

A HISTORY OF FOOD IN MEDIEVAL EUROPE:
UNDERSTANDING HISTORY THROUGH FOOD AND COOKERY

By

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Abstract

Through observing food acquisition and culinary practices in the European Middle Ages, one can get a better understanding of daily life in this period. Through this observation of food there lies a clear distinction between the peoples of Medieval Europe. On one end lies the nobles whose wealth and status allow them the privilege to indulge finer foods and partook in indulgent food-based events such as the hunt and the feast. On the opposite side is the everyday peasant of frugal means and a modest life similarly defined by food. However, rather than a definition based on its indulgence they instead draw value from their laboring on the fields collecting food all year long to keep themselves and those above them fed.

These aspects of daily life can be seen not just through literary analysis of historical sources, but also in direct participation of the cookery and culinary practices of the Middle Ages. To cook and eat the foods of this time, both peasant and noble gives a deeper insight to how this disparity would have felt as noble foods indulge in extravagant flavors and presentations while peasant food makes do with quality flavors and filling meals.

Introduction:

The European Middle Ages, a period of time made popular in the modern world through its iconic imagery in pop culture and media depictions, from King Arthur and Renaissance fairs, to fantastical works such as the television show *Game of Thrones* and the videogame *Crusader Kings*.¹ It's a time which conjures images of castles and knights, of jousts and court politics, intrigue and tragedy, all images mustered up in our minds from these prevalent media depictions, yet rarely ever showing the full picture of life in Medieval Europe. It shows little of the goings on of daily life for the typical Medieval person when not participating in such grand jousts or out at war. What of the many days in between? What of the peasants rarely depicted in such works of fiction? There's more to be discovered about daily life and Medieval Europe, and the key lies in food.

In this project, I will be analyzing the role of food and cookery in Medieval European daily life and demonstrating the significant impact it had in shaping the cultures of that period, and thereby their histories. Why food in particular? First it's important to remember that food as a concept is one that while often rarely thought of in our day-to-day lives is nonetheless an integral part of our very lives. We literally cannot live without it, dying of starvation being our only alternative. In modern western culture entire portions of the day were dedicated to the consumption of food to keep up our energy from breakfast in the morning hours, lunch in the afternoon, and evening dinner. In addition, entire modern careers are dedicated to the production of food and the preparation of acquired foods into elaborate meals and dishes.

Just as food is a vital component of modern life, it would stand to reason it would also be important in other historical cultures, and indeed European cultures in the Middle Ages were

¹ Mathew Gabriele, and David M. Perry, *The Bright Ages: A New History of Medieval Europe* (Broadway, NY: HarperCollins, 2021), xvi.

ripe with influence from food and cookery. Just as is seen in modern food practices, entire careers and lives were dedicated to the collection and distribution of foods as well as the preparation of specially prepared dishes made from the foods acquired by the agricultural workers. However, this is only the beginning of food's influence on medieval culture. It goes beyond careers having influential ties in social class, medicine, and even religion. One would be hard pressed to find an aspect of Medieval life that wasn't connected to this concept in some fashion.

The main emphasis of the analysis will be focused on sources from the later Middle Ages, defined as ranging from the twelfth century C.E. to sixteenth C.E. in western Europe, the period in which most preserved medieval sources on food and cookery were written.² Choosing a particular time frame to define as “medieval” can be a rather complex task, as explained by Matthew Gabriele and David Perry in the introduction to their work, *The Bright Ages: A New History of Medieval Europe*, in which they explain the complex nature of trying to define the “Middle Ages” with many potential dates working as potential candidates.³ For the purposes of this project, I could define the end of the Middle Ages as when new world foods were first introduced to European cuisine. However, most of these foods did not have an impact on European cuisine until much later. Instead, my Middle Ages ended in the seventeenth century, when medieval cookery in western Europe was replaced by what we now think of as classical French cuisine.⁴

As for what will be analyzed, the sources can be separated into two social classes, nobles and peasants. The elite and the impoverished of Medieval society have their own distinct stories

² Paul Freedman, *Food: The History of Taste*, (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 2007), 164.

³ Matthew Gabriele, and David M. Perry, *The Bright ages: A New History of Medieval Europe* (Broadway, NY: HarperCollins, 2021), xiii.

⁴ Paul Freedman, *Food: The History of Taste*, (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 2007), 197.

to tell on food and how it shaped their daily lives with only some crossover. The historical analysis of nobles explores their practice of hunting and feasting, displays of wealth and status that draw their importance ultimately in their inclusion of foods and the acquisitions of particular foods. To hunt for wild game in reserved park hunting grounds and feast on expensive meals in one's house served to you by your hired staff was a key marker of elite status in the Middle Ages.⁵ As for peasants the emphasis is on the ways in which the acquisition of hard-earned food dictated their entire lives as seen in the labors of the month's images (Fig. 2 & 3).

The History:

The divide between noble and peasant in Medieval European society was one defined by a disparity of abundant access and restricting limitations. What I mean by this is that to be noble was to have the resources and privilege to acquire luxurious goods and partake in prestigious events. One of higher standing in Medieval society would eat fresh foods and possess fine cutlery, namely a silvered set of spoons and knives. Both the food nobles ate the utensils they used to consume. It set them apart from peasants, who used the same knife they used for everything else at the dinner table.⁶

This was true even for wealthier peasants, who could afford a silver spoon or two and may be able to purchase more meat or butcher more of their animals more often, but they would still need to preserve the meat through salting or smoking to keep that meat for as long as possible to not waste it. To have it fresh all the time would be out of the reach of just about every peasant.⁷ Peasants were limited both financially and socially from partaking in extravagances

⁵ Martha Carlin, and David Crouch, eds, *Lost Letters of Medieval Life : English Society*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013.), 192

⁶ Paul Freedman, *Food: The History of Taste*, (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 2007), 194.

⁷ Paul Freedman, *Food: The History of Taste*, (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 2007), 169.

such as magnificent feasts and hunting parties, because forest laws prevented peasants from hunting (see below) and sumptuary laws restricted commoners' conspicuous consumption of foods.

Hunting was common among Medieval elites looking to show off their prowess and earn a bit of social respect. The hunt could serve a variety of purposes including the bringing up of young nobles so that they could be introduced into a masculine world of glory through hunting and the learning of war through the implements of the hunt.⁸ In fact, hunters were often primarily concerned with obtaining trophies and status not food. This was particularly true of medieval falconry, which Robin S. Oggins calls “an almost perfect example of conspicuous consumption: it was expensive, time-consuming, and useless.”⁹

Though hunting is not exclusive to Medieval English, it is at its most prevalent in this region due to its many laws and regulations on the practices such as the game laws restricting peasantry from hunting certain animals deemed exclusive to the elites alone.¹⁰ In addition, entire regions of forest and land would be sectioned off and protected under special forest laws that looked to preserve good game grounds and ponds.¹¹ The lands once preserved would make for the ideal hunting spot for the English nobles that owned it along with any guests they might bring with them to hunt on their park grounds.

These restrictions did not come without resistance. Disgruntled peasants unable by law to hunt on these grounds or use the land for other needed uses such as farmland would at times

⁸ Roger B. Manning, '*The Cultural and Social Context of Hunting*', *Hunters and Poachers: A Social and Cultural History of Unlawful Hunting in England 1485-1640*, (Oxford, 1993; online edn, Oxford Academic, 22 Mar. 2012), 1.1.

⁹ Robin S. Oggins, *The Kings and Their Hawks: Falconry in Medieval England* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2004), 111.

