

# *