in Montreal.

The publication of a cookbook naturally aids in the ossification of culinary practices because it can become authoritative—a kind of invented authenticity that people thereafter rarely veer away from in their effort to remain true to what they perceive as the proper way to make a certain dish.

The historical setting is crucial to understanding this cookbook, because it was written several centuries after settlement. Montreal in 1840 was the biggest city in Canada, the financial and trade hub and even the capital for

a while. It was also in the thick of the Industrial Revolution: The Lachine Canal had just been built, and the Victoria Bridge would soon be underway.

One might expect that a cookbook would reflect these industrial advances somehow, but in fact, *La cuisinière Canadienne* is decidedly traditional. Most surprising is that the recipes in the book all call for cooking in a hearth or wood-burning oven, rather than a cast-iron stove with hobs on top.

Several recipes call for a tripod—or, as it is called in English, a spider—on which is set a pot over hot coals in the hearth to cook. The technology is scarcely different from a century before, and the recipes also could easily have been penned in the 1740s, some even in the 1640s.

The absence of any prepared condiments and sauces, which are evident in contemporary British cookbooks, is also striking. Everything is made from scratch, and the cookbook's author insists in the introduction that one must start with good-quality, fresh butter; the purest flour; and fresh eggs. Implied here is that many people bought stale ingredients in the city. No doubt the booming population made it increasingly difficult to obtain fresh ingredients from the countryside.

It's also important to remember that Lower Canada (what is today Quebec) had been conquered by the English in 1763. After 77 years, it was still to some extent an occupied territory under foreign rule. With an influx of English and especially Irish in the 19th century, its cultural identity was considered threatened.

This was also a time of political reactionism following the failed republican uprisings of 1837 and 1838. The Act of Union of 1840 aimed not only to join Upper and Lower Canada but to efface the Francophone population and assimilate them among the English as subjects loyal to the crown. There were even measures to ban French in the legislature. This turmoil would not begin to be settled until later in the decade, so when this cookbook came out, French culture, language, and cuisine were under threat.

It's in this context that *La cuisinière Canadienne* was written by a group of nuns, who remain anonymous, in their attempt to rescue French culture. They wrote a cookbook that is not only extremely antiquated but that includes recipes very much like those of the Middle Ages and Renaissance—recipes that were no longer eaten in France ironically. In a sense, they invented this tradition, since many generations of French Canadians looked at the book and took this to be their heritage.

Traditional *Tourtière*

There are several different *tourtières* in *La cuisinière Canadienne*, but the ground pork version seems to be the most common.

Traditional *Tourtière*

Ingredients

- ☐ pastry crust
- ☐ diced onion
- ☐ ground pork
- ☐ ground beef
- ☐ salt
- ☐ thyme
- ☐ coriander
- ☐ cinnamon
- ☐ mace
- ☐ flour
- ☐ cooked potato

Instructions

Sauté onions, pork, beef, salt, and spices in pan, adding water as needed and flour to thicken.

Cool and then add peeled, diced potatoes.

Put pastry crust in deep baking dish and fill with meat mixture.

Add top crust and then bake in oven at 375°F for about 1 hour.

This is exactly the way pies were made in the Middle Ages. What likely happened is that the authors of this cookbook reconstructed what they imagined the early 17th-century settlers to Quebec would have eaten and then wrote these recipes—and, in turn, everyone reading the book made it their tradition.

tourtière

Curing and Smoking Bacon

For this lecture's technique, we are going to preserve pork belly with maple sugar and then smoke it. This is a kind of bacon, but interestingly, in the past it was not always sliced and fried the way we eat bacon today. Instead, it was cooked, perhaps on top of a pot of beans, and then cut up and served afterward. The bacon flavors the beans but also becomes quite tender, unlike fried bacon.

Smoked Maple Pork Belly

Ingredients

- ☐ pork belly (about 2½ pounds)
- ☐ salt (2 tablespoons)
- ☐ maple sugar (2 tablespoons)
- ☐ sage
- ☐ pink salt or celery powder (½ teaspoon, optional)

Instructions

Season pork belly liberally with salt, maple sugar, and sage.

If you'd like, cure with pink salt or celery powder.

Wrap pork belly in plastic and keep it in the fridge for a week.*

Smoke in a smokehouse or a conventional smoker for about 1 to 3 hours.

In the past, the process of curing and smoking bacon would have been done to preserve it over the winter, and it should last several months if kept cold. But we're going to make another recipe with it now.

* In the past, this would have gone into a wooden barrel down in the cold cellar.

Beans with Bacon and Maple Syrup

Ingredients

- ☐ haricot blanc beans† (3 cups)
- ☐ dry mustard (1 tablespoon)
- ☐ chopped onion (1)
- ☐ salt (1 teaspoon)
- ☐ maple syrup (⅔ cup)
- ☐ bacon‡

Instructions

Add haricot blanc beans to a pot (ceramic is ideal) and cover with water.

Add dry mustard, chopped onion, salt, sage, and maple syrup.

Place the bacon on top or cut bacon into lardons and mix in.

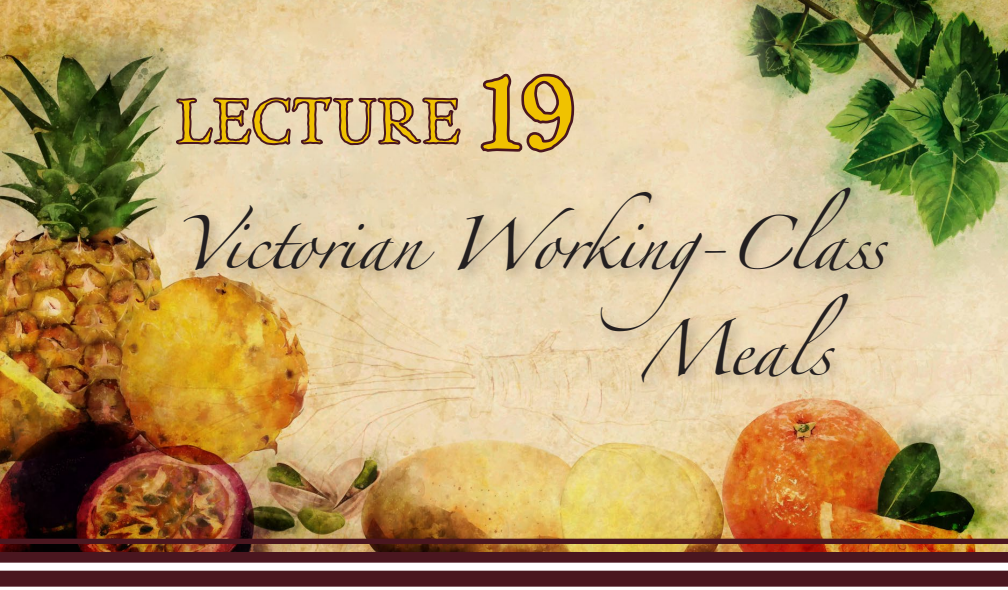
Cover the pot and cook on low on the stove or cook in the oven for about 2 to 3 hours.

If you kept the bacon whole, remove it and slice it before serving with the beans.

If you're not inclined to spend a lot of time making this dish the historic way, you can make it very quickly in an instant pot or multipurpose cooker with navy beans, store-bought bacon, and maple syrup.

† white navy beans

‡ made from previous recipe or store-bought slab



LECTURE 19

Victorian Working-Class Meals

In this lecture, we will travel to mid-19th-century Britain to examine the cuisine of a figure that has often been hailed as one of the first celebrity chefs. Alexis Soyer gained fame primarily as the chef at the Reform Club, the Whig Party's fashionable new club in London, but also as an inventor and philanthropist who started soup kitchens during the Irish potato famine and helped reorganize the military food supply in the Crimean War beside Florence Nightingale.

Soyer's Cookery

Published in 1855 toward the end of his life, Soyer wrote *A Shilling Cookery for the People*, which was intended specifically to teach the working classes how to make affordable, nutritious, and easily made meals for their families. The book is indicative of the Victorian era's social reform and reflects the first generation that tried to remedy the social and economic ills that followed in the wake of industrialization.

In many respects, this cookbook is different from any that preceded it. It targets an audience that just a generation before would have been illiterate. Most working-class women learned to cook from their mothers or relatives before the 19th century, and the very fact that they had to learn basic cooking skills implies that somehow that traditional mode of transmitting information has been severed.


Alexis Soyer

Indeed, in many cases, it was young people moving into London in search of work. Ironically, they married earlier than their parents had in comparison, because these young people had no real prospects of setting up their own households or owning a business, which would have delayed marriage and limited the size of the average family. Instead, they sought wage-paying jobs, found housing in the new urban slums, and generally married earlier, causing the population to dramatically spike.