¹⁰ Roger B. Manning, '*The Cultural and Social Context of Hunting*', *Hunters and Poachers: A Social and Cultural History of Unlawful Hunting in England 1485-1640*, (Oxford, 1993; online edn, Oxford Academic, 22 Mar. 2012), 1.1

¹¹ Martha Carlin, and David Crouch, eds, *Lost Letters of Medieval Life : English Society*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013.), 185.

resort to poaching as a form of protest and means of taking back from the restricting game and forest laws. One letter from the King to one of his sheriffs, a hired official to look over royal parks suggests that poaching was a real problem for English lords and that infractions were taken very seriously and presumably punished equally so.¹² Specifically their punishment seems to be a pledge of money to the lord for the damages to their land or to be imprisoned if they cannot pay the due pledge.

Interestingly, the peasantry were not the only citizens frustrated with these parks. Reports show that the restrictions on the king's forest land would at times even affect those in power, fining them for a variety of offenses and false accusations. Corruption ran rampant through the royal foresters as well, only further fueling the frustration of the people. The push back against this culminated with other grievances into conflicts such as the Baron's War and even leading to the signing of the Magna Carta.¹³ This is not to say that the forest laws alone and the corruption of the foresters and sheriffs working under the king were the sole causes of such conflicts, but there is something to be said for their role in escalating already existing tensions and adding new ones to the conflict.

In hunting there was status and renown, and only then nobility had the right to earn this glory in hunting. A practice built on the idea of slaying wild game for trophy and meat would become such a pivotal cultural practice throughout Europe, and especially in England where forest laws and noble owned parks would dominate the landscape, that protests were raised and even wars fought against the rights and corruptions of this system as noble and peasant alike found themselves living in land dominated by hunting grounds.

¹² Martha Carlin, and David Crouch, eds, *Lost Letters of Medieval Life* : English Society, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013.), 185.

¹³ Martha Carlin, and David Crouch, eds, *Lost Letters of Medieval Life* : English Society, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013.), 192

At its basest form, to hunt is to gather food by finding and killing prey in the wild. All of these laws and conflicts were over what could be seen as simply a means of gathering food supply. Yet it meant so much to them than this simple definition would suggest. It was glory and masculinity; it was a means of gaining social renown; and it was even a way of showing off one's own militaristic prowess. It's this added social importance that would define the sport of medieval hunting, even to the point that the base act of gathering the food was more a second thought of the activity. Pheasant and fowl, animals commonly hunted in these parks were eaten in large quantities, but rarely form actual hunting spoils. Instead, many nobles would rely on peasant farmers who specialized in the trade of these wildfowl to sell to nobles.¹⁴

Because wildfowl flew and perched high in trees, they were thought to be one of the foods for the highborn and so were suitable for noble consumption, especially at a feast. The feast was a major event for the wealthy of Medieval society as they indulged in various dishes prepared by the kitchen staff of the lord as he ate and conversed with his guests. Such a scene can be seen in the iconic painting from the *Tres Riches Hueres* in which 15th century Frenchman, John Duke of Berry, is seen in elaborate blue adornments seated at the feast table which seems to be serving two large plates of roasted fowl in addition to a variety of other indiscernible accouterments (Fig. 1).

This display of John, Duke of Berry encapsulates what exactly it meant to partake in a feast in Medieval Europe. It was grand, it was elaborate, and it was plentiful. The feast was a means of gathering together as acquaintances to celebrate and indulge. There was a spectacle that came with these feasts, especially in English dishes where many recipes would encourage by modern standards rather outlandish displays for their foods, decorating them into unique shapes

¹⁴ Paul Freedman, *Food: The History of Taste*, (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 2007), 188-192.

and patterns such as the *pome dorreng* what sought to take a meatball and “gild” it with spices and herbs so it would resemble an orange in appearance.¹⁵ Such visual displays would add to the experience, likely in much the same way in the 21st century one might decorate an elaborate wedding cake with symbolic toppers, or get a design of a cake for a birthday party, choosing symbols and characters that are significant to the person who is celebrating that birthday.

As for the feast itself, it was typically a multi event affair with several rounds of dishes being served to the guests throughout the event as opposed to all at once from the beginning. Each segment of the feast can be segmented into courses with the number of courses and what exactly was served within these courses varying from region to region. Paul Freedman in his text, *Food: The History of Taste*, demonstrates this variation with a comparison of English meals which often saw no more than three courses and French meals that would see four or more courses.¹⁶ What was served would similarly differ with certain key foods making appearances throughout the courses such as roasts, fruits, pottages, puddings, and boiled meats.

Special care would even be taken to ensure the foods eaten would follow a certain pattern in order to follow medical advice. According to medieval medical advice, certain fruits should precede and follow a roast dish in order to maintain one’s bodily health during the feast.¹⁷ This concern for the medical health of individuals was no uncommon occurrence during the feast as even works such as the painting of Duke John show his physician standing behind him as he feasts, dictating what he should eat and how much to maintain his physical health.¹⁸ In particular, John’s court physician would be looking out primarily for his humoral characteristics, keeping

¹⁵ Melitta Weiss Adamson, *Regional Cuisine of Medieval Europe: A Book of Essays*, (New York, New York: Routledge, 2002), 27.

¹⁶ Paul Freedman, *Food: The History of Taste*, (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 2007), 188, 192.

¹⁷ Paul Freedman, *Food: The History of Taste*, (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 2007), 188.

¹⁸ Paul Freedman, *Food: The History of Taste*, (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 2007), 163.

track of what humor balance each food has and what amount of each the Duke should eat to maintain his humoral balance

The humors were the basis for medical practice and understanding in Medieval Europe. Humoral theory, deriving from the Classical Greek interpretations of the four humors, suggests that within each person is a balance of four humors; blood, phlegm, black bile, and yellow bile.¹⁹ Each of the humors is based on the four elements, fire, wind, water, and earth believed to be the basic building blocks of all things created. Within a person, these elements take on the form of the four humors, each representing a combination of hot and cold and wet and dry. It was believed then that good bodily health derived from finding balance with these forces, to ensure that one was never too hot nor too cold and to regulate one's wet and dry elements.

Referring back to the belief that all things created held aspects of these four elements or humors, it was then believed that anything that would act upon the body would in turn manipulate its humor balance. The most important of these “non-naturals” that affected the body was food. The consumption of food would thereby alter one’s humor balance and would need to be tracked to ensure one did not for example become too hot or too wet, using dry and cold dishes to even the balance. This was a job not only for the consumer of a meal and any physician they may have at hand, but the chef as well as they prepare the meal. Knowing which humors were affected by which foods and how certain cooking methods could affect this balance was vital to being a competent Medieval chef. For example, fish was perceived as a wet and cold food, so by frying it the cook could even out the wet and cold nature of the fish with the dry heat of frying. Alternatively, boiling food would enhance the wet qualities of the dish.²⁰

¹⁹ Paul Freedman, *Food: The History of Taste*, (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 2007), 167

²⁰ Paul Freedman, *Food: The History of Taste*, (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 2007), 168.

The humoral theory of food goes so far as to suggest that the capability of food to affect one's humoral balance makes it a form of medicine. Texts detailing recipes such as the *The Viandier of Taillevent* include a list of dishes labeled as "sick dishes" intended to remedy ailments the consumer was suffering as the food digests in their stomach and shifts the balance of the humors.

