

What's in the pot?

Magazine of the Lochac Cooks Guild

Guild Journal #2 October 2025

From the Guild Administrator

Yay ... IT'S SPRING! And that very brief window of the year where I can candy sugar without worrying about cold damp or hot damp!

Once again Master Cristoval has assembled a fascinating and diverse collection of recipes and menus, and provided some good Food For Thought over the question of packed lunches. Love 'em? Hate 'em? It's certainly a question many of us have to consider.

I hope the war weather is firing up the cooking enthusiasm. For anyone attending Spring War, I will be doing a hands on class making Elizabethan pickles and jam. See you there if you're going!

In Service,

Mistress Leoba of Lecelade

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Nuhud al-Adra (maiden's breasts) biscuits, made by THL Bjorn Bassason. A 14th century Egyptian biscuit recipe from Kitab Wasf al-Atima al-Mutada, as adapted at Mistress Leoba's [blog](#).

Contacts

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Recent Feast: Bal d'Argent 2025

By Mistress Alethea of Shrewsbury

Several months ago, I was asked to be the food steward for Lochac's annual dance event, Bal d'Argent.

The event steward (Mistress Helouys le Poer) asked for an elegant 'Italian credenza' style buffet.

The night wouldn't have happened without Lady Isolda Deye, Master Cristoval, Mistress Alys Dietsch and some amazing folk who popped in to the kitchen to lend a hand – thank you everyone. Thank you also to Baron Polit who helped decorate the kitchen nicely.

I was not able to view most of the evening. The kitchen was a 'calm' but very busy place, but the feedback was wonderful – some even went as far as saying it was the best 'feast' they had eaten for a long time. This was wonderful to hear.

Menu choices

I wanted to move away from the heavy pastry laden events I had attended in the past and chose a fresher, lighter menu.

We had a large number of allergies and intolerances – gluten, allium, dairy, lactose, chilli, vegan, vegetarian, lactose and lavender, so most of the dishes were gluten free, using almond or chestnut flours to replace wheat) and a combination of other fodmap free ingredients. Allergy versions went on a separate table.

Antipasto

We had antipasto platters to start.

Cured meats: (all nitrate and gluten free and free range)

- mild salami
- mild felino
- mild pancetta
- Australian prosciutto
- mortadella with pistachio
- ham

Marinated vegetables:

- mushrooms
- cauliflower
- artichoke hearts
- olives

Cheeses:

- smoked provolone
- provolone
- cheddar
- sheep cheese

Eggs with herbs.

Sundried figs, salted and roasted broad beans, and red grapes draped the platters and in standalone cups and bowls.



Arancini

Arancini are traditional Sicilian rice balls. They were cooked in rice bran oil, in several variations to meet the various allergy needs.

- rice, pork, stock, egg, chestnut flour and turmeric
- rice, beef, asafoetida, salt, ghee and almond flour
- rice, eggplant, zucchini, olive oil, salt, egg, and almond flour
- rice, cheese, egg and chestnut flour.



Crostini neri

This was a paté style dish contributed by Alys, with chicken livers, onion, red wine, verjuice, butter, sage.

They were served with crispbreads I made from baguette, olive oil and salt.



Pastiera di pollo

Chicken pies from *Due Libri di Cucina* (15C), made by Cristoval. Chicken, egg, ricotta, onion, parsley, flour, butter, vegetable oils, ginger, marjoram.



Chervis

Parsnip pies. Created by Isolda – see following article.

Torta bianca

White cheesecakes made by Cristoval. Cream cheese, egg whites, butter, sugar, ginger, milk.

Other

Isolda made some sugar shards in two flavours – these were very popular in the kitchen – I must have eaten half of them.



I made some candied peel, which was very popular eaten on top of the torta bianca. This combination turned out to be many people's favourite dish.

Parsnip Pies

By Lady Isolda Deye

These pies were made for Bal D'Argent, as described in the previous article. The dish was originally intended as one large pie, but these worked as small individual pies, finger-food for the ball.

Source

Le Menagier de Paris (1393):

Chervis. The earliest appearing from the ground and freshly pulled, harvested in January, February, etc., are the best; and the freshest are known by the fact that they break off, and the old ones when pulled from the ground bend. You must clean them and removed the bad parts as with turnips, then you must wash them thoroughly in warm water, then parboil a little, the put them to dry on a towel. Then flour them, then fry then arrange nicely on little plates and put sugar on them.