This in turn provided the steady supply of cheap labor that fueled the Industrial Revolution. Real wages dropped because of this glut of workers, including child labor, since there were no laws yet forbidding that. This all meant that there was a ready market for basic cookbooks geared not only toward middle-class housewives, but now for the first time toward the working classes, who were trying to survive as frugally as possible. Soyer's cookbook is written specifically for this audience.

Not unconnected to these phenomena was the changing technology of printing. There were inexpensive books before this time, but nothing like the industrial scale of automated steam-powered presses, pioneered by Friedrich Koenig, that were introduced to London around 1812/1814. These made possible a book that could be printed quickly, cheaply, in hundreds and thousands of copies, and sold for just a shilling.

The greatest irony of this story is that apparently Soyer started cooking at such a young age that he never learned to write well and through his whole life preferred to dictate both in French and English to a secretary. Yet he could write for the masses in a way no cookbook author up to that time could.

Soyer's Successes

Soyer was born to middle-class parents and had a keen sense of desperately wanting to succeed. And indeed he did, getting a job as a chef—that is, head of a kitchen—by age 17. Within a few years, he was cooking for Polignac, the first minister of King Charles X of France. But after a revolution in 1830 that was directed at Soyer's employer, Soyer fled to London, where opportunity beckoned.

After working in various aristocratic households, at the age of 27, he landed a job as chef at the new Reform Club in London (on Pall Mall, where it still stands today). The club is a massive Palladian structure with columns and pediments, but its real marvels were the kitchens, which Soyer designed. They

featured gas-powered ovens with temperature controls, refrigerating systems with running ice water, steam-driven dumbwaiters, and a layout that was so ingenious that visitors to the club would insist on being taken on a tour of the kitchen. It was, in many respects, the first modern professional kitchen.

Soyer became famous, inventing dishes that are still served today. It should seem ironic that the party pressing for social reform would also have the most celebrated chef of haute cuisine running its kitchen.

Soyer worked at the club for 13 years. Then, something seemed to have snapped. Perhaps it was a contradiction of cooking perversely expensive food while a famine was raging in Ireland. Whatever it was, he decided to go there himself and open a soup kitchen that was on the same scale as the great kitchens he had worked in. It could serve 8,750 meals a day of an economical vegetable soup flavored with a little meat. The soup kitchen was given official government backing and was intended to be replicated elsewhere.

Soyer's life took a decidedly philanthropic turn. He wanted working-class people to be able to cook something inexpensive and nutritious, and following the scientific principles of the day, he believed soup was the best way.

Macaroni Soup

Thus, it is only fitting to start with one of Soyer's economical soups. This one is for macaroni, which wasn't unknown in Britain; in fact, a century earlier, it was considered rather fashionable and continental. However, produced on an industrial scale, pasta could be both inexpensive and nutritious.

The recipe starts with a simple clear stock—in fact, the first recipe in the book and something akin to what he served in Ireland, though apparently that was also made with vegetable scraps, onions, carrot peelings, and leek tops.

Macaroni Soup

Ingredients

- ☐ veal* shank (12 ounces of the cheapest cut of knuckle or neck)
- ☐ butter (1 ½ tablespoons)
- ☐ bacon (⅔ ounce)
- ☐ salt (1 teaspoon)
- ☐ pepper (⅛ spoonful)
- ☐ water (⅓ cup)
- ☐ shallot (1 onion)
- ☐ macaroni (⅛ of a pound of vermicelli)

Instructions

Cut veal into small pieces. Salt veal and add to pan with butter, diced bacon, pepper, water, and sliced shallot.

* Today, veal is much more expensive than it would have been in the past for ethical reasons, so if you decide to use beef, that's OK.

Boil for about 10 minutes, until a thick gravy forms; then, add more water.†

Simmer for about 45 minutes, skim the top, and then strain.

Add macaroni to broth and boil until tender.

There are many other versions of this soup that include peas or other vegetables. Soyer got a great deal of criticism for serving this supposedly nourishing soup. Most physicians didn't think you could be properly nourished on a lot of vegetables and just a few ounces of meat or meat extract, but we know today that they were mistaken.

Fried Fish, Jewish Fashion

Here is another fascinating recipe for what is considered one of the quintessential working-class British dishes. Although chicken tikka masala has recently been hailed as the national dish, for many years it was fish and chips. The first proper fish-and-chip shop opened in the 1860s, but it is generally agreed that this type of fried, battered fish was originally introduced by Sephardic Jewish refugees who were escaping Portugal and Spain in the 15th and 16th centuries. They must have been living in England secretly because the community was not officially welcomed back until the 1650s under Oliver Cromwell. However it came about, this recipe is simple, effective, and economical.

† 1½ pints of hot or cold water

Fried Fish, Jewish Fashion

Ingredients

- ☐ halibut
- ☐ salt
- ☐ oil (¼ pound)
- ☐ flour (2 ounces)
- ☐ lemon

Instructions

Cut halibut into ½-inch-thick slices and salt them.

Mix flour and water to form a batter; then, dip fish to cover.

Fry the fish in oil, turning them over, until golden brown.

Drain fish on paper towels and serve with salt and lemon.

fried fish, Jewish fashion

You can add egg or beer to the batter, adjusting the amount of water accordingly. Beer not only flavors the batter, but the alcohol rapidly evaporates in the heat, expanding and creating a lighter, crunchier batter. Traditionally in England, malt vinegar is the accompaniment rather than lemon, which would have been imported and more expensive. For authenticity, serve the fried fish on top of newspaper.

Beef Pudding

Soyer considered beef pudding a national dish. To start, that word *pudding* has come to mean something very different in the US, where it is thought of exclusively as dessert and almost always as a smooth, spoonable, sweet, chocolate pudding, rice pudding, or tapioca. Originally, the dish meant a flour paste boiled either in a stomach, intestine, or cloth—usually savory. Think of black pudding, which is a sausage of blood and grains. By the 19th century, it was most often boiled in a pudding cloth set in a basin.

Beef Pudding

Pudding Paste—Ingredients

- ☐ flour (1 pound)
- ☐ beef suet (½ pound)
- ☐ salt
- ☐ pepper‡

Pudding Paste—Instructions

Mix flour and chopped beef suet.

Add salt and pepper; then, add water to moisten until it forms a stiff paste.

Set aside a small amount and then roll out the remaining paste and lower on top of cloth into mold.

‡ Soyer sometimes also uses parsley or thyme.

Filling—Ingredients

- ☐ skirt steak
- ☐ salt
- ☐ pepper
- ☐ flour
- ☐ onion
- ☐ fat

Filling—Instructions

Cut steak across the grain into 1-inch slices.

Mix steak with salt, pepper, flour, and chopped onion.

Assembly

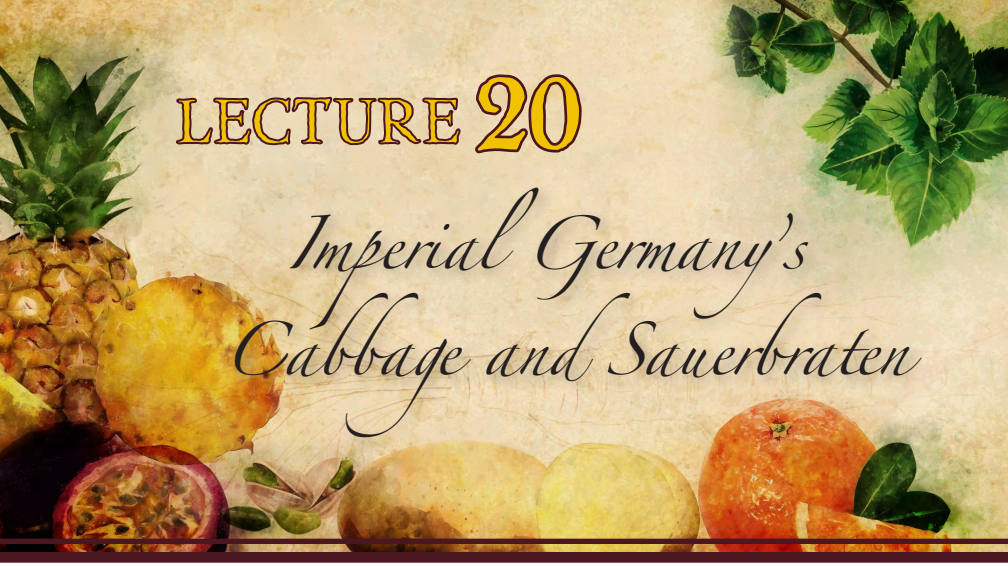
Layer filling into mold with pieces of fat, along with about 2 ounces of water.

Add top crust, seal, and tie the cloth.

Place mold in water and boil for 1 hour.

