

From Libro di cucina/ Libro per cuoco (14th/15th c.)

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V. Blancmange.

If you want to make blancmange for twelve people, take four pounds of almonds, one pound of rice, four hens (chickens), two pounds of grease (lard), a pound and a half of sugar and half a quarter (of an ounce) of cloves. Peel the almonds, reserve some whole, grind the remainder and prepare almond milk by soaking with clean water and straining. Take rice that has been hulled, picked over, washed with hot water and dried and grind to a fine powder and strain. Take the chickens that have been cut into pieces and boil them a little. Shred the cooked chicken meat finely and fry gently in the grease. Meanwhile put most of the almond milk in a pan and bring to a boil. Mix the reserved, cold, almond milk with the rice flour and allow it to soak. When the almond milk boils mix it with the soaked rice flour and return to the pan. Boil the rice flour and almond milk together until it thickens, immediately add the shredded fried chicken and the fat from the pan. Mix this mixture frequently to prevent burning and sticking and add the sugar. When the dish is cooked pour into a bowl to serve. Dress the dish with rosewater, sugar, the reserved almonds that have been fried and cloves. This dish should be very white like snow and potent with spices.

XVII Capons or hens stuffed

If you want to make two capons for 12 persons. Take two fresh cheeses and 12 eggs and take two ounces of sweet spices, half a pound of fresh lard and take the capons well washed and skinned and let them boil. When they are well cooked, strip all (of the flesh off) and pull out the bones and reserve. And beat the meat with some leaves of parsley, and mint and marjoram, and of the said spices, and the cheese that has been well mixed to a paste, and enough of the eggs (to bind the paste). Of these things make a good batter, fine and soft and well yellow, and good presence of spices. Take chopped (broken up) these bones and redress each one for it is according that it nails in part of this batter (reform the meat paste around the bones). And put each in rashers of pork and fry in lard. And when they are fried, powder with the said spices. Take strained egg yolks and whites and spices and saffron, temper with juice of grapes crushed or with verjuice or with the capon broth, and of this stuff make a good sauce, and put it to boil. Then you want to put these bones stuffed in this boiling broth, when it is cooked serve it in a bowl and the capons in platters. This dish should be a strong yellow (color) and sour with verjuice. If you want to make it for more persons or for less take the things of this measure by same proportion.

* the first of several complex recipes. The capons are cooked, mashed, made into a paste with herbs and spices, reformed around the bones (which must be the leg bones), wrapped in rashers and fried in lard. These fritters are then finished in a broth made of eggs, spices and a liquid (verjuice, grape juice or stock). The meat is served on a platter and the sauce in a bowl separately.

XXV Mushrooms

If you want to make mushrooms, take dried mushrooms and put them to soak in hot water and wash them well. Then boil them a little and make them cook how you want and prefer. Then take onions and herbs and season with strong and sweet spices, and then add the mushrooms and fry everything together. Take unpeeled almonds and grind them and then put on top of the mushroom dish, alternatively you can add verjuice and it needs to be served hot.

XXVI Magnificent Imperial Fritters

If you want to make Imperial fritters, take the whites of eggs and slices of fresh cheese. Beat them (the cheese) with the white of the egg, and add a little bit of wheat flour and whole peeled pine nuts. Take a frying pan with plenty of grease (oil) and put it to boil (heat) then make the fritters (fry in the fat). When they are cooked sprinkle them with plenty of sugar and keep them hot, etc.

XXIV Apple fritters for lent.

Take apples and peel them, then cut in the way of the host (thin circular slices). Make a batter of flour with saffron (and presumably water), and add currants, and put the apples in this batter; then fry them in sufficient oil for each. Powder with sugar when they are cooked, etc.

XXXIII Common good fish aspic

To make aspic of fish for 12 people. Take three large tench, two ounces of strong and sweet spices together and half a quarter (of an ounce) of saffron for this. Wash the fish well and put it in the sun for a little while (to dry?), then put it to boil in part water, part vinegar. When it is well boiled the first things that you add are the said spices and saffron. Boil everything well closed and very slowly. When it is cooked pull it (the fish) out and put it to cool. Have enough laurel (bay) leaves, well washed and powdered with the said spices. Then put the fish into a vessel, and let the jelly rest. You can either boil it with saffron or not. When it (the jelly) is chilled and a little set pour it over the fish, and add enough spices and it is done, etc.

XXXVIII Lasagne

If you want to make lasagne in lent, take the lasagne (wide pasta noodles) and put them to cook (in water and salt). Take peeled walnuts and beat and grind them well. Put them between the lasagna (in layers), and guard from smoke (while reheating). And when they go to the table dress them with a dusting of spices and with sugar.

XL A white and rich “migliaciti” (cake)

If you want to make white cake in the best way that you can for 12 persons. Take enough leaven (fermenting bread dough) that is (for) about a bread and a half, take water that is a little hot and mix it with the leaven so that it makes strings (breaks up). Take four fresh, good fat cheeses, ten eggs, two pounds of fresh lard that has been well rendered with little smoke and well strained. And when the leaven is well working put it above flour in quantities of about a dish (scudella pizola a dish of a specific and constant size), and put in a little water, and put in the chopped cheese (one of the three) and add the eggs that you have. Make this batter/dough soft and tender, and put it into a hot but not too hot “testo” (pie dish designed to cook pies on the fire) which has been well greased. And scatter above the two cheeses that you have chopped well, and above it add the hot strained lard that you have, and put it to cook. And if you want to make for more persons or for less take the ingredients in the same way.

XLV Mortarolo (a ground/pasted) dish for twelve people.