Item, if you wish to make pies with them, you must prepare them as above up to the frying, and then put them in pastry, breaking the longest in two pieces, and instead of the sugar mentioned above, you should put figs chopped small and grapes.

My redaction

- 2 parsnips, extra large
- ¼ cup dried figs, finely chopped
- ¼ cup raisins
- ½ tsp fine spice powder
- 10 sheets puff pastry

Preheat oven to 180°C.

Peel parsnips and remove the woody core. Dice and place into a pot of boiling water and cook until tender. Drain and let the parsnips cool and dry slightly. Place on to a paper towel if you would like to help remove moisture.

Once the parsnips are dried/less moist, add the diced figs, raisins and the fine powder. Mix until the fine powder is evenly coating the mixture.

Using pastry cutting rings (or egg rings if you don't have), cut a base and top for each pastry and place into a greased mini muffin/cupcake tray. Fill

with mixture and top with the cut pastry, pressing tops and sides together.

Place into preheated oven and cook pastries until golden. Remove and serve warm. 10 sheets of puff pastry made around 50 mini pies.



Changes made

For Bal d'Argent, I was asked to make a Gluten free, dairy free, allium free, vegetarian something. Since we also had a vegan, I was also trying to accommodate them.

I used two types of gluten free puff pastry, one I was able to source from Woolworths, but is slightly smaller than regular puff pastry. Thanks to a friend who is gluten free, I was pointed into the direction of one of the local IGA supermarkets which stocked Glutenfree Bakery Savoury Puff Pastry. This pastry is free from: wheat, dairy, soy allergens, yeast, egg & nuts, fructose and vegan friendly.

When cooked, the puff pastry from Woolworths actually puffs up really nicely. The pastry that is vegan friendly is flakier (which I can see in the first picture – the pies marked with a circle are the vegan pastry).

I used dried figs as they are out of season currently, but I don't think this made too much of a difference to the recipe.

These can be served cold, but nicer warmed on a cold day as we had.

Fool!

By Master Crispin Sexi

This desert dish works well with wafers or as a topping with stewed fruit or cake.

So far I have not found the name "Fool" being used in period manuscripts with this exact concoction, though there are more modern recipes by that name that are attested to date way back to period.

Original recipe

To make a Trifle.

Take a pinte of thicke Creame, and season it with Suger and Ginger, and Rosewater, so stirre it as you would then haue it, and make it luke warme in a dish on a Chafingdishe and coales, and after put it into a siluer peece or a bowle, and so serue it to the boorde.

The Good Huswives Jewel by Thomas Dawson, 1596, f24r.

My notes

The original describes "stirring" the thick cream but not "beating" it, so possibly they were aiming at a more runny mixture rather than a thick mousse. Or maybe by "thick" they meant "clotted", which pretty much doesn't need any beating.

There is a similar recipe ("cast cream") in the same manuscript with these ingredients that adds egg yolks and features cooking on the chafing dish until thick, making a custard.

My hand-whisking method works for me for a pint of standard "thickened" cream from the supermarket. The cream needs to be refrigerated before you start.

The 5 minute rest seems to work like magic for me, somehow helping to go from "good grief this just isn't working" to "wow, how did that happen?", but I have not found anything to back me up in the various "How to whip cream" tutorials I have found online.

If you use double cream (or something else) the time and experience will be different. There are also creams that are available that do not whip - check the label and avoid them!

Ingredients

Cream - 600ml

Sugar (castor) - Quarter cup (62ml)

Rosewater / rose essence - 1 teaspoon

Ginger powder - half a teaspoon

Method

Briskly whisk the cream by hand in a large bowl for 10 minutes.

Let it rest for 5 minutes.

Whisk again another 5 minutes until stiff peaks.

Fold in the other ingredients.

Refrigerate and serve cold ... OR heat and serve slightly warm.

Serves approx 20 people (large dollop).



SCA Bagged Lunches – a good idea?

Crowdsourced from the Cooks Guild and Lochac chat pages

Years ago, there was a fashion for bagged lunches at large SCA events. Sometimes these were full drawstring bags, sometimes just fabric wraps which might have a dual purpose.