Incidentally, any kind of meat can go inside. Soyer also has recipes for calves' brains, liver and kidney, sheep's head, tongue and trotters, pigeon, mackerel, and eel. Although we pride ourselves on the abundance found in a modern supermarket, the number of species we consume—and especially the range of edible parts of each animal we eat—has drastically diminished. And these weren't considered foods of poverty, either; they're often the tastiest parts, though we usually throw them away or only use them in dog food.

beef pudding



LECTURE 20

Imperial Germany's Cabbage and Sauerbraten

In this lecture, we are venturing to mid-19th-century Germany, a place you might not think of immediately as a culinary hot spot, but in fact, it witnessed a remarkable efflorescence of culture in which food deserves to take a prominent place.

Nationalism and Romanticism

There was no unified nation-state of Germany until 1871; instead, this area was a patchwork of small states. But there was an idea of unification and national character—even destiny. And the cultural and artistic movement from which nationalism sprang is Romanticism.

Romanticism was essentially a reaction to the overweening optimism of the Enlightenment and its faith in rationality to solve human problems. The 18th-century Enlightenment upheld reason as the key to reforming society and its institutions, even if that meant challenging the sacred pillars of society—the monarchy, the church, and the aristocracy—to create a more just and equable world.

These institutions were all challenged in the French and American Revolutions, but the changes they promised never fully materialized. In fact, if anything, the emerging Industrial Revolution made society more unequal. There was still slavery, and a permanently impoverished working class was now laboring in factories separated from their traditional social structures, rural villages, and the natural rhythms of agrarian life.

Romanticism instead turned to the emotional, passionate side of human nature—and even the irrational side, which often leads to self-destruction. Painters became interested in wild nature, gothic ruins, and the darker side of human nature. In music, composers suddenly broke all the rules of propriety and order. The same feeling of awe, terror, and obsession with the sublime, as the philosopher Edmund Burke wrote in his treatise on aesthetics, can be seen in J. W. von Goethe's short novel *The Sorrows of Young Werther*, which seems like a conventional love story, but instead of the hero getting the girl in the end, he kills himself.

Tied up with this new aesthetic was a desire to find local, traditional art forms and celebrate them—essentially rejecting the very court-centered elitist arts of the previous century, which were so dominated by the French.

German artists would instead look to their own native literary works, such as the folktales collected by the Brothers Grimm or the Norse mythology set to operas by Richard Wagner. Composers looked to native folk music and artists to folk architecture and costume. It's not coincidental that the lederhosen suddenly became a popular form of national dress to wear at Oktoberfest.

Just as the arts turned away from French dominance, so did cooking. German people had been making their own recipes for many centuries, and there were even cookbooks going back to the Middle Ages. Moreover, differing from most other places in the early modern period, German cookbooks were often written by and addressed to women. Sabina Welserin wrote a manuscript cookbook in the 16th century that survives, and Anna Wecker's *Ein köstlich new Kochbuch* was the first written by a woman to be published. Although there are dishes in these cookbooks that look distinctively German because that's where they were written, they are not consciously inspired by the food of ordinary people—the folk—as is the cookbook that's featured in this lecture.

Davidis's *Practical Cookbook*

Henriette Davidis, who lived from 1801 to 1876, was by any standard the most popular cookbook author of that century who wrote in German. In fact, it was said that no home was complete without its Bible and its Davidis. Her *Praktisches Kochbuch* (*Practical Cookbook*) was published in 1844 in the midst of this upswelling of nationalist sentiment.

Davidis was from a middle-class family that lived in the Ruhr valley, the first and most heavily industrialized part of Germany, so she witnessed not only the proliferation of coal mines and steel mills but railroads, urbanization, and the birth of a working class in which women might get married having never learned to cook or manage a house. Perhaps that was her prime motivation for writing this book.

In traditional society, young women would have learned from their relatives, cooking side by side in the same traditional kitchen. But now, they went into small rented apartments with the barest minimum of cooking utensils. And Davidis clearly saw the demand for a good all-around cookbook for young women.

In many respects, Davidis helped cultivate the ideal of female domesticity: that the proper role of a woman was to be in the home cooking, cleaning, and caring for the children. But rather than see this as constricting or limiting, she thought it was a venue for the expression of creativity and personal fulfillment.

Davidis's cookbook is still very popular in Germany as a classic.

It was also part of what held the community together—the well-ordered household that would produce a responsible, intelligent next generation. Whatever we think of those ideals today, they were inspiring in a way that many women learned to cook good, solid German fare from her pages.

A clearly stated goal of the cookbook is economy. She's against the extravagant use of sugar, butter, and spices, which often ruins good food. She also says that we should pay attention to using leftovers well. All of this gives us a good sense of the type of household she's addressing.

Another truly fascinating legacy of this book is that in the mid-19th century, there were still many parts of Germany that remained rural and impoverished. Increasingly, people moved from these areas to cities to find work, or they left Germany entirely. There was a massive wave of immigration to the US at the time.

While there had been large German-speaking communities, for example, in Pennsylvania (the Pennsylvania Dutch), these new immigrants moved to the industrial centers of the Midwest, where they introduced German lager, which is still the dominant style of beer in the US. They also introduced frankfurters and bratwurst, sauerkraut, pretzels, potato salad, and Hamburg steak (which morphed into hamburgers). German cuisine became an integral part of American cuisine.

Davidis's cookbook was published in the US in 1879 for this new immigrant community—so that they could hold onto their traditions—but it was also translated into English in 1897. This is the version that's used in this lecture. To some extent, it's works like this one, as well as what people were cooking daily at home, that caused German food to become mainstream in the US, just as did the cooking of so many immigrant communities in the 19th century.

Kappes (Red Cabbage)

To start, we'll make some red cabbage. The translator gives the German *Kappes* ("cabbage"), which is a distinctly western German, Franconian dialect. Davidis prefers red over white cabbage because the latter is stronger in flavor and takes twice as long to cook.

Kappes (Red Cabbage)

Ingredients

- ☐ red cabbage
- ☐ duck fat
- ☐ sweet grapes
- ☐ sour apples (2)
- ☐ shallots or onions
- ☐ sugar
- ☐ salt
- ☐ flour
- ☐ claret* (1 glassful)
- ☐ currant juice or unsweetened cranberry juice (a few spoonfuls)
- ☐ small potatoes

Instructions

Cut cabbage in half and remove outer leaves, ribs, and core; then, slice into shreds.

Briefly immerse in boiling water and then drain.

Add cabbage to a pan with water and duck fat.

Add sweet grapes, sliced sour apples, sliced shallots, sugar, and salt and cook until tender.

Before serving, sprinkle with flour and add claret and juice.

Garnish with quartered apples and roasted or boiled potatoes.

* red wine

Sauerbraten

The next recipe is the classic dish sauerbraten.

Sauerbraten (Sour Beef)

Ingredients

- ☐ beef round (a 5- or 6-pound piece of meat)
- ☐ vinegar
- ☐ bay leaves
- ☐ cloves
- ☐ juniper berries
- ☐ allspice
- ☐ pork or bacon
- ☐ flour (1 tablespoon)
- ☐ carrots (2 to 3)
- ☐ onion (3 to 4 large onions)
- ☐ rye bread crust (1 piece)
- ☐ cream (1 cup)
- ☐ ginger cookies

Instructions

Marinate beef in vinegar for several days †in the refrigerator.

Pour vinegar into a pot. Add bay leaves, cloves, juniper berries, and allspice and bring to a boil.

Put beef in a pan and pour over the boiling vinegar.‡

Remove beef from pan (reserving some vinegar), poke holes in it with a knife, and insert strips of pork or bacon.

Salt the beef and then brown it in hot oil.

Sprinkle flour into pan, let it brown, and then cover with water.

† Without refrigeration, the beef was laid in vinegar for 3 to 4 days in summer or 8 to 10 days in winter. With modern refrigeration, let the beef sit in the fridge for at least 8 days.

‡ This prevents the juices from being lost from the meat.

Add chopped carrots and onions, rye bread crust, and some of the reserved vinegar.

Simmer for 2 to 2½ hours, turning occasionally and adding water as needed.

In the last ½ hour of cooking, add cream; thicken with ginger cookies or honey cake.

The meat is served with some of the gravy on top and the rest on the side. If it's too thick, add milk; if it's too thin, add flour.

Bread Dumplings

The final food item to round out a meal of sauerbraten and red cabbage is bread dumplings. In the US, some people may be familiar with matzo balls, introduced by the Jewish community. They're essentially the same as Davidis's cracker dumpling recipe, just using matzo.

Bread Dumplings

Ingredients

- ☐ butter (1 tablespoon)
- ☐ egg (1)
- ☐ nutmeg
- ☐ parsley (optional)
- ☐ stale bread (1 cup)
- ☐ stock or soup

Instructions

Soak bread in cold water.§

Cream butter with egg yolks (saving the whites); then, add nutmeg and parsley, if desired.