As could be expected, such an importance to how food could affect one's very body meant that humoral theory would play a pivotal role in dictating Medieval diet, but it was not the only factor determining Medieval diet. Religion, particularly Medieval European Christian doctrine, would play a major role in dietary practices. Perhaps the greatest influence can be seen in the periodic fastings of Medieval Christians. It was believed that purity of the soul and thus virtue in life could be obtained in part by regulating what one consumed.²¹ In terms of food, this would mean avoiding animal products on designated dates and instead resorting to a pescetarian diet that avoided meat save for fish which would have been seen as acceptable on fasting days and is often a go to source of protein for fasting day meals in various recipe books. These particular recipes would take into consideration the dates in which they were eaten, such as a salmon dish from the German *Duz Buch von Guter Spise* which includes a salmon dish which ends noting that if it a meatday, then the fish whether that be salmon or pike, can be replaced with chicken breast.²²

While the dates of religious days of fasting periods like Lent varied with the calendar, throughout most of the Middle ages people avoided meat on Mondays, Wednesdays, Fridays, and Saturdays.²³ The weekly fasting days added to the seasonal fasting days suggests that the

²¹ Paul Freedman, *Food: The History of Taste*, (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 2007), 165,166.

²² Alia Atlas, "Ein Buch von guter spise," *Medieval Cookery*, 1993, <http://www.medievalcookery.com/etexts/buch.html>.

²³ Paul Freedman, *Food: The History of Taste*, (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 2007), 166.

consumption of meat products was a rather rare occurrence even among the more elite of society that might be able to afford more food.

A final note is on the recurring theme of feasting aligned with religious dates and texts. Paul Freedman makes mention of feasts taking place on certain religious holidays.²⁴ The text, *Tres Riches Hueres*, which shows the feast of Duke John is a religious text. This seems to suggest a correlation between religious practice and feasts, a symbolism perhaps deriving from the exuberance of the event and the indulgence in finer foods to celebrate these events could hold some religious symbology to it. A celebratory indulgence in reverence to the holy significance of the date.

Now, thus far the discussion has been on the luxuries of the elite and the role food plays in these expenses even among more neutral grounds such as diet and religion with nobles still having access to more options than the common peasant. However, this is not to say they were completely without luxury, nor that they were defined solely by what they lacked. As illustrated by the previous point of feasting and religious ceremonies, books of hours contain many illustrations depicting medieval life, including the labors of the months. While these illustrations depict the hunting and feasting of the nobles, they also depict. This would suggest to some greater or lesser degree an ability for peasantry to partake in their own feasts to likewise celebrate these dates alongside the elites.

Beyond this, however, things for peasant life were not as glamorous as their wealthier counterparts. Shown in the calendar's labors of the month was a life dedicated to the constant working of fields and gardens throughout the year, year after year, to produce enough food for themselves and to give as tax or perhaps sell for a profit. In this way, food would in a way define

²⁴ Paul Freedman, *Food: The History of Taste*, (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 2007), 163-166.

their entire life, one lived to acquire and store food supplies and ensure they did not dwindle lest they wanted to suffer starvation. A stark contrast to the overabundance of food that defined noble life was the limited options of the peasants in terms of quantity, quality, and choice of food. Though I have given examples of exemptions to this rule in the form of peasants feasting or eating with silver cutlery, this is only an exception, noted as the particularly wealthy among them in secondary sources. This would mean that to lack in good dining ware and to make due with humbler meals was closer to the experience of most peasants.

That is until the famines and plagues of the fourteenth century. Following a massive rise in the European population, the populations started to decline in the 1310s-1330s because of famines, and then in the 1340s came a cataclysmic plague which severely reduced the population of Europe. The mass death would create a disparity in animals to humans present in Europe opening up to those who survived the plague more widespread meat consumption leading to a more "carnivorous Europe" as described by Paul Freedman.²⁵ While not a completely equalizing force, the catastrophe of the Black Death did allow for an upsurge in food choices among peasants, as fewer people were competing for limited resources, reducing both demand and prices.

The Analysis:

To summarize, the role of food in the history of Medieval Europe is not just as a simple means of sustenance determined by local ecosystems, but instead a social force which could define the very life of an individual within their culture. To be a peasant was to be a person of modest standing that worked much of their life growing much of the food they ate in both fields

²⁵Paul Freedman, *Food: The History of Taste*, (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 2007), 173.

and gardens. They got to keep everything they grew in their gardens, but a large percentage of what they grew in their fields they had to give to their lords, who did not work for their daily bread.²⁶ Those who labored often faced food insecurity, while nobles seemed never to lack, and if they ever labored for their food, it was in one of their favorite pastimes, hunting. Noble life was defined by an overindulgence of food and the luxuries acquired with the peasant-produced overabundance of food.

This dichotomy of social presence between peasants and nobles is equally as visible in the very foods that they ate. Not just in their quantity but in the very ingredients and presentations of the foods themselves. In noble food there is an emphasis on visual appeal, to make a pretty show of the food even above its taste, though it was unlikely to like that due to its heavy handed use of spice for both qualities.²⁷ A peasant's meal consequently was less focused on presentation and the flavorings of such spices, instead relying solely on foods they grew themselves, whether grains in the field or vegetables at home. It was more practical, meant to fill and sustain while also being as enjoyable as could be managed.

This relationship of food and social status is what inspired the following section, on recipes and the recreation of these medieval foods. To attempt to mimic their recipes and cookery as closely as is possible to experience the preparation and consumption of these foods to then better understand how they would have been understood by those who ate them.

This, however, is not as simple a taste as it might at first sound. For one, the technology of today in the twenty-first century varies quite wildly to that of medieval houses and manors. Even just to have easy access to an oven is quite the distinction as even many great houses had to

²⁶ Paul Freedman, *Food: The History of Taste*, (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 2007), 175

²⁷ Paul Freedman, *Food: The History of Taste*, (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 2007), 180- 184.

make due without one paying for outside services to prepare them baked goods.²⁸ Not to mention the significant changes that many foods have gone through in the last several hundred years. One Renaissance painting by Giovanni Stanhci presents this perfectly as his depiction of a watermelon (Fig. 4) looks nothing like that of a modern watermelon. This means that to reenact medieval cookery, some liberties would have to be made in order to maintain the core elements of the methods and foods.

The Recipes:

This information forms a foundation for the final portion of this project, recipe recreations of food from Medieval Europe. As discussed in the introduction, the historical research was primarily focused on later Medieval Europe, from the twelfth to sixteenth centuries. In addition, my sources largely focus on western continental Europe, regions in modern day France and Germany, as noted, however, this should not limit the scope of this project as different regions of Medieval Europe shared many of the same tastes and ingredients. The main differences lie in subtle distinctions in proteins and local plants available as well as influence from Middle Eastern cuisine in local diets with regions along the Mediterranean and also England being far more influenced by Middle Eastern cookery than Central and Northern Europe.²⁹

When looking through these sources, the question then became what to cook and why. My first conclusion was to sort the recipes into two sections, noble foods and peasant foods. This separation would not only produce unique recipes for each social class, showing what cooking

²⁸ Paul Freedman, *Food: The History of Taste*, (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 2007), 184.

²⁹ Paul Freedman, *Food: The History of Taste*, (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 2007), 181, 182.

methods and ingredients they would have had access to but also from an analytical perspective would show the different approaches used to understand and learn about food and cookery from each of the social classes. The former relies far more on written recipes and texts from that period, while the later relies more on more unconventional sources such as artistic depictions and descriptive works.

The next consideration was how I would approach “translating” these recipes into a more modern format. The term translated here feels rather strange as I am not doing any literal translation work into English, instead relying on already linguistically translated works to find these recipes, but I do believe that this is in some way a translation work. Recipes from the European Middle Ages were not written how recipes would be conventionally written now with a detailed list of ingredients followed by step by step instructions on how to prepare the dish with accurate measurements of both time and weights and measures. Instead, medieval recipes could be described more like a list of ingredients with intermittent unguided explanations for how they will be prepared and how it should come out in the end. Measurements are rare and, in any case, are not in any modern unit. Time or temperature measurements are sometimes given, but in vague forms like the length of certain prayers or “not too close to the fire.” These limitations can be explained in the differences in technology between then and now, but also in the different purposes in writing medieval and modern recipes. Modern recipes are written for a wide audience of would-be cooks wanting to prepare a certain dish, whereas Medieval recipes were more like modern menu descriptions at an upscale restaurant, enticing display pieces in written, showing off a meal a chef may have prepared for whichever noble family they worked for.³⁰

³⁰ Paul Freedman, *Food: The History of Taste*, (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 2007), 186.