I guess bagged lunches were easy to hand out on the day, in a busy schedule. Everybody got an exactly equal share. You could get immediately to the next tourney or craft class.

Some people love them as souvenirs, others reuse them to carry feasting gear or sewing projects.

Some events have used paper bags for recyclable goodness and ease of dealing with dietary quirks, or fold-out cardboard boxes. Very useful during the COVID period! These options have their virtues, but this article is specifically on fabric ones.

Contents

They always had a hard-boiled egg still in its shell, and maybe a roll and a lump of cheese in a plastic sleeve.

A few dates or dried apricots, nuts, an apple, maybe a juice box. Sometimes they contained a chicken drumstick or a salami stick or jerky.

Midwinter 2003 in Stowe gave you a ginger nut biscuit in the mix.

In more recent years, there have been special bags for those with dietary needs, special containers for salads, swap-out items.

Some events have provided the bags and let people fill them themselves from platters.

Purgatorio

The earliest ones I have any records of were at Purgatorio in 1994, the only kingdom event of the West Kingdom ever held in Lochac.



We think there were scotch eggs included in the bags.

Game Boards

At the 2001 Coronet Tourney in Torlyon, the bags were large napkins tied with a purple ribbon, with a variety of game boards printed on them. Some were taken home, washed and ironed, and turn up to events occasionally.



French vs English

Mistress Kiriell said she had fun with the lunches she catered at Polit's Fields of Gold event.

One event was themed on the lines of the field of cloth of gold (meeting of the French and English king). People got to choose a French or an English lunch bag. I gather the French ones had a gold fleur de lys on them.

Both contained smoked sausages, cheese, a piece of fruit. But they weren't the same - a mediaeval French sausage vs a mediaeval English sausage, chunk of brie or chunk of jack. That sort of thing. It was fun seeing people comparing bags and swapping sausages with each other.

Kiriell said that there were challenges in using bags. How do you pack a salad? She couldn't fit a bread roll into the bags so still had to have some food served.

Were they a good idea?

Master Giles Leabrook likes them for practicality in events where there is no formal sit-down lunch. He likes to provide a range of items in the bags, so people can swap out with their friends.

He particularly mentioned the value of bagged lunches during the COVID period, where food handling requirements made self-service options impossible.



Mistress Gwen verch David commented that while aesthetically and logistically the bag has advantages, it leads to a very 'one size fits all' meal - no ability to take a bit more of this, or a bit less of that, or skip the things you can't eat.

Because her dietary preferences don't line up well with the things that make a convenient bagged lunch, when she's received a bagged lunch at events, she usually eats less than half of what she is given. She was left looking around for someone who would eat her leftovers so she wouldn't have to throw them away, and at the same time, wishing she'd gotten more.

She said that even ignoring dietary restrictions and preferences (which is a HUGE caveat), exactly equal doesn't mean exactly equitable. Someone who's been working hard in the kitchen, or fighting a long tournament, may find themselves hungrier than someone who's been sitting at the gate. Different bodies need different amounts of fuel too.

She wrote "Portable food that doesn't need feast gear and can be carried to the next location in a bag? I'm a fan. But if you're going to do that, please let me fill the bag myself from options on the table. I'll be less hungry and less food will be wasted."



A Pumpkin Tourte

by Mistress Antonia di Benedetto Calvo

Mistress Antonia is from Southron Gaard, and currently in foreign parts.

This is an edited version of a recipe redaction I created for the 2025 Ealdormere Cooks' Calendar.

I chose the month of October, and here in Canada, that means Thanksgiving, and Thanksgiving means pumpkin pie. Fortunately, Bartolomeo Scappi gives us the perfect recipe for the season.

To prepare a tourte of domestic pumpkin without a shell

When the pumpkin is scraped, cook it in a good meat broth or else in salted water and butter. Then put it into a strainer and squeeze the broth out of it. Grind it in a mortar along with, for every two pounds of it, a pound of fresh ricotta and a pound of creamy cheese that is not too salted. When everything is ground up, put it through a colander, adding in ten well beaten eggs, a pound of ground sugar, an ounce of ground cinnamon, a pound of milk, four ounces of fresh butter and a half ounce of ginger. Have a tourte pan ready with six ounces of very hot butter in it and put the filling into it. Bake it in an oven or braise it, giving it a glazing with sugar and cinnamon. Serve it hot.