Beat the egg whites.

Break apart the bread, strain into a cloth, and squeeze out the liquid.

Add bread and egg whites to mixture.

Use 2 spoons to form dumplings and cook in stock or soup for 5 minutes.

The dumplings can be served either in the soup as a first course or as a side dish.

red cabbage, sauerbraten, and bread dumplings

§ In the general heading for dumplings, Davidis specifies not to use fresh bread and not to use warm water or the dumplings will be sticky.

LECTURE 21

Imperial Russia's Piroshki and Coulibiac

In this lecture, we move to the Russian Empire under the rule of the Romanov dynasty in the final decades before the revolution, when life could be not only pleasant but extraordinarily lavish if you were among the upper classes. The cookbook for this lecture is Elena Molokhovets's *A Gift to Young Housewives*, first published in 1861 and revised in 20 later editions through the end of the century. Henriette Davidis's *Practical Cookbook* from the previous lecture is roughly contemporaneous but reflects a very different cultural, political, and artistic milieu. Socially, too, the books come from different backgrounds, and although both pay attention to frugality in their own way, Molokhovets's book features far more elaborate, complicated, and lavish dishes for entertaining.

Setting the Historical Stage

Although 18th-century Russian rulers like Peter the Great and Catherine the Great admired and consciously imitated the arts of the West, the state they ruled over was autocratic, repressive, and socially divided between very wealthy landowners and peasants—or, more properly, serfs, who were legally bound to the soil and constrained to work certain days for their landlords.

In the early 19th century, Czar Nicholas I was an ultraconservative who believed that the success of his empire depended on autocracy, strict orthodoxy, and devotion to Russia. Even though the empire at this point stretched all the way from the Baltic Sea to Northern California and included many different cultures and faiths, there was a kind of mystical devotion to Russian culture and the Orthodox church. This profoundly influenced the cooking as well, since the church legislated numerous periods of fasting throughout the year. This lecture's cookbook strictly divides meat days from fasting days.

Russian rule was also very repressive. There were censorship and secret police, and Nicholas believed that everything would be more secure if people were kept in ignorance. So the kind of political and artistic freedoms that emerged in western Europe were absent here.

Also absent was the Industrial Revolution. The majority of people lived on the land, much as they had in the Middle Ages. The backwardness of the state became apparent in Russia's disastrous participation in the Crimean War. The Western powers had advanced rifles and artillery, news reporters on the front, and Florence Nightingale and better medical treatment. But the Russians were fighting just as they had 100 years earlier. A young Leo Tolstoy was there witnessing the incompetence of the officers and the poor planning, and he wrote about it.

In the wake of the embarrassing failure, Russia seemed to be ready for reform. And the new czar, Alexander II, was hailed as the great

liberator because he officially abolished serfdom in 1861—the same year Molokhovets's cookbook was published. Whether it really improved the lives of the peasants is not clear; it doesn't seem to have. One could perhaps compare it to the emancipation of African American slaves after the US Civil War.

But Alexander still ruled as an autocrat and was assassinated. His successor, Alexander III, dismantled or called off nearly every reform that had been planned, including a kind of constitutional monarchy. The state remained oppressive, especially against Jews; there were numerous pogroms. There were also uprisings that were violently suppressed. There is a straight line from this point directly to the Russian Revolution.

Molokhovets witnessed this all. But more importantly, although here and there she mentions that she's writing the book to benefit young women who need to pay attention to costs and cut corners where necessary, the recipes clearly speak to an upper-class audience who can afford servants and maintain a large rural household with an enormous larder bursting with provisions. It's almost as if she and her audience were consciously blocking out the plight of ordinary people.

The book does contain frugal recipes, but we get the sense that the lavish ones are what really interested her as a head of the household. And even the Lenten fasting dishes prepared only with fish can be quite extravagant.

Pirozhki iz vermisheli

The Russian meal *zakusky* is something like a smorgasbord but set directly on the table, not a sideboard. It would contain cold salads, aspics, pickles, cheeses, smoked fish, bread, and plenty of vodka. Sometimes this was used to start a larger meal, but it could also be a spread unto itself. We'll make a few recipes that belong in this category.

One of them is *pirog*—diminutive form *pirozhki*, or *piroshki*—which is a pie. Those terms cover a wide variety of different foods, but this is essentially a small pie that is either baked or fried and contains meat, cabbage, potatoes, mushrooms, or fish. (Pierogi in Poland are different; that's a noodle dough, so they're more like a dumpling, what in Russia would be *pelmeny*.)

This recipe for piroshki is made of thin noodles, either store-bought or homemade. When the book was first published, Molokhovets's audience would probably had to have made the noodles themselves; probably only later in the 19th century could you get store-bought vermicelli (that's true in the US, too).

Pirozhki iz vermisheli

Ingredients

- ☐ bread flour
- ☐ eggs (at least 5)
- ☐ salt
- ☐ butter
- ☐ grated cheese (12 tablespoons)
- ☐ rusk crumbs*
- ☐ chopped onion (½ an onion)
- ☐ sour cream
- ☐ lemon juice

Instructions

Add salt and 1 egg to 1 cup of flour and mix, adding more egg or flour as needed to form a firm dough.

Knead for about 5 minutes. Then, roll out the dough very thin and cut into fine noodles.

Boil the noodles in salted water for about a minute and then drain.

* Any bread crumbs would be fine here.

In a pan, melt butter (3 tablespoons) and stir into the noodles, adding salt, eggs (2), and grated cheese (6 tablespoons).

Grease small tin molds with butter and sprinkle with rusk crumbs.

Fill molds with vermicelli mixture and bake at 350°F for about 20 minutes, until brown on top.

Cook chopped onion and flour in a pan with butter and then cool the mixture.

Mix in sour cream, egg yolks (2), grated cheese (6 tablespoons), and lemon juice.

Remove the upper, browned crust and a little vermicelli from the middle of each *pirozhok*.

Fill them with the onion mixture, put the tops back on, and put them back in a warm oven for 5 to 10 minutes.

pirozhki iz vermisheli

The idea is for these to be crunchy on the outside and gooey on the inside. Imagine setting these piroshki on the table with other cold salads, pickles, fish, etc.

Salad Olivier

What would go perfectly with the piroshki is one of the iconic salads of Russian cuisine. This is usually just called Russian salad outside the country, but within, it's salad Olivier, which is named for the owner of a fashionable Moscow restaurant called the Hermitage. Molokhovets actually called it *vinaigrette*, which it contains.

For this recipe, you can use any leftover meats: game or wildfowl, veal or beef, or boiled fish like sturgeon, pike, or salmon. The protein is entirely up to you, but it needs to be cooked already. She gives quantities, but you can just use what you have on hand.

Salad Olivier

Ingredients

- ☐ boiled or baked beets (1 or 2)
- ☐ cornichons (3 tablespoons)
- ☐ peeled cucumber (1)
- ☐ herring (1)
- ☐ hard-boiled eggs (2)
- ☐ marinated milkcap mushrooms (5 or 6)
- ☐ pickles (3 tablespoons)
- ☐ boiled, chopped potatoes (5 or 6)
- ☐ capers (6 tablespoons)
- ☐ sauerkraut (9 tablespoons)
- ☐ white beans (½ cup)
- ☐ pitted olives (20)
- ☐ lemon
- ☐ parsley
- ☐ salt
- ☐ pepper
- ☐ vinegar (½ cup or more)
- ☐ olive oil (6 tablespoons)
- ☐ prepared mustard (4½ tablespoons)
- ☐ sugar (optional)

Instructions

Make vinaigrette with vinegar, olive oil, salt, pepper, mustard, and sugar (if desired).

Chop ingredients so that everything is roughly the same size.

Mix everything together and present on a platter surrounded by slices of potato and beets.

The drink that should go with this spread is vodka—the national drink of Russia. *Voda* means "water" in Russian, so *vodka* means "little water." Molokhovets has a whole section on flavored vodka. One is a baked vodka with spices (cinnamon, cardamom, star anise, mace, and nutmeg); another is made with raspberry.

salad Olivier

Coulibiac

This final dish is arguably the quintessential Russian party food. This recipe uses Smolensk buckwheat, which is ground buckwheat groats, but coulibiac is also sometimes made with rice.

Coulibiac

Ingredients

- ☐ sturgeon† (1 pound) and/or salmon fillets (½ pound)

Dough—Ingredients

- ☐ flour (1 ½ pounds, or about 5 ½ cups)
- ☐ butter (⅜ pound, or a little less than 2 sticks)
- ☐ egg yolks (3)
- ☐ milk (1 cup)
- ☐ yeast (2 teaspoons, or 1 packet)
- ☐ salt (½ teaspoon)

Dough—Instructions

Add yeast to hot (110°F) milk to proof; then, add all ingredients together and let the dough rise.