Thus, I am in a sense “translating” these recipes over into a modern understanding of cookery as I write looking to guide others in how they might also cook these meals. I used various modern internet recipe websites and recipe books I personally own as an inspirational template from which to mold these Medieval ingredients into a cohesive recipe guide to cooking these dishes.

Noble Recipes

Ris engoule and Chicken Entremets for a Feast:

To begin our look at Medieval Europe cuisine, I’ll be starting with a combination of two separate dishes as presented in Terrance Scully’s translation of *The Viandier of Taillevent*, a collection of fourteenth-century French recipes.³¹ The translation work details a variety of recipes found throughout the collection of manuscripts ranging from feast foods, pottages, lent day meals, and even “dishes for the sick” intended to help alleviate different ailments.³² For this meal, however, I’ve chosen to go with the “Ris engoule,” translated as ‘Fancy Rice’ for meat-days, and an unnamed chicken dish found under the Entremets section of Scully’s translations. These recipes as entremets would be served during a feast in between meals for guests of the feast to snack on while they wait for the next round of food from the kitchen, comparable to the French Hors d'oeuvres for the entremets were functionally appetizers for the feast. Together, the fancy rice and chicken dishes would likely only serve as just a portion of the main entremets section of the feast with other such dishes and foods being served alongside them such as sausages, fruits, and pâtés.³³

³¹ Terrance Scully, *The Viandier of Taillevent*, (Canada: Ottawa Press, 1988), 3.

³² Terrance Scully, *The Viandier of Taillevent*, (Canada: Ottawa Press, 1988), 290.

³³ Paul Freedman, *Food: The History of Taste*, (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 2007), 188-192.

I've chosen these two dishes because they felt like a simple yet effective pairing for a sample entremet style meal. They also serve as an excellent introduction to Medieval European style foods as the ingredients used to cook them are not too far off in accessibility to what we have now and their flavor is a simple yet savory experience that would not be foreign to modern palettes. Despite their familiarity, the dishes still hold very important lessons to Medieval European noble cookery with their use of spices to manipulate the visual qualities of a dish. The visual appeal of a dish was a sign of higher status and thus a pivotal part of these noble dishes, even to the point that some recipes would list only the desired color of a dish rather than the achieved flavor with a combination of spices and herbs. The saffron, or substitute turmeric, would thus give the dishes a vibrant rust yellow look adding to its visual appeal and showing anyone that may try these recipes the importance of using spice to add color to a dish.³⁴

As a final note for the dishes, though I only show the recipes and ingredients for the two translated dishes, I personally added some additional elements to the final preparation that can be seen in the linked video below. Specifically I added cut fruit in the form of apples, almonds, and sausage. Paul Freedman in *Food: The History of Taste* explains that in French cookery it was considered proper medical practice to have certain foods such as fruits before or just after a roast, and in another section details how in French dishes fruits were often eaten raw. Thus I opted to add cut apples, blanched almonds, and some cooked sausage to fully round out the meal.³⁵ While not integral to the recipe, I would personally recommend giving it a try as it does indeed give a well rounded quality to the foods, each bringing their own unique flavors and textures to the experience with minimal additional work.

³⁴ Paul Freedman, *Food: The History of Taste*, (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 2007), 180- 184.

³⁵ Paul Freedman, *Food: The History of Taste*, (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 2007), 180-188.

Ingredients:

- Ris engoule
 - **1 cup** White Rice
 - **2 cups** Whole Milk
 - **1 ½ Tsp.** Salt, or to preference
 - **1 cup** Beef Broth
 - **1Tbs.** Butter
 - Pinch of Ground Saffron (or Turmeric)
- Chicken
 - **4-6** small Chicken Breasts
 - **1-2 Slices** Bacon per Chicken Breast
 - **1 cup** Beef Broth
 - 1 beaten Egg Yolk
 - Splash of Verjuice (Or good quality White Wine Vinegar)
 - Pinch of Saffron (or Turmeric)
 - Drizzle of Olive Oil

1: To start, make sure to wash your rice of any residual starch and dirt. Then while the rice dries, prepare your ingredients into their ideal measurements while you bring 2 cups of whole milk to a simmer.

2: Once a simmer is reached, pour in the now dried rice with a pinch of salt letting it simmer in the whole milk uncovered, stirring occasionally as to prevent burning until most of the liquid is absorbed. Next bring a large pan to medium high heat with a drizzle of olive oil to reduce stickage. Once you can feel the heat coming off the oil with your hand, place in the chicken breasts and bacon slices, a few at a time if you don't have the room. Cook each until a golden outer crust forms on the chicken and has reached an internal temperature of 165F, and when the bacon reaches your preferred doneness. Set it aside as you cook the rest of the chicken and bacon.

3: Once most of the liquid has been absorbed by the rice, add the beef broth, butter, and pinch of saffron (or turmeric), stirring the ingredients together and letting them sit. Once again let the rice simmer uncovered. Once this state is reached, place a lid on the pot and let the rice sit on the side off the heat while the chicken finishes.

4: By now all of the chicken and bacon should be fully cooked. Remove the remaining chicken and bacon from the pan and add the beef broth, splash of verjuice (or white wine vinegar), the beaten egg yolk, and pinch of saffron (or turmeric) to color. Stir these ingredients together quickly to combine before placing the chicken and bacon back into the pan. Let the meat simmer in the sauce soaking up those flavors and over time reaching a thick consistency.

5: Finally for plating, lay down a bed of rice on the side of your plate, placing a chicken breast on top with one or two slices of bacon resting on top of the chicken. Then with a ladle or spoon pour a healthy amount of sauce from the chicken pot over it all. I recommend serving these entremets with sides of seasoned sausage, cut fruits, nuts, and a glass of port wine. Together these create a wonderfully complex flavor palette with the rich savory flavors of the main entremet playing nicely with spiced sausage and sweeter fruits, and it also helps emulate how an entremet may have more accurately looked during a feast.

Original Recipes:

- Ris engoule:
 - “Cull the rice and wash it thoroughly in hot water and set it to dry by the fire, then cook it in simmering cow's milk; then add ground saffron infused in your milk, to lend it a russet colour, and greasy beef broth from the pot.³⁶”

³⁶ Terrance Scully, *the Viandier of Taillevent*, (Canada: Ottawa Press, 1988), 288.

- Unnamed Chicken Recipe:
 - “Quarter chickens and sautee them in a pot with rashers of bacon stirring frequently and keeping the lid tight; then, after frying, take beef broth and cook them in it; then add beaten egg yolks, verjuice and saffron. It should be quite thick. Serv the quarters on plates, and on each plate place a rasher of bacon and then pour your broth over top.³⁷”

Video Script:

“Hello, my name is Ryan Divens, an honors student at the University of Arizona and in this video demonstration I will be cooking a fancy rice dish and unnamed meat entremets from the *Viandier of Taillevent* as translated by Terrance Scully.³⁸ The recipe consists of a white rice dish simmered in cows’ milk and seasoned with beef broth and saffron, and a chicken dish served with bacon and a broth and verjuice-based sauce.