Source: Scully, T. (2008) The Opera of Bartolomeo Scappi (1570): L'arte et prudenza d'un maestro cuoco (The Art and Craft of a Master Cook). Toronto, ON, Canada: University of Toronto Press.

Notes on the translation

It's not absolutely clear what kind of squash or pumpkin Scappi is talking about. He uses the word cocuzza, which can mean specifically the bottle gourd, *Lagenaria sicario* or squashes and pumpkins in general. In the interest of ease of use, I used half of a large can of ED Smith pumpkin puree.

(For Australian and New Zealand readers, you can alternatively make a pumpkin puree. Preheat oven to 190C. Cut a pumpkin in half and remove the seeds. Roast the pumpkin 40-60 minutes (until very tender). Scoop out the flesh and puree in food processor or push through a sieve. Any variety of orange-fleshed pumpkin will work, but smaller

varieties such as Kent or Buttercup are easy to manage and don't tend to be stringy.)

Regarding cheese, Scully's translation says "creamy cheese" which has led some redactors to use cream cheese, but Scappi actually uses the word grasso, ie fat or rich. I used havarti, as an easily available mild and rich cheese.

The 16th century had sugars of various degrees of refinement, but outside of confectionery, recipes rarely specify what kind should be used. I used half white, and half brown cane sugar.

Most of what is labelled cinnamon in both Canada and New Zealand is actually a related spice, cassia. It's perfectly OK to use cassia in this recipe, but if you want the real thing, look for Ceylon cinnamon.

My Recipe

- 400ml pumpkin puree
- 200g ricotta
- 200g mild, semi-soft high fat cheese, finely grated
- 200ml milk
- 200g/1c sugar (brown, white, or a mixture)
- 4 large eggs, beaten
- 2 tbsp Ceylon cinnamon
- 1 tbsp ground ginger
- 60g butter, melted
- additional 90g butter, melted
- additional 2 tbsp of sugar and sprinkle of cinnamon

Note: Canadian and NZ tablespoons are 15ml, Australian ones are 20ml, so Aussies might go easy.

Preheat the oven to 190C (375F).

Combine the pumpkin, cheese, and ricotta. Push the mixture through a sieve, or whizz it in a food processor, or smoosh it with your immersion blender, or, if you feel it's smooth enough, just mix thoroughly.

Stir in the eggs, milk, spices, and the first measure of melted butter.

Mix the 2tbsp of sugar with a 2tbsp of water and set aside for glazing.

Divide the second measure of melted butter between two 23cm (9") pie pans, swirling it around to coat the sides.

Pour the pumpkin mix into the pans and bake 'til nearly done (about 45 minutes). They should be set, but still a bit jiggly in the middle.

Carefully spoon or brush the glaze over the pies, sprinkle with a little cinnamon, and return them to the oven for 2-3 minutes to set the glaze. You can also glaze by just sprinkling the pie with sugar and

spritzing it with enough water to wet everything a little.

Serves 12-16. Good hot or cold.

Tartlets

You can also spoon the filling into tartlet shells and bake about 20 minutes.

This article is adapted from one at
Mistress Antonia's blog, at
<https://peerless.kitchen/>



Cuskynoles

By Master Cristoval

I decided in my early SCA career (40+ years ago) to work my way through the *Forme of Cury*, then called the first English cookbook, c1390. It was the first translated manuscript I found, and I love that in 2025 you can see online scans of a couple of versions.

I was going to give it a damned good shake and then move to the second cookbook. I didn't have to do the porpoise recipes, and there was some optionality on deer blood and entrails.

Over the years, I've made and served a large number of *Forme of Cury* recipes, and have only scratched the surface. I once ran a feast on this theme (see [following article](#)).

There are now other known early English manuscripts, with overlaps and orders of recipes, and food researchers have come up with a family tree all probably arising from a lost manuscript from earlier in the 1300s.

On the trail of puff bread

This article is a side quest from a future article on "payn puff" (puff bread). Puff bread gets passing mentions from very early on, and a very brief recipe in *Forme*, hence why I want to re-create it.