Filling—Ingredients

- ☐ zander (1 ½ pounds) or other white freshwater fish, such as walleye
- ☐ onion (1)
- ☐ fresh or dried dill
- ☐ buckwheat (1 ¼ cups)
- ☐ egg (1)
- ☐ water (1 ¼ cups)
- ☐ butter (¼ pound, or 1 stick)
- ☐ salt

† If you can't find or afford sturgeon, just use all salmon.

Filling—Instructions

Fry zander (or other fish) in butter with chopped onion and dill; then, chop it all together.

Mix buckwheat with egg.

Bring water to a boil with butter and stir into buckwheat.

Add salt to the buckwheat and put it in the oven to brown lightly; then, mix with fish.

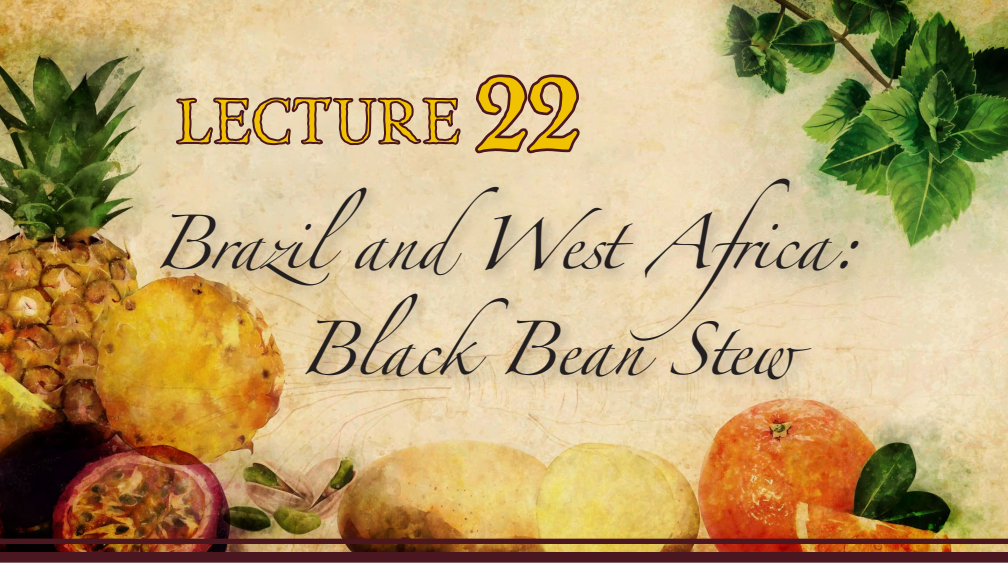
Assembly

Roll out the dough and place half the buckwheat filling on it, then cover with sturgeon and/or salmon fillets, and top with the rest of the filling.

Fold the dough over the top and pinch it closed.

Let it rise for 30 minutes, brush the top with some egg yolk, and then bake at 350°F for 30 minutes to 1 hour, until the top is brown and the fish is fully cooked.

coulibiac



LECTURE 22

Brazil and West Africa: Black Bean Stew

In this lecture, we are traveling to 19th-century Brazil to examine a fascinating cuisine that is a mixture of indigenous American, West African, and Portuguese elements. In some respects, the food is reminiscent of New Orleans cuisine because there's a mixture of ingredients and people that yields something entirely new and arguably much greater than the sum of its parts. Additionally, both Rio de Janeiro and New Orleans have had deep trade connections, celebrate Mardi Gras/Carnival, and have a very distinctive musical tradition—and food and drink are central to both.

Imperial Chef

This lecture's cookbook is called the *Cozinheiro imperial* (*Imperial Chef*) and was first published in 1839. Its first edition was very much like other Portuguese cookbooks. There are many recipes here that seem to be taken from Domingos Rodrigues's *Arte de cozinha* of 1680. But it went through many subsequent editions without any author attribution through the end of the century. In later editions, the book was expanded to include uniquely Brazilian recipes. For this reason, we'll use the 1887 edition, which is available online.

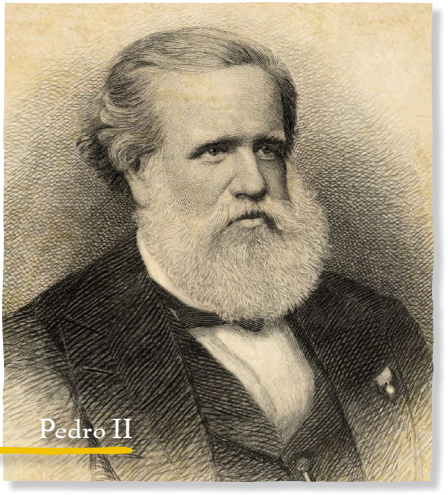
In the 15th century, the Portuguese had begun building a global empire. Following the reconquest of the peninsula from the Moors, they began to make trading contacts down the coast of West Africa. They brought guns and horses and took home gold, ivory, and slaves. Ultimately, they hoped to round the southern tip of Africa and sail directly to Asia to pick up spices and cut out the Arab middlemen and Venetians, who had a monopoly for several centuries. In 1481, they did that when Bartholomeu Dias rounded the Cape of Good Hope, and in the course of the next century, the Portuguese built a string of trading posts in Asia, including Goa, Macao, and the Indonesian Spice Islands—not to mention trade with Japan for a while, too.

In the process of these travels, the counterclockwise trade winds in the southern Atlantic pushed them eastward rather than south, and in 1500, Pedro Cabral bumped into Brazil. According to the terms of a treaty signed with Spain in Tordesillas, everything to the east of a line 370 leagues from Cape Verde belonged to Portugal, and everything to the west belonged to Spain.

The idea was to give Portugal control of Africa and Asia and give Spain all of the New World. But Brazil falls on the Portuguese side; that's how they got there. As elsewhere in the New World, indigenous peoples were first exploited for labor and often succumbed to European diseases, so the Portuguese began importing African slaves, mostly to work in the sugar plantations. That's how these three cultures mixed initially.

In the 19th century, after three centuries of interaction, about 2.5 million slaves were brought to Brazil. They grew some of the same crops, mostly sugar but also tobacco and cotton. Then, later in the century, coffee became most important. The trade in slaves didn't officially come to an end until the mid-19th century, and then it continued illegally. Slavery wasn't finally abolished until 1888. But none of this had happened yet when the edition of the *Imperial Chef* was published, so keep in mind that the people who brought recipes whose origins are in Africa were still slaves.

Rio de Janeiro was the colonial capital and a trade hub, but it wasn't a large or important city until the Napoleonic era. It's a strange set of circumstances. In a nutshell, Napoleon conquered Portugal, and the crown prince escaped and moved his entire court to Rio, which became the capital of the empire for 15 years. The crown later returned to Portugal, but in 1822, Brazil declared its independence but remained a monarchy with its ruler in the same hereditary Bragança family. So, Pedro II, who became emperor of Brazil as a boy, was the brother of the queen of Portugal. It was during these years that Rio became a populous, wealthy, and cultured city and the trading hub of the entire southern Atlantic. Emperor Pedro was also a patron of the arts and learning as well as science.


Pedro II

Brazil itself was also struggling to establish a national identity, which was difficult because each province was very different, containing many different indigenous people, slaves, and the wealthy of Portuguese descent. So, to some extent, the *Imperial Chef* was an attempt to bring together a culture that included a common culinary tradition. That's probably why the

uniquely Brazilian recipes were added in later editions, particularly in 1866. The book also contains French, English, Italian, and Prussian recipes, likely because Brazilians wanted to be cosmopolitan, too.

Pedro II was a symbol of this newly modernizing nation. He's the one who pushed for abolition of slavery against popular opinion. The year after that happened, there was a military coup, and the Brazilian republic was declared. It was actually a dictatorship. The emperor quietly retired to Europe and died a few years later, but he remained a popular symbol of the nation, and in many ways, his spirit pervades this cookbook.

Vatapá

This recipe is one that is still made in Brazil today—specifically in Bahia, which was the center of slave plantations, so the African influence was very strong there. It is called *vatapá*, which comes from the Yoruba word *ehba-tapa*. Interestingly, this exact dish doesn't exist in West Africa, but it's clearly related to recipes there; it's quite similar to what's called *gari foto* in Ghana.

It's difficult to say exactly how ingredients and techniques moved from Africa—the stories of people smuggling seeds in the hems of their dresses might be true—but more likely, slave owners desperate to prevent their captives from starving themselves intentionally imported foods that they knew their slaves would eat and allowed the slaves to grow these plants in gardens. And because slaves were usually the people doing the cooking, they used the methods they were familiar with. This is how these separate traditions naturally evolved.