To begin, by this point in the video I have begun the prep work for the meal, cutting apples and getting my saffron ground with a pinch of salt. Meanwhile I have a pot of 2 cups of whole milk beginning to simmer on the back burner as I prepare the two front burners for the sausage, chicken and bacon. The chicken and sausage will want to be cooked to roughly have an internal temperature of 160-165F while the bacon can be cooked to your preferred doneness. The sausage goes into a smaller pan with roughly half a tbsp of butter while the chicken and bacon go into the larger pan with a drizzle of olive oil mostly to help prevent sticking as they cook. From here I will periodically check on the meats while I wait for the milk to reach a full simmer before adding in a cup of previously washed white rice.

³⁷ Terrance Scully, *the Viandier of Taillevent*, (Canada: Ottawa Press, 1988), 287.

³⁸ Terrance Scully, *the Viandier of Taillevent*, (Canada: Ottawa Press, 1988), 287-88.

The sausage, apple slices, and briefly seen bowl of almonds may seem out of place so far as none of them appear as though they would be ingredients on either of these dishes, and it's true as they're present to serve as additional entremets for this meal. See, an entremets is a dish served between the main courses of a feast. As presented in Paul Freedman's *Food: The History of Taste*, foods such as fruit, sausages, and nuts would make common additions to the entremets stage of a feast.³⁹

By now the meats are cooking well, getting a good color to them and the milk has reached a full simmer, so in goes the cup of rice along with a healthy pinch of salt for flavor. From here I'll occasionally stir the rice until most of the liquid is absorbed into it and finish cooking the meat.

With the sausage finished and the bacon done, I'm finishing up the chicken here as I move onto the next step of or the rice, adding one cup of beef broth, a pinch of saffron till nice and yellow, and unseen in the video, a tablespoon of butter added to the rice, stirring all those ingredients together and letting it continue to simmer until the liquid is fully absorbed by the rice.

This only takes just a few more minutes of cooking, and right as the chicken comes to temp meaning that I can set the rice aside, covered to keep it warm and move onto the sauce making step of the meat dish. To the pan I'll add another cup of beef broth with a good glug or two of white wine vinegar, a substitute for verjuice I could not get my hands on for this video, a beaten egg yolk, and a pinch of saffron again looking for that distinct yellow color. Here I am adding the ingredients of the sauce to the pan like the original recipe seems to imply, but in later

³⁹ Paul Freedman, *Food: The History of Taste* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), 188.

testing, that can be seen later on in this video, I would suggest mixing these ingredients together first then adding back in the Chicken and Bacon.

Finally, after some time letting the meats get to mix with the sauce, everything is ready to be plated up. A nice bed of rice with a piece of chicken and bacon on top with a drizzle of the sauce served alongside a piece of sausage, apple slices, and some almonds and the plate is complete. The main dish is rich and savory with a slight tart bite from the vinegar that plays very well with the spiced heat of the sausage, the sweetness of the apples, and the dry nuttiness of the almonds. I personally suggest serving this dish alongside a sweeter wine. We went for a port wine for one of the times we've cooked this and I think it adds an additional sweetness to the dish rounding out the flavors.

As the video finishes, you'll see a brief recreation of the meat portion to test the previously stated method of stirring the sauce alone then adding back the meat. As well, another thought I've had on this recipe is extending just how long the chicken and bacon simmer in the sauce as to tenderize the meat making it easier to eat using a spoon, which was the dominant eating utensil of the time next to the knife with little evidence of forks being used for eating.⁴⁰ As a final word, as the rest of this video plays out, I highly recommend this meal to anyone curious about the tastes of Medieval cookery but are worried about flavors and ingredients that are too far removed from modern recipes. With that I hope you enjoy the rest of this video presentation.”

Video Link: <https://youtu.be/kPmMbTPsR8w>

⁴⁰ Paul Freedman, *Food: The History of Taste*, (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 2007), 194

Diz ist ein gut spise von eime lahs (A Good Food of a Salmon):

For this next and final recipe for the noble meals section, we'll be looking at a recipe from the 14th century German cookery transcripts known as the *Duz Buch von Guter Spise*. This text made for a particularly interesting challenge when gathering information on it as it has no published readily available translation, as was the case for *The Viandier of Taillevent*; however, thanks to a reliable open access translation found online by Doctor Milliman, I was able to gather a sense of what was being presented in the recipes of the *Duz Buch von Guter Spise*. The dish I had chosen to go with, *Diz ist ein gut spise von eime lahs*, or “this is a good food of a salmon,” is a dish that incorporates fish as its main protein surrounding it with bread and seasoning it with various herbs, seasonings, and ginger⁴¹. Aside from the unusual preparation of the dish by modern standards, the *diz ist ein gut spise von eime lahs* presents a look into a major point in Medieval European cooking, fasting and Lent.

The Christian church was one of the most dominant forces in Medieval Europe dictating many factors of life at that time, even down to food and eating practices, primarily, as highlighted in this particular dish, periodic fasting from meat. Starting as early as the 4th century, there was a link in European food practices and Christian views on purity and moderation.⁴² For these devout Christians, it was important to watch what they eat and ensure they did not slip too far into gluttony. An important note though is that this Christian fasting is not a full abstinence of food, but rather a restraint from certain foods to limit one's intake of certain foods, mainly meats with fish being a distinct exception. The practice is link to Catholic Lent, a practice still seen in the 21st century in Catholic communities, but is also seen periodically throughout the week and on other significant dates throughout the year with each period and region having their own

⁴¹ Alia Atlas, “Ein Buch von guter spise,” *Medieval Cookery*, 1993, <http://www.medievalcookery.com/etexts/buch.html>.

⁴² Paul Freedman, *Food: The History of Taste* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), 165.

stipulations and schedules for what is a “meat day” and what is a “fast day.”⁴³ It's primarily for this particular focus on religious fasting practiced in Medieval European eating that led me to decide on this German salmon dish. At the end of the recipe's translation it gives mention to meat days suggesting how the dish could be modified for such days using chicken breasts in place of the fish.

Aside from this major reason, I also chose this recipe as it helps highlight a major theme in this project in bringing Medieval Recipes to the modern table. This recipe sits in a rather peculiar place among these recipes as a spiced salmon dish that calls for an unspecified fresh dough to cover the salmon before cooking. I chose to go forward with this recipe to show how we in the 21st century can adapt these foods to modern methods and practices while keeping the core elements and presentation of the dish that define much of the dish. To be precise, I chose to approach this dish as a Medieval spin on salmon wellington, a savory pastry dish that looks to take seasoned salmon and surround it in puff pastry.⁴⁴ What we get as an end result of this modern meets Medieval dish is a meal that is rich in salmon flavor with the chosen spices and ginger shining through, finished off by the buttery richness of the puff pastry to create a fulfilling approximation to what was intended by the original author.

Ingredients:

- **1 Pound** Salmon, deskinned
- **1 Tbsp.** Fresh Parsley and Sage
- **1 Tbsp.** grated Ginger (or ground ginger)

⁴³ Paul Freedman, *Food: The History of Taste*, (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 2007), 166.

⁴⁴ “Puff Pastry Salmon (Salmon Wellington),” Tasty. BuzzFeed, May 23, 2019, <https://tasty.co/recipe/puff-pastry-salmon-salmon-wellington>

- **1 Tsp.** Anise seed
- **1 Tsp.** Salt
- **1 Tsp.** Peper
- **1 Pound** Puff Pastry
- 1 Egg for egg wash

1: To begin, preheat your oven to 425F. Then get your seasonings and herbs ready by plucking and chopping the fresh parsley and sage and setting them aside. Then grate, peel and grate the ginger and set aside along with the herbs.

2: Before getting started with cooking, be sure to look over your salmon feeling along the meat for any bone fragments that may have been forgotten by the butcher. Next, if your salmon has its skin still on it grab a sharp knife and grab a corner of the salmon meat. Then slowly begin to run the knife along the skin wedging it between the skin and the flesh. Be sure to have the sharp end of the knife angled downward more towards the skin side of the filet.