Essentially, we know it's a bit like "pety peruaunt" which are themselves not very clear, but have a fruit/spice filling and a pastry made with egg and definitely zero water.

Puff Bread is similar but the pastry is more tender, whatever that means. There are some later recipes, all pretty vague, but if you put all the clues together it does lead somewhere. Next time!

The cuskynole connection

This article arose because a couple of the absolutely earliest texts don't mention payn puff or pety peruaunt, but they do have a recipe called "cuskynoles", which is close to a pety peruaunt, which is something like a payn puff.

The cuskynoles recipe is especially archaic in language, but unusually precise in its description. It's quite fascinated me, hence this article.

We'd call it a ravioli these days; it's an open question whether Italian ravioles are really English cuskynoles.

Can you read this recipe?

See if you can read the recipe from the manuscript *Diuersa Ciberia* ([MS Add 46919](#)):

"A mete phat is icleped cuskynoles. Make a past tempred wiþ ayren & soppen nim peoren & applen figes & reysins alemaundes & dates bet am togedere & do god poudre of gode spesces wipinnen & in leyten make þi past wiþ milke of alemaundes & rolle þi past on a bord & soppen hew hit on moni perties & uche an pertie beo of þe leynþe of a paume & an half & of þreo vyngres of brede & smeor þy past al of one dole & sothen do þi fassure wipinnen Vchen kake is portiooun & soppen veld together oþe beolue manere ase þeos fugurre is imad: [see below] & soppe boille in veir water & soppen rost on an greudil & soppen adrese."



My translation

I get:

A meat [foodstuff] that is called cuskynoles. Make pastry tempered with eggs. Then mix together pears, apples, figs, raisins, almonds and dates, beat them together and add good powder of good spices with it. In Lent, make your pastry with almond milk. Roll your pastry on a board and then hew it in many parts. Each part is of the length of a palm and a half [say 15cm?] and of three fingers breadth [5cm?] and smear the pastry all of one dole and then add your farce [fruit mix] within. Each cake is a portion and press together in the below manner as this figure is made: [see pic above] and then boil in fair water and then roast on a griddle and then serve it.

Pastry

The pety peruaunt recipe simply uses flour and egg, forbidding any water, and cuskynoles appear

to take the same approach. I used six eggs and four cups of flour, which I think is about right.

From making them, I think the cuskynoles recipe means a large rolled sheet which makes enough for 15 pieces. I admit to cheating here and using a pasta maker, which meant that my pieces were most of the size of my pastry strip.

I deemed that I had a small (apparently hairy) palm and made my test pieces 110x60mm. Second time, I did 100x50mm for a better feast portion.

My experiments suggest this will make about 120 cuskynoles, sufficient for about 60 people.

Fruit mix

I lightly stewed the fruit I had on hand (two large apples, 2 small pears), quarter of a round of dried figs, a handful of raisins, with two tads worth of ground almonds. If I'd had dried dates I would have put them in too. With dates, the volume would have matched the amount of pastry.

I guessed the spice mix, then increased it after the first run. It would now be about 3 tsp ginger, 2 tsp cinnamon, 1 tsp mace, pinch salt and pepper. I added about 3 dessert spoons of brown sugar, which was expensive at that time but probably an ingredient in "good powder".

Construction

Smearing the pastry of one dole meant (for me) brushing a set of cut pieces with water, all at once, then dumping a teaspoon of fruit mix on one side. I then folded the piece over and sealed.

Note: the manuscript *apparently* shows a dot of fruit mix in the middle of each piece. I have found scans from that manuscript, but not that one, so I can't confirm it.

Putting it on one side, then folding over, seemed sane. Alternatively I could have put another pastry piece over each one, but then they would be much bigger than I wanted.

I boiled the raviolis for about 5 minutes, then pan fried them in butter. I used oil for the next run and that would be better for a feast.