Another factor is that the West African religion Candomblé also came with the slaves, and in it, certain foods are considered favorites of the ancestor gods and are offered to them to gain their good favor. This is perhaps also why certain dishes are transported relatively unchanged from Africa.

Today, *vatapá* is usually made with soaked bread as the base, forming a thick yellow stew with fish and red palm oil. This recipe is a little different—and probably closer to the original. This is exactly the kind of food that would have been imported to feed slaves.

Vatapá

Ingredients

- ☐ bacalao* (dried, salted cod)
- ☐ tomatoes
- ☐ onion
- ☐ Cumari chili peppers
- ☐ parsley
- ☐ cilantro
- ☐ saffron
- ☐ okra
- ☐ dende palm oil†
- ☐ mandioca flour‡
- ☐ peanut flour

Instructions

Soak the bacalao for a day, changing the water a few times.

Cut the bacalao in pieces, clean it, lightly toast it, and pull it apart; then, put it in a pot with water.

Add sliced tomatoes, chopped onions, Cumari chili peppers, parsley, and cilantro.

Add saffron, finely chopped okra, and dende palm oil.

* Bacalao was a staple in Lenten cooking since the Middle Ages, primarily because it's practically indestructible and can be carried overland and rehydrated at any time. It also makes an ideal food for seagoing voyages.

† This is the signature flavoring of West Africa. It's a deep-red, intensely flavored oil you can find in any West African grocery or even in health-food stores nowadays.

‡ Today, bread is used to thicken this, but this cookbook calls for mandioca flour, which is manioc, also called cassava or yuca root, made into a toasted flour.

Thicken the stew with mandioca flour and peanut flour.

Cook slowly, stirring constantly, until thick.§

This is eaten with rice flour cooked in coconut milk, or with a kind of corn flour flakes, or with mandioca flour. It's served with extra Cumari pepper to add as desired.

vatapá

Green Beans with Brazilian Prawns

This dish is also seafood and made for fasting days but can be eaten any day of the week. It's very simple, too—just green beans and shrimp. Green beans are a native American plant in the *Phaseolus* genus.

§ The final dish should be very thick, perhaps thick enough to eat with your hands. Today, people use a blender to mix up the bread with the liquid, but it's closer to the original to remain a little chunky with visibly distinct vegetables.

Feijões verdes com vamarões à Brasileira

(Green Beans with Brazilian Prawns)

Ingredients

- ☐ green beans
- ☐ olive oil
- ☐ parsley
- ☐ tomatoes
- ☐ finely chopped garlic
- ☐ bay leaf
- ☐ salt
- ☐ pepper
- ☐ chili pepper
- ☐ vinegar
- ☐ raw, peeled shrimp
- ☐ flour

Instructions

Trim green beans and blanch in salted water.

Heat olive oil in a pan and then add green beans, parsley, tomatoes, chopped garlic, bay leaf, pepper, chili pepper, vinegar, and salt.

Add raw, peeled shrimp to pan with a little water.

Thicken with flour before serving.

feijões verdes com vamarões à Brasileira

Miner's Black Bean Stew

This final recipe is a different bean dish, made from dried black beans. It's like a feijoada, a very popular bean stew with every imaginable part of the pig—sausages, tails, ears. In Brazil, they will argue with you about exactly how it should be made. Its origins are in Portugal, and it's a cousin of other bean-and-meat dishes like cassoulet in France and *fabada* in Spain. Feijoada is the national dish of Brazil.

This recipe is a little different. This dish was invented during the gold rush of Brazil by *mineiros*, or miners. Since everyone was busy in the mines, they didn't have time for planting or raising food, so everything was carried in and was necessarily not food that would spoil—thus, dried beans and cured pork belly.

You can cure the pork belly yourself or buy it already cured.

Cured Pork Belly

Instructions

A 2- to 3-pound slab of pork belly is seasoned with 2 tablespoons salt, 1 tablespoon sugar, a little black pepper, and herbs.

Add ¼ teaspoon of sodium nitrate (Insta Cure #1¶).

Leave this in a well-sealed plastic bag in the fridge for 1 week.

Smoke** the entire slab over very low heat for at least 2 hours. Then, cut into lardons.

¶ This is necessary for bacon; it will bring out the pink coloring, improve the texture, and prevent botulism.

** The smoke is a preservative.

Tutú de feijão preto á mineira

(Miner's Black Bean Stew)

Ingredients

- ☐ black beans
- ☐ cured pork belly
- ☐ onion
- ☐ garlic
- ☐ bay leaves
- ☐ pepper
- ☐ chili flakes
- ☐ salt
- ☐ mandioca flour
- ☐ rice
- ☐ kale

Instructions

Boil the black beans in salted water. Once the beans begin to split, remove from the heat.

Cook the cured pork belly†† in a separate pan and then remove from pan.

In the pork fat, cook chopped onion, minced garlic, bay leaves, pepper, and chili flakes.

Add the onion mixture into the beans with water and cook together.

Thicken the beans with mandioca flour.

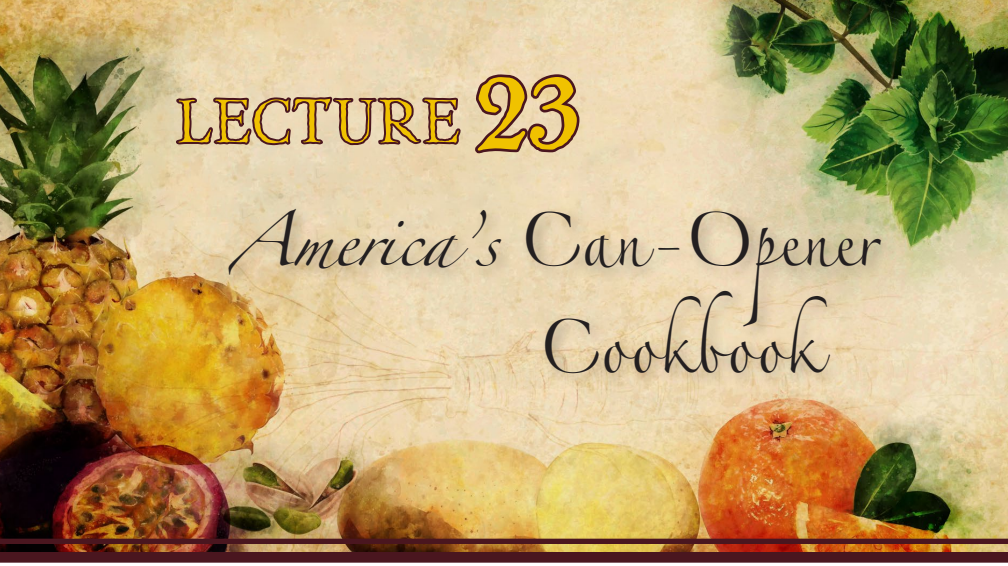
Serve with white rice and sautéed kale.

This is the basic, simple recipe, but it can be gussied up, too; the author says you can also add cooked linguiça sausage or salted pork loin.

†† Remove the cracklings.

This is a universal dish. Think about all the recipes around the world that pair beans and rice with some greens on the side. There are dozens of combinations, including in Asia with soy products and rice, in India with basmati rice and dal, and in Italy in a pairing called *risi e bisi*. In America, there's Hoppin' John in the South—especially South Carolina—and red beans and rice in New Orleans, and pretty much everywhere else in the Americas, there's a variation on this.

tutú de feijão preto á mineira



LECTURE 23

America's Can-Opener Cookbook

Our final cookbook for this course was published in the US in 1951: *The Can-Opener Cookbook*. If we wanted to focus on popularity and influence, the *Joy of Cooking* would have been ideal for this lecture. James Beard or Craig Claiborne would certainly have been better for exploring American cuisine at its best. And for legacy alone, Julia Child stands head and shoulders above all these. The relatively unknown Poppy Cannon was chosen not because her recipes are particularly good—they're not—nor was her cookbook chosen merely to gawk at. Rather, Cannon's cookbook reveals the most about the time and place in which it was written: 1950s America.

1950s Cooking and Canning

Unlike today, there was no obsession with freshness from the farm in 1950s America. Vegetables were likely to go rotten in transit and were difficult to clean and cook. Having a can on the shelf was much easier, more dependable, and more hygienic and was considered a positive boon, especially to working women.