3: Take the newly cleaned salmon and add the salt, pepper, sage and parsley, ginger, and anise seed, spreading the seasonings along the top and bottom of the salmon evenly. Then place the seasoned salmon onto the bottom half of your puff pastry and cover with the second half of your puff pastry. Cut off the excess pastry dough and pinch the edges closed before rolling them under the bundle. Now give the pastry dough an egg wash and score the top with a knife. I recommend scoring the dough into a scale pattern to mimic a fish, a fun presentational look that wouldn't have been out of place in Medieval cookery.

5: Place the pastry-covered salmon onto a baking sheet covered pan and place in the oven for 20-25 minutes or until the puff pastry has risen and is a golden brown in color. Once cooked through and golden brown, take out of the oven, slice up, and enjoy.

Original Recipe:

- “Take a salmon. Scrape off the scales. Split it and cut it into pieces. Cut parsley (and) sage. Take ground ginger, pepper, anise. Salt to mass. Make a dough (possibly freshly made as opposed to sourdough) also the size of the piece (of salmon). And throw the herb on the piece. And surround it with the dough. Stamp it in a form if you can. Thus you may make pike (and) trout. And bake individually in a dough.⁴⁵”

Video Script:

“Hello, my name is Ryan Divens, an honors student at the University of Arizona and in this next video presentation I will be cooking a Medieval German meal known as *diz ist ein gut spise von eime lahs* which roughly translates to, this is a dish of good salmon. Indeed it is a good salmon dish deriving from the Medieval texts, *Duz Buch von Guter Spise*.⁴⁶ The recipe includes salmon, fresh dough, salt, pepper, ginger, anise seed, and fresh parsley and sage.

To begin, I set my oven to 425F to preheat as I prepared my salmon by cutting the skin off of mt filet, a process which requires slowly driving the knife between the skin and meat sliding down with the edge pointed towards the skin. This presents one particularly large deviation from the original recipe that recommends only descaling the skin, but in my effort to translate this recipe over to a modern context, I’ve opted to take a salmon wellington style approach, which means for my fresh dough I used puff pastry, and for my salmon I would be better off not including the skin.

⁴⁵ Alia Atlas, “Ein Buch von guter spise,” Medieval Cookery, 1993, <http://www.medievalcookery.com/etexts/buch.html>.

⁴⁶Alia Atlas, “Ein Buch von guter spise,” Medieval Cookery, 1993, <http://www.medievalcookery.com/etexts/buch.html>.

Once the salmon was rid of its skin, I moved on to prepping the seasonings, which meant chopping the herbs, grating the ginger, and in an experimental step on my part, grinding the ginger with a bit of anise seed and salt to see if this would help the flavors pop a bit. Regardless. Once this was done, the next step was to rub these seasonings along with the herbs and a bit of extra salt and pepper all over the salmon. With that, it would be ready for the puff pastry.

I layed the seasoned salmon atop the lower half before I covered the whole salmon with the rest of the puff pastry, cutting off the excess and closing the sides. To this I pinched the two pieces together and tucked them under the main body of the salmon. Then I gave the salmon a quick egg wash and scored the top with a sharp knife. I tried and partially succeeded in attempting to make the scoring pattern look like the scales of a fish as such humorous presentations would not be out of place in such noble meals.⁴⁷

Afterwards, I put the pastry into the oven letting it cook on the middle rack for 20 to 25 minutes, or until the pastry was a nice golden brown and had risen a bit. This dish is a rather interesting look into Medieval noble culinary history as on one hand it serves as an excellent example of a fasting day meal, as discussed in the written introduction to the recipe. On the other hand, it also serves as an example of foods that would likely have been acquired on specially marked hunting grounds, or ponds in this case. Seen especially in Medieval England, dedicated park land would be preserved for nobles to hunt and fish in with various shipments of new animals sent to keep the areas stocked, including freshwater fish for the ponds.⁴⁸

Moving on from that historical anecdote. Once the pastry had risen and reached that golden brown, I removed it from the oven and let it cool for 5 minutes before cutting it into even

⁴⁷ Paul Freedman, *Food: The History of Taste*, (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 2007), 180- 184.

⁴⁸ Martha Carlin, and David Crouch, eds, *Lost Letters of Medieval Life : English Society*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013.), 185-191,192.

pieces and served it up. The dish is incredibly flavorful with a strong yet not unpleasant taste of ginger and anise seed complimented nicely by the herbs and other seasonings. The salmon was moist and tender, cooked perfectly in the pastry dough, and finished off with the buttery aftertaste of the puff pastry. That will do it for this recipe, so as with all of these recipes I do hope I have inspired you to give them a try and that you enjoy the rest of the demonstration.”

Video Link: <https://youtu.be/qw9y5FRZzlQ>

Peasant Recipes:

Pea Pottage for Fast and Meat Days:

For the peasant meal section, acquiring a recipe to cook, discuss, and present for this section was a wholly unique challenge compared to the noble recipes, but one I nonetheless found a suitable answer for. For this section of the recipes I'll be taking a look at two different interpretations of the same dish, a simple pea pottage as described in *The Good Wife's Guide*. *The Good Wife's Guide*, as the name suggests, is a Medieval European text from later 14th century France where the narrator, an older husband, is taking on the role of a husband enlightening his new bride on how to be a good and proper wife of the home.⁴⁹ The text covers a variety of topics on household management and wifely duties as expected of Medieval European standards, including food preparation and cooking. It's in the later sections of the text in this particular section that I use the husband narrator's instructions of how to prepare a pea pottage to get the core basis of these meals.⁵⁰ This I would describe as the easy portion of the recipe preparation.

⁴⁹ Gina Greco and Christine Rose, *The Good Wife's Guide*, Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 2009), 2.

⁵⁰ Gina Greco and Christine Rose, *The Good Wife's Guide*, Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 2009), 276, 277.

As noted by Paul Freedman in *Food: the History of Taste*, the amount of historical resources on Medieval peasant cookery, or for that matter general life, is quite slim compared to the abundance of sources on higher class individuals.⁵¹ Thus I needed to get a bit creative for coming up with a recipe that would suitably present peasant cookery. The Good Wife's Guide serves as a decent starting point as the husband narrator is of more modest standings compared to many of the nobles presented in other texts as can be seen in his choice of foods shown in the food preparation section. In particular, just before the section on pea pottage and how to properly handle various peas and beans, the husband narrator has several instructions on unsalted foods and their various cooking needs. Fresher foods were a symbol then of higher status living as one of noble standing could afford to order freshly butchered meat and eat it before it goes bad. Those of lower standing, however, that could not always purchase or butcher their own fresh meats would need to preserve it in order to keep it edible longer.⁵² While this text gets us closer to what a peasant recipe might have looked like, some additional research was necessary to bridge the gap between this well-to-do Parisian and a peasant living in a village.

So, now that I had a basis for the meal, a pea pottage, I needed to expand upon this as pottage alone would not suffice for this project, nor was it the only factor of most peasant meals. As explained in an informative academic short video titled, *Daily Life*, peasants typically ate what they grew. In other words that means a variety of grain and vegetable based meals such as pottages, porridges, breads, and brewer grain beers.⁵³ This was a promising start, and one I could back up with textual evidence presented in Paul Freedman's *Images of the Medieval Peasant*. In

⁵¹ Paul Freedman, *Food: The History of Taste*, (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 2007), 164.

⁵² Paul Freedman, *Food: The History of Taste*, (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 2007), 169.