The result



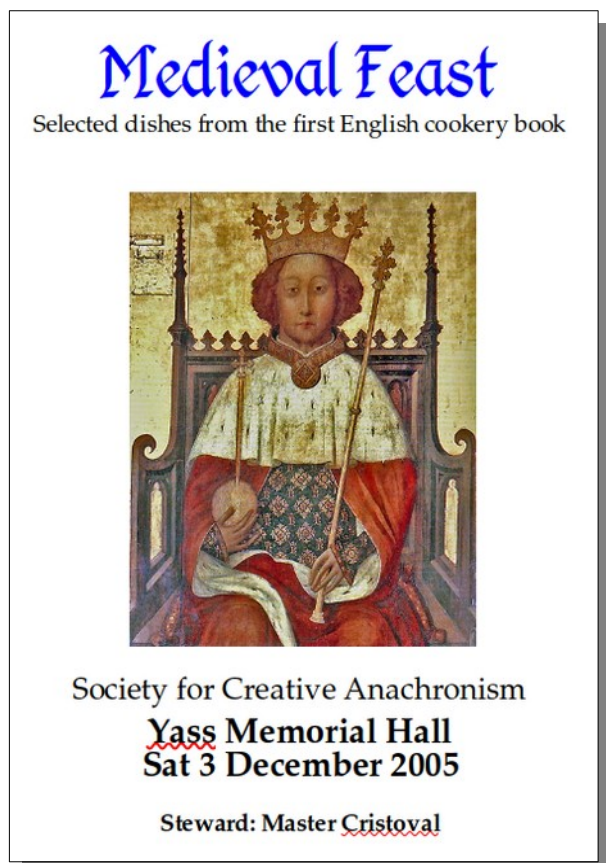
They were quite tasty. For the Torlyon picnic, I boiled them at home, quickly fried them at the event, then tossed them in drizzled honey which was well worth doing.

There's a similar recipe in *Forme of Cury*, called Comadores, where you use the same sort of mix wrapped in shortcrust pasty and baked. We make them every year for Rowany Festival. I think cuskynoles are actually nicer.

Historic Feast: First English Cookery Book 2005

By Master Cristoval

Aha, an excuse to squeeze in a historic menu! This is my feast of December 2005, featuring dishes from *Forme of Cury*.



I was assisted in cooking this feast by Mistress Alethea of Shrewsbury and the Torlyon feasting team of the day.

First course

Roste of pork – regular roast, glazed with quince marmalade ("connates").

Appulmoy – apple and almond meal sauce.

Cormarye – a caraway sauce for the pork. These days I would interpret that more as a glaze.

Lesshes for lenton — fruit pillows for Lent, with prunes and spices. Lots of medieval things are similar.

Bukkenade of venison — minced venison as a pie, with currants.

Drawen benes — ground beans and onions, served in pastry castles, which are documented in *Forme*. Surprisingly tasty. The bean mix is poured in when serving.

Loseyns — medieval lasagne! This attempt was not wildly successful, using commercial dry noodles, broth, cheddar cheese, spices. I have quite a different interpretation on my blog.

Salat of herbs and flowers.

Morree — almond and red wine pudding, made to look like mulberries. Very pleasant.

Second course

Chykenes with sawse noyre — roast chicken with a liver/aniseed/verjuice sauce. Tasted great, looked a bit ordinary; I should try it again.

Connynges in grauey — rabbit stew in a sweet ginger sauce, served with frumenty, a savoury porridge. Good, but we were using expensive commercial rabbit so the quantities were small.

Tart de Brylment — fish and fruit tart, done as small tarts with chopped figs. I've revived recently for a Polit and an Adoran event.

Fenkel in soppes – braised fennel on toast fingers. Tastier than you might guess.

Vyaunde Cypre – oatmeal and mead pudding. Actually yummy, I should do again.

Cristoval has a medieval cooking blog at
FoodForTheFeast.com

Stirring the Pot

Thoughts from the Chronicler

The first issue was well received, and at this stage I'm getting good support for articles. So it looks like the magazine has a future.

I hope you enjoy this one too, and tell us about your own adventures in SCA cookery.

Master Cristoval



During the COVID lockdown, Okewaite held a distributed feast where we all cooked up our own food and then shared the resulting dinner over Zoom.

Here's me at "Cockatrice Farm" on our little home set with a roast chicken (with sage butter sauce), I'm guessing a mutton stew and some mushrooms cooked with garlic in a ceramic pan. There was a herb salad from the garden too. We all had a lovely time.