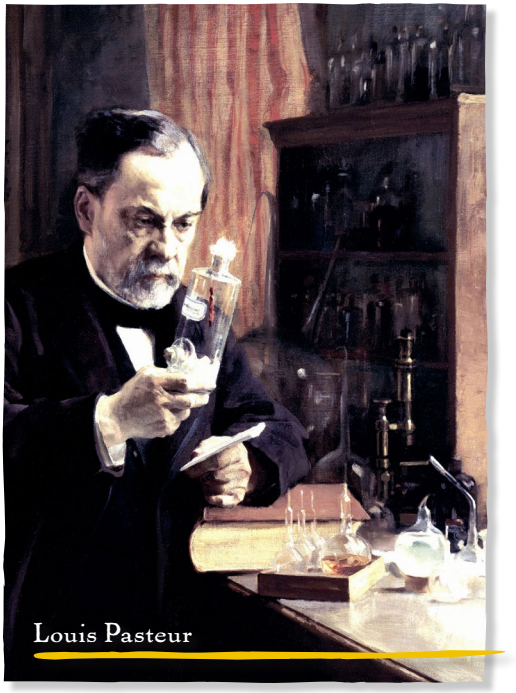
Cannon's cookbook never mentions cost. You might think that a cookbook of this type was geared toward frugality, perhaps even targeting affordable meals for families on a budget. But exactly the opposite was the truth. This cookbook is decidedly for middle-class or even upper-middle-class readers, and the recipes were intended to impress your guests at dinner parties.

At this time, there was no stigma against opening cans for dinner, and there was not yet the modern obsession with cooking from scratch as a reflection of one's time and energy and skill. In fact, perhaps even the opposite was true: Someone who could pull off a tasty meal in very little time was considered clever, especially if the convenience foods were gussied up and made fancy, or garnished in some interesting way, or were French or some other exotic cuisine. Cans were considered modern and progressive and freed a woman from the daily drudgery of cooking chores. But they were not less expensive.

As for canning itself, this wasn't a new technology by any means. The process of boiling the contents of a closed vessel—at first, glass—was invented by Nicolas Appert in the early 19th century. It was intended to solve logistical problems of food storage as well as supplying an army.

> *The Can-Opener Cookbook* is a perfect expression of life in 1950s America.

Ironically, Appert didn't understand why the process worked; that wouldn't be until Louis Pasteur, looking closely through a microscope, realized that heating a closed vessel kills all the bacteria and most pathogens inside, making it shelf-stable. Pasteurization works on everything—fruits, vegetables, and meats. And by the end of the 19th century, nearly everything that could be canned was indeed.


Louis Pasteur

The crucial step between Appert and Pasteur was the invention of the metal can itself by Peter Durand and then Bryan Donkin, who bought the patent and began supplying the British Navy in 1813 with tinned food. Note that the British still use the word *tin* generically, whereas Americans use the word *can*.

Ironically, the can opener wasn't invented until much later. At first, they were opened with a chisel and hammer. Only in the 1850s were there can openers—basically a sharp blade leveraged against the rim of the can that punctures the top. The device with a sharp wheel wasn't invented until 1870, and the type with two wheels and a handle you turn wasn't invented until 1925.

And that's when canned foods begin to become truly popular household items; fruits and vegetables grown in California could be shipped economically across the country. That's also about when supermarkets were invented, so people could stroll the shelves and choose their own prepacked goods without the help of a clerk. So you could stock your pantry with canned goods, which naturally caught on during the Great Depression, when people feared running out of food. Canned food was also a boon for the war effort; rations could be shipped anywhere without fear of spoilage or breakage.

But it was really the milieu of the postwar economic boom that gave canned food its biggest boost. People increasingly moved out of cities into the suburbs and commuted back into the cities to work. That meant they did their shopping once a week instead every day from a corner grocery store and butcher. You could simply drive to the supermarket; fill up the trunk with canned, frozen, and packaged goods; and then, when it was time to fix dinner, you could just reach in and pull out whatever you liked and cook it in no time while the kids were glued to the TV set. It was quick and convenient.

Cannon's cookbook targets exactly this audience, as well as the burgeoning feminist reader. In fact, her introduction specifically mentions the "brave young women, nine million of them (give or take a few thousand here and there), who are engaged in frying as well as bringing home the bacon." In other words, although hardly completely articulated and not yet so bold as to say that women should be liberated from housework and free to choose their own careers, that's exactly the direction the culinary culture of the next decades would go.

Herself a working woman, Cannon was still very proud to be in the kitchen as an outlet for her creativity, but she would do it on her own terms: "Armed with a can opener, I become the artist-cook, the master, the creative chef."

Instant Punch Frappé

If you were throwing a dinner party in the 1950s, you would've started with a festive drink, such as a punch. Punch goes back to the 18th century, but the height of its popularity was the early 19th century, when no fashionable party was complete without the punch bowl. This version bears no relation to those. This one is made with sherbet—a big frozen block of lemon, lime, pineapple, or raspberry. The sherbet melts, making it creamy and surprisingly refreshing.

Instant Punch Frappé

Ingredients

- ☐ sherbet
- ☐ ginger ale
- ☐ rum or brandy (optional)

Instructions

Add ginger ale and rum or brandy to scoops of sherbet.

Quick Crabmeat Lorenzo

To go with this, we need an hors d'oeuvre. This recipe is actually more expensive in this version, with canned crab and mushroom soup, than it would be using fresh ingredients, but for the 1950s, speed and convenience were more important than making something fresh and from scratch. We simply have different values today.

Quick Crabmeat Lorenzo

Ingredients

- ☐ cooked crabmeat
- ☐ cream-of-mushroom soup (4 or 5 tablespoons)
- ☐ cayenne pepper
- ☐ lemon juice or sherry (1 tablespoon)
- ☐ butter
- ☐ melba toast
- ☐ grated cheese

Instructions

Open the can of crab and flake it.

Add some condensed cream-of-mushroom soup.

Add cayenne pepper and lemon juice or sherry.

Butter the melba toasts and spread ½ inch of the crab mixture on.

Sprinkle with grated cheese and brown in the oven.

Jambalaya


jambalaya

For the main course, we turn to a regional American dish called jambalaya, which is Creole from Louisiana. Cannon says there can be breakfast sausage and oysters in it, but she has a simplified version with ham and shrimp that you can pull out of the cabinet and make in a few minutes.

Jambalaya

Ingredients

- ☐ onion (2)
- ☐ butter or bacon fat
- ☐ ham (1 slice)
- ☐ cooked shrimp* (2 cups)
- ☐ fresh garlic (1 clove)
- ☐ tomato juice or canned vegetable juice (2 cups)
- ☐ cayenne pepper (a few grains) or Tabasco (3 or 4 dashes)
- ☐ fresh or dried parsley (1 tablespoon of fresh, chopped parsley or 1 teaspoon of dried parsley)
- ☐ thyme (½ teaspoon)
- ☐ quick-cook rice (1 package (1⅓ cups))

Instructions

Brown onions in butter or bacon fat.

Add ham, cut into squares or julienne strips.

* canned or frozen

Add shrimp.

Simmer, covered, for 5 minutes; then, add mashed garlic, tomato juice, cayenne pepper or Tabasco, parsley, thyme, and rice.

Bring to a boil and cook uncovered for 2 to 3 minutes; then, rest for 10 minutes.

Serve with a tossed green salad and dessert to make a satisfying meal for 6.

Light Blancmange

Lastly, we need dessert. Cannon says, "The cookbooks of long ago called for clarified isinglass or Irish moss for the making of this pudding. Today we put it together with vanilla pudding mix." Isinglass is made from a fish's swim bladder, and Irish moss is agar jelly (a seaweed). The old recipes she has in mind are from the 19th century, but we can bet she would've been surprised going back 500 years to find that this was made with pounded chicken, almond milk, sugar, and rosewater. It's perhaps the best example of a dish whose name remains the same, yet the ingredients completely change.


light blancmange

Light Blancmange

Ingredients

- ☐ vanilla pudding mix
- ☐ milk (1 ¾ cup)
- ☐ Madeira or sherry (¼ cup)
- ☐ grated lemon rind (1 tablespoon)
- ☐ egg whites (2)
- ☐ canned peaches or apricots

Instructions

Bring milk and pudding mix to a boil, stirring constantly.