⁵³ Infobase, ClickView Pty Limited, and Video Education America. *Daily Life*. Wilberg Presents Medieval England. 2017. 5:50.
https://fod-infobase-com.ezproxy3.library.arizona.edu/p_ViewVideo.aspx?xtid=161207.

it he describes a nasty medieval description of peasants comparing them to farm animals who may as well crawl around on all fours and so might have an easier time eating their food from the ground. As harsh and likely exaggerated as the words are, they do nonetheless present in important enough insight to peasant diets, that being its emphasis on foods produced from the ground.⁵⁴

At this point I had a solid basis for a pea pottage, but I wanted to round off the meal with a main protein, so I had to go for other sources. I knew that meats were rare for peasants to have access to, particularly fresh meats, but that did not mean it was impossible for them to have access to it. Calendars from books of hours have illustrations of the labors of the months, which depict peasants throughout the year participating in various labors and festivities for each month (Fig. 3). In this labor calendar around December as winter hits, it shows a peasant in his home with a presumably butchered pig and fish hanging on his wall ready to be preserved. This shows that while not always readily available to them, peasants could in fact have access to pork and fish based meat for meals.

At last with all of these factors together, I could create a basis for these recipes; a pea based pottage served with a protein (pork or fish), a side of bread, and a beer for an optional side drink. This goes to show that process that had to go into understanding what exactly a peasant in medieval Europe ate on a typical basis as modern historians do not always have the same luxuries of written out cookbooks and manuscripts on cookery that are commonplace for many later Medieval aristocratic dishes. Then with this final basis, I chose to split the recipe into two sections as was done with the noble meals. One would be a meat day pottage meal and the other a fast day pottage meal.

⁵⁴ Paul Freedman, *Images of the Medieval Peasant* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1999), 144.

The final note to add about these two recipes is that I opted to use ingredients that were of ease to access today in the 21st century, pulling inspiration from modern takes on Medieval pea pottage and using meats and grains that would today be easy for anyone of any social standing to get their hands on allowing the dishes to retain their authentic quality as everyday-persons meals. For example I used bacon for the pork as it is an easy meat to buy at any market. As is the same for the use of salmon for the meat. This was a rather complicated choice as large freshwater fish such as salmon were a noble's food, but in sticking with this section's theme of adapting these medieval recipes to a modern context to better understand them, I've chosen to stick with salmon as it was the cheapest fish option at the market I went to.⁵⁵ Then for the pottage I used a premade vegetable stock as opposed to the instructions presented in the *Good Wife's Guide* that encourage boiling the peas and onions multiple times to create an equivalent homemade vegetable stock.⁵⁶ As well, I added carrots, garlic, and celery which are all easy to access ground grown vegetables commonly found in modern iterations of the pottage that could feasibly be grown in a personal home garden where Medieval peasants would likely acquire many or all of their herbs and vegetables.

Pea Pottage Meal for Meat Day:

Ingredients:

- **2 Cans** Peas
- **2 quarts** Meat Broth of your choice
- **2 Tbsp.** Butter

⁵⁵ Paul Freedman, *Food: The History of Taste*, (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 2007), 194.

⁵⁶ Gina Greco and Christine Rose, *The Good Wife's Guide*, Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 2009), 276, 277.

- Yellow Onion
- Garlic
- Celery
- Carrots
- Salt, to taste
- Pepper, to taste
- **2 Tbsp.** Sage (or herb of choice)
- Bacon
- Rustic Bread, Sliced

1: Begin by washing your vegetables and any fresh herbs you may wish to include in the recipe. Then peel and chop the carrots to half an inch, peel and mince or crush the garlic, mince the onion, and cut up the celery into thin slices. Set all vegetables aside.

2: Bring a large pot to medium-high heat and add the butter till it's melted and begun to get bubbly. Add the minced garlic and onions and stir until fragrant and beginning to blonde around the edges of the garlic. Now add the diced carrots, celery slices, and the peas, ideally washed before adding. Stir fry the ingredients together for a few minutes as the heat and fat begins to break the vegetables down.

3: Add the broth of your choice (I went with chicken broth as it was what I had on hand) and bring the whole pot to a steady simmer. Leave it uncovered and stir on occasion for about 20 minutes or until a constant bubbling simmer is reached and the vegetables have begun to soften. Now add the salt, pepper, and chosen herbs (a bay leaf floating on top would do well here), and let the pottage continue to simmer covered with a lid until a desired consistency is reached, roughly 30 to 40 minutes for a thicker pottage and sooner for a soupier broth like pottage.

4: While the pottage simmers covered, bring a flat pan to medium high heat and add rashers of bacon cooking to a desired doneness. Alternatively, preheat your oven to 425F just as you cover the pottage. Place the rashers of bacon onto a baking rack over a flat oven pan and add it to the oven once it's come to heat. Cook for 15-25 minutes, or until desired doneness is reached. Then in either case, place the bacon on the side on a paper towel covered plate to catch excess grease.

5: At this time as the bacon begins to cook and the pottage is reaching your desired doneness, start cutting your bread if it is not already and set aside as you begin to plate up. Then chop up a rasher or two of bacon and add it to the pottage for the last 5 minutes of simmering,

6: Once everything is to your desired completion, pour a ladleful of pottage into a bowl then on a side plate grab the rashers of bacon and bread slices. Optionally serve alongside a glass of milk or light beer and enjoy.

Pottage of Peas for Fast Days:

Ingredients:

- **2 Cans Peas**
- **2 quarts** Vegetable Stock
- **2 Tbsp.** Vegetable Oil
- Yellow Onion
- Garlic
- Celery
- Carrots
- Salt, to taste

- Pepper, to taste
- **2 Tbsp.** Sage (or herb of choice)
- **1 pound** Salmon Filet
- Rustic Bread, Sliced

1: Begin by washing your vegetables and any fresh herbs you may wish to include in the recipe. Then peel and chop the carrots to half an inch, peel and mince or crush the garlic, mince the onion, and cut up the celery into thin slices. Set all vegetables aside.

2: Bring a large pot to medium-high heat and add the oil waiting for when you can feel the heat ride off of the oil and it gets a glistening sheen. Add the minced garlic and onions and stir until fragrant and beginning to blonde around the edges of the garlic. Now add the diced carrots, celery slices, and the peas, ideally washed before adding. Stir fry the ingredients together for a few minutes as the heat and fat begins to break the vegetables down.

3: Add the vegetable stock and bring the whole pot to a steady simmer. Leave it uncovered and stir on occasion for about 20 minutes or until a constant bubbling simmer is reached and the vegetables have begun to soften. Now add the salt, pepper, and chosen herbs (a bay leaf floating on top would do well here), and let the pottage continue to simmer covered with a lid until a desired consistency is reached, roughly 30 to 40 minutes for a thicker pottage and sooner for a soupier broth like pottage.

4: While the pottage simmers, begin to prepare your salmon filet. If your salmon filet has skin, scrape off the scales by running a sharp knife against the grain of the scales until you cannot feel and scale on the filet anymore. Bring a skillet or pan to medium-high heat with a drizzle of oil and season your salmon filet with salt and pepper on each side. Once the pan has come to heat, add the salmon skin side up if your filet still has its skin and leave it for at least 5

minutes or until the filet can freely move without sticking to develop a good crust along the top. Then flip it and continue to cook on the other side, developing a crust there as well and bringing the filet to an internal temp of 120/125F.

5: At this time as the bacon begins to cook and the pottage is reaching your desired doneness, start cutting your bread if it is not already and set aside as you begin to plate up.

6: Once everything is to your desired completion, pour a ladleful of pottage into a bowl then on a side plate place your finished salmon filet and bread slices. Optionally serve alongside a glass of milk or light beer and enjoy.