If you want to make a “mortarolo” for twelve people. Take six hens, 4 fresh strained cheese, eighteen eggs, half a pound of almonds, one (pound) of dates, half an ounce of whole ginger, a

half a quarter (of an ounce) of cloves and three ounces of pine nuts. Make half a pound of sweet spices powdered. [Dish one] Take a pork belly and let it boil until it is well cooked. Take the cheese that you have, some of the spices, a quantity of parsley, mint and sage and of these things make a good chopped mixture (with the pork). And when you have a good chopped mix use it to constitute the middle of either “tortelli” (tortellini) or “rafioli” (ravioli) *1. Fry them (tortelli or ravioli) in good fresh strained lard, and when they are fried powder them with spices. [Dish 2] Take the hens and chop them up and fry them in a frying pan, adding enough of the previously mentioned spices. When they have fried a good bit take the peeled whole almonds and put them above the frying (chicken) and put above (into the frying pan) enough water that they can cook completely (to cover). [Dish 3] Take the dates and pull forward the nuts, that is to say the pits within (the date) and wash them well. Then stuff them well with chopped ginger and cinnamon and cloves and then the dates are done. Take the mixtures that you have, the hen [dish 2], and the ravioli and tortelli [dish 1] and the dates [dish 3] and the peeled pine nuts, and well washed currants. Have a pie pan and put a good crust on the bottom and another in half (at the top, dividing the pie into two halves?) and all these said things should be put into it (the pie dish) in layers and put the crust above and grease it and dress it (the pastry lid) above with a little good lard that has been strained. Put the pie to cook with a little heat above with a hot “testo” *2 and make sure that it gets little smoke. This dish should be yellow and very strong with spices. To make it for more or less people take these same things in the same proportions, etc.

To clarify this complicated multistage dish the dishes within the recipe have been distinguished.

*1 - the distinction between tortellini and ravioli in modern Italian cuisine is merely one of shape, both indicate a filled pasta dish, one circular, one square. However, in medieval and renaissance Italy the difference was more profound. References to tortelli or tortellini are almost exclusively reserved for descriptions of a filling wrapped in a pastry of some form which is then boiled or fried. While ravioli are unwrapped portions of stuffing, something more akin to a quenelle. The filling might be rolled briefly in flour prior to frying or boiling but the filling was not encased in a pasta layer.

*2 - A testo is a clay or metal lid which is designed to be placed over pie dishes resting over coals in the fire. The lid is then loaded up with hot coals, providing oven like baking in the coals of a fire. A similar cooking technique used now is the Dutch oven.

XLVII Stuffed eggs

If you want to make stuffed eggs. Take the eggs and put them to boil and make sure that they are hard cooked. When they are cooked pull them out (of the hot water) and put them in cold water. Peel and slice (the eggs) in half and remove the yolk (reserve). Take the fattest sweetest cheese that you have. Take the best herbs that you have, peel them (from the stalk) wash and grind them together in a mortar. When they (the herbs) are well ground take the egg yolks, the cheese and spices and put them in the mortar with the good herbs. Grind all these things together to make a fine paste and temper (mix) with raw eggs until it is good (has the right consistency). Meanwhile put a frying pan over the fire. Take the egg halves and stuff with the paste (of egg yolks and cheese) and put them to cook (in the frying pan). When they are cooked remove from the pan and powder them with sugar before serving them hot to the table. And if you want to serve them savory take them (without sugaring them), etc.

LIV Hens in white broth

If you want to make hens in white broth for twelve people. Take as many hens as you think enough, up to eight, two and a half pounds of almonds, one and a half ounces of ground white ginger, half a pound of sugar, and a pound and a half of fresh pig abdominal fat. Take the hens and boil them, when they are boiled take a quantity of the pork fat and fry them (in this). When they are fried powder them with ground ginger, sugar, cinnamon, cloves and a little bit of verjuice, and rosewater to taste. Let them boil for a little while then take them off (the heat) to serve. And put the hens in the broth. And when they go to the table serve the hens sliced, and the dish should be both sweet and sour.

LVIII Marvelous and good walnut bread

If you want to make a bread of walnuts. Take walnuts and peel and grind them, and take good herbs, a little grated suet, sweet and strong spices and a little sugar. Put these in a mortar with the walnuts and make a paste. Then take wheat flour and make a sheet in the way (that one makes) lasagna, large and wide and thin. Put this (nut) paste within and knead all this together in the same way that one makes bread. Take the dough, when it has become soft like a cake, and put it to cook in the oven, and when it is cooked pull it out and let it cool.

LXII Fried ravioli, etc.

If you want to make fried ravioli for 12 people. Take three pounds of pork loin, two fresh strained cheese, eight eggs and twelve (20 eggs), three ounces of dried currants, enough leaves of parsley, two pounds of fresh sumac and four ounces of sugar. Take the pork loin, boil it well and chop (batter) finely with the cheese that you have, well washed and mashed, the well washed currants, the named spices and all these things (including the eggs). Make a paste to make ravioli, make them small and subtle and put them to fry in the grease. When they are fried powder them with sugar and serve them before other dishes from the kitchen service.

LXV Armored turnips

To make armored turnips, put the turnips to cook in the fire (embers) and when they are cooked peel them and cut into thin slices. Take sweet cheese and make thin slices. Between each slice of turnip put one (slice) of cheese and let them melt well together. If you want you can put them with a hot lid above and they will be done, then powder them with sugar, etc.

CII Scallion or onion tart etc.

If you want to make a tart of these things, take whichever you want and boil it well. Take it out of the water and squeeze out all the water in sieve and then chop them finely. Take fine lard and chop/grind it well, eggs, fresh cheese, and saffron and mix all these things together and make the tart.