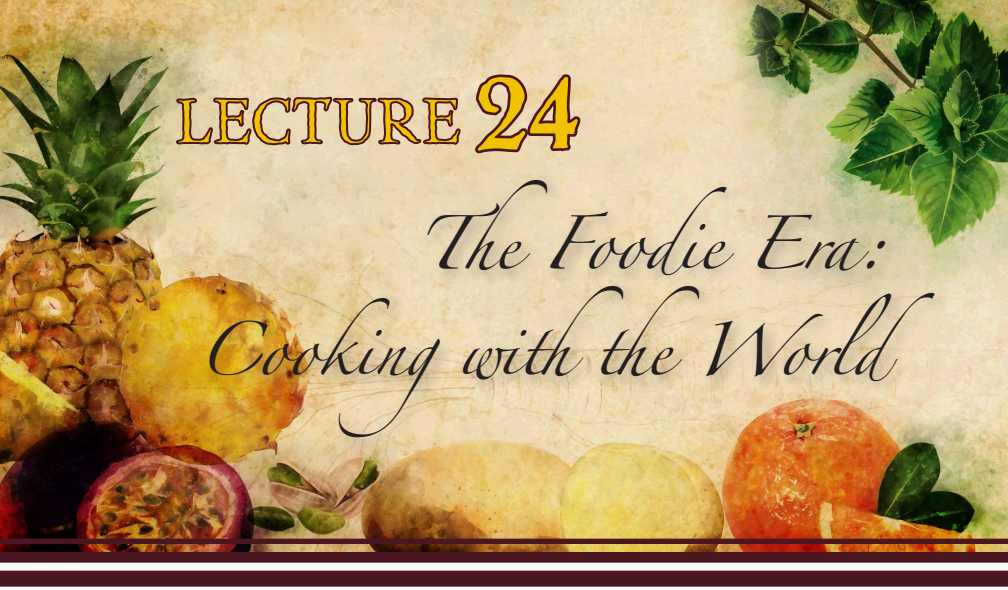
Add Madeira or sherry and grated lemon rind.

Fold in stiffly beaten egg whites.

Rinse the mold in cold water, add the pudding mixture, and then chill for several hours.

Turn out the mold and decorate with drained and sliced peaches or apricots from a can.

Cookbooks are a literary genre—they can be read without ever cooking anything—and from their pages, we can learn about attitudes in the past, gender roles, the state of trade, and technology.



LECTURE 24

The Foodie Era: Cooking with the World

In this final lecture, we move into the 1980s, a time when the word *FOODIE** was coined and came into common parlance. The term captures the driving culinary aesthetic of the time: people who were driven to discover new foods, sometimes at any cost, but also learn about new cuisines, valorize their own regional cooking or particular ethnic background, travel to discover new flavors, and—most importantly—do some serious cooking at home.

* American food critic Gael Greene sometimes gets the credit for inventing the term *foodie*; in Britain, Ann Barr and Paul Levy are given credit.

1980s TV Cooking

The 1980s was the first time that cooking became a proper leisure activity and mark of cultural status, when men stepped into the kitchen for fun and when cooking shows on TV became wildly popular. Julia Child was the vanguard, but in her wake, there were iconic superstars—not chefs from famous restaurants, but home cooks who stood at the stove and actually taught you how to cook.

Three influential authors of the recipes that reflect this era are Nathalie Dupree, who more than anyone put Southern cooking on the map for average Americans; Jacques Pépin, who taught us French cuisine (often alongside Julia); and Martin Yan, who did the same for Chinese cuisine. Together, they represent three of the great world cuisines. Perhaps most importantly, they taught cooking on TV, a medium that would come to rival the printed word in importance.

Macaroni Pie

Dupree's macaroni pie—not macaroni and cheese, which is based on a béchamel sauce—is spaghetti set into a custard and served in a pie dish. It's a fairly simple recipe and not a dump-everything-in-a-casserole kind of dish as is done in the Midwest. It's a dish you could serve when you have guests over and not have to be fussing in the kitchen at the last minute.

macaroni pie

Apart from the ease of cooking and great taste, what is most interesting about this dish is its history. It comes from Trinidad, which had long connections to Charleston, South Carolina, through the slave trade. The ingredients are English and ultimately Italian, though macaroni was especially popular in colonial America, too. The fact that this dish survived in the South but could also be rediscovered in the 1980s as something interesting to cook is very typical of the foodie era.

Macaroni Pie

Ingredients

- ☐ spaghetti (½ box)
- ☐ butter (4 tablespoons)
- ☐ eggs (4)
- ☐ milk (3 cups)
- ☐ mustard (1 ½ tsp)
- ☐ cheddar cheese (1 pound)
- ☐ salt
- ☐ pepper

Instructions

Break spaghetti in half and cook in boiling water.

Drain and then mix pasta with butter.

Mix eggs with milk, mustard, salt, pepper, and cheddar cheese.

Layer in a buttered dish, alternating layers of pasta and custard mixture, starting with pasta on the bottom and ending with cheese on top.

Bake at 350°F for about 45 minutes, until the top is brown and bubbly.

This is served not in wedges but with a big spoon.

Boning a Chicken

When it came to technique, nobody did a better job as a teacher than Pépin. He was classically trained and made an excellent argument that regardless of the type of cuisine you are cooking, it makes sense to have good knife skills and know your way around a standard kitchen. In the 1980s, he was the go-to person for learning basic techniques like boning a chicken.

The reasons to go through this process is that it's cheaper and more economical, and you get bones and little bits with which you can make a stock. Doing it yourself might take a little time, but it's empowering. It tastes better and is better for you.

Pépin's technique is a little different from the technique outlined here. Mostly, the classic French technique is to keep the wing attached to the breastbone. American chefs tend to separate them and keep the breasts in 2 whole portions rather than 3 smaller ones.

Boning a Chicken

Instructions

Lift the entire chicken by one leg.

Pass your knife through the loose skin where the inner thigh connects to the body.

Pop the thigh out of the joint and cut the leg free.

Repeat the process on the other side.

Slide the knife along the ridge of the sternum to cut away one breast with the tenderloin attached.

Remove the wings and cut the carcass in half, cutting right through the rib bones for use in stock.

Chicken with White Wine Sauce

Let's put our new technique to use by cooking a boneless breast in a dish.

Chicken with White Wine Sauce

Ingredients

- ☐ boneless, skinless chicken breast
- ☐ salt
- ☐ pepper
- ☐ herbs of choice (optional)
- ☐ flour
- ☐ olive oil
- ☐ butter
- ☐ white wine
- ☐ shallot
- ☐ tarragon
- ☐ cream
- ☐ lemon

Instructions

Using a mallet, flatten chicken breast into a paillard and season with salt, pepper, and any herbs of choice; then, dust with flour.

Heat olive oil and butter in a stainless-steel pan and add chicken.

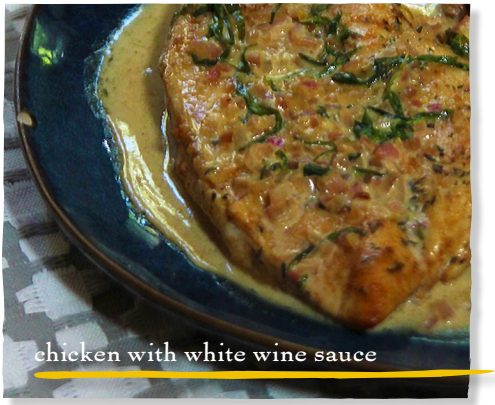
Cook chicken a few minutes on each side until lightly browned; then, remove from pan.

Deglaze the pan with white wine, scraping up all the browned bits on the bottom, called fond.

Add finely chopped shallot and tarragon, sauté, and then add cream and a squeeze of lemon juice.

Pour sauce over the chicken and serve.

This is a very simple, straightforward recipe, but it can form the base for dozens of other dishes; by just adding another ingredient, you completely change its character. A few capers and chopped tomatoes would give it a Provençal twist. Some chicken stock, mushrooms, and a dash of cream would make it luxurious.


chicken with white wine sauce

The point is that when you learn a basic technique, you don't need to follow a recipe. It opens up possibilities for creativity and invention and even serendipitous surprises in the kitchen, and that was one of the most valuable things Pépin taught to this generation of cooks.

Cashew Chicken


cashew chicken

Now let's use the boneless chicken thighs in a technique Yan taught American audiences. For this, we'll use a wok—a completely different technique and aesthetic than the previous recipe, but equally easy for home cooking.

Cashew Chicken

Ingredients

- ☐ boneless chicken thighs
- ☐ ginger
- ☐ Shaoxing rice wine or sherry
- ☐ cornstarch†
- ☐ baby bok choy
- ☐ other vegetables of choice
- ☐ chicken stock
- ☐ cashews
- ☐ chili oil or oyster sauce

Instructions

Slice the chicken thinly across the grain with a cleaver and then marinate in rice wine, smashed and chopped ginger, and cornstarch.

Slice bok choy and other vegetables of choice.

Heat oil in a wok and quickly stir-fry the chicken, not cooking it completely through; then, remove the chicken from the wok.

Add vegetables and cashews to the wok.

Add the chicken back into the wok and then add desired seasonings, chicken stock, and chili oil or oyster sauce.

If you want to thicken the sauce, add a slurry of cornstarch.

Like Pépin, this recipe for Yan was not about slavishly following a printed and often-intimidating recipe. Yan was all about teaching techniques—making them seem simple and actually getting people in the kitchen to cook.

† Cornstarch seals in the juices.

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