Video Script:

“Hello my name is Ryan Divens, an honors student at the University of Arizona and in this final video demonstration I’ll be showing you a two part interpretation of a Medieval peasant special, pea pottage. For the base of this recipe I’ll be using canned sweet peas, onion, garlic, carrot, and celery along with a broth or stock of choice for the pottage. Then on the sides will be a fresh loaf of rustic bread and a choice protein. Starting off this video is me retrieving the rustic bread for this meal before getting underway with the vegetables. To get the vegetables ready, I peeled and chopped the carrots, diced the onion, peeled the garlic, and sliced up the celery.

Once finished, I began to get the pots ready to cook, but first I should explain here the reasoning behind the two pottages you’ll be seeing in this video. Diet in Medieval Europe was heavily influenced by religion, with dedicated fasting days taking up much of the year.⁵⁷ On these fasting days meats and other animal products would be replaced instead with fasting appropriate ingredients such as fish. Thus, as you will see in the video I’ve separated the pottages

⁵⁷ Paul Freedman, *Food: The History of Taste*, (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 2007), 165, 166.

into a meat day and fasting day pottage with the meat day pottage cooking the onion and garlic in butter while the larger fasting day pottage is cooking them in olive oil. I would personally recommend a higher smoke point oil, but that was all I had at hand at the time of making this video.

In either case the onion and garlic go to cook in the pots until fragrant and the garlic begins to become blonde around the edges. After which I add the rest of the vegetables including the peas which hopefully you remember to decan and wash before recording unlike myself, and begin to stir fry them for a bit letting the pieces get even more fragrant.

Finally, once the vegetables had begun to soften up, I added the respective broth and stock to the pots. In my case, one quart of vegetable stock for the fasting day pottage and half a quart of chicken broth for the meat day pottage. I would recommend when cooking this at home to up the ingredients and use a larger pot for about 2 quarts of stock or broth. One quart fed two people so using the measurements as listed in the recipe should feed about 4 to 5 people.

After adding the broth and stock, I let the pots sit uncovered for 20 to 25 minutes to simmer, stirring occasionally to prevent burning at the bottom as we begin to move onto the side proteins. First, for my fasting day pottage I've chosen to go for a filet of salmon seasoning it with salt and pepper just before adding skin up, if you still have its skin on it, to a pan I've heated to medium high heat and added olive oil to. Then I let the filet sit unbothered for 5 or so minutes to develop a nice crust. Once the crust had formed and the salmon moved on its own without sticking, I flipped it and cooked until it reached an internal temperature of 125F. Once the filet was finished I set it aside in a low oven to keep it warm as I finished the pottages and moved onto the next protein.

For the meat day meal I've gone for some simple rashers of bacon as pork would have been a common meat available to Medieval peasants, as seen on the December labor of figure 2 at the end of the main thesis document. Cooking the bacon was simple enough as I just added a few at a time to a flat pan heated to medium high heat and let them cook to my desired doneness.

By this point the pottages have finished simmering and so I added salt, pepper, and dry herbs, in this case rosemary, before covering and letting simmer until the pottages reached my desired texture. There's no solid time I could give for this as this would depend on the heat of your stove and how mushy or soupy you might prefer your pottage to be. For mine, I would say it took about 40 to 45 minutes to reach a nice thick consistency. Throughout this time I made sure to stir occasionally again to prevent burning, and for the meat day pottage adding some diced up bacon for the last 5 minutes of cooking.

Finally, as the pottages simmer covered, I cut up the rustic bread into slices and got the dishes ready for plating. Once the pottages were done simmering, I poured a ladleful into bowls and set alongside it a few slices of bread and the protein of choice.

The end result is an excellent meal that I highly recommend everyone watching this try at least once in your life. It's a simple but flavorful meal that's very filling and easy to make at home as well. The meats can be easily bought at any market and the vegetables could even be grown in your own garden, just as many peasants would in Medieval Europe to make these recipes themselves.⁵⁸ I know I for one will be returning to this recipe in the future for simple dinner plans. All that said, I hope you enjoy the rest of the video presentation.”

Video Link: <https://youtu.be/pzaZujuQBfo>

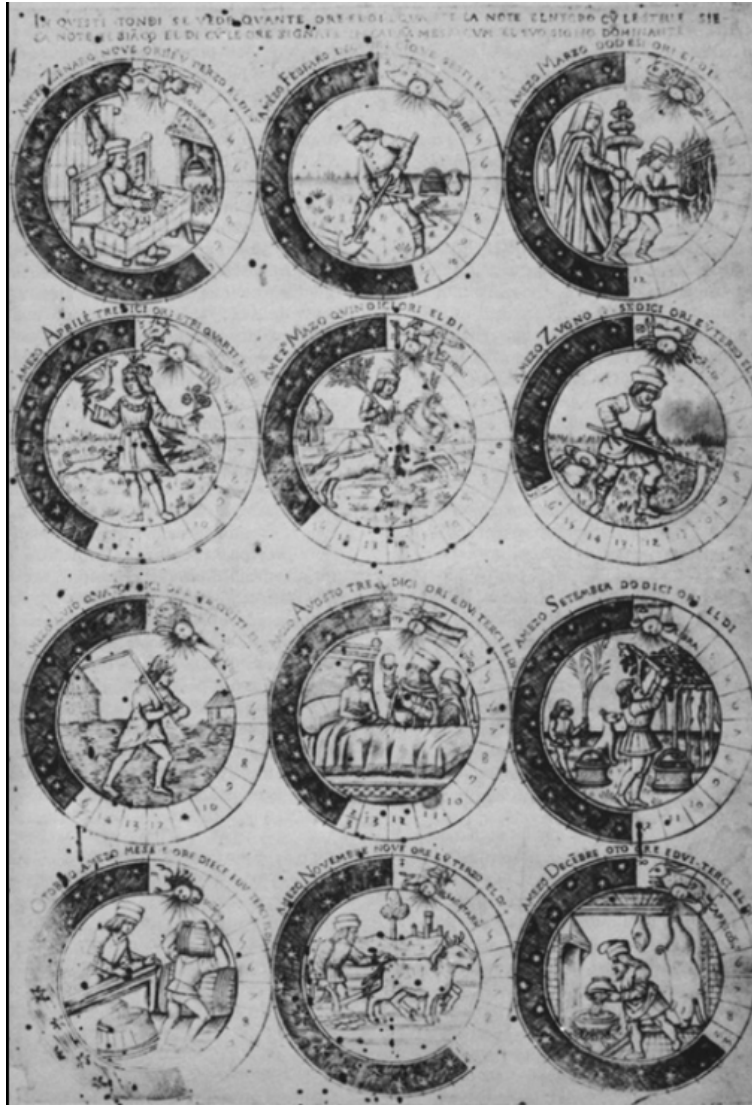
⁵⁸ Paul Freedman, *Food: The History of Taste*, (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 2007), 175.

Images



(Figure 1)

John, Duke of Berry, depicted in blue robes, c. 1411 C.E., from the Tres Riches Heures, acquired through Artstor. John is depicted sitting alone at the feasts table with his physician to his left guiding him on what foods to eat.



(Figure 2)

A calendar with labors of the months and Christian feast days, c. 1470 C.E., Warsaw, MA Repository, acquired through Artstor. This ancient calendar depicts the twelve months of the year along with the twelve labors and Christian feasts associated with each month.



(Figure 3)

A Calendar of Labor's November entry, c. 1520-1530 C.E., Walter Arts Museum, acquired on The Walters Ex Libris. Depicts the slaughtering of a pig by peasants as part of their winter labors.



(Figure 4)

A Renaissance Era painting by Giovanni Stanchi, c. 1645-1672 C.E., acquired on Wikimedia Commons. Presents an array of various fruits and vegetables including watermelon, peaches, and pears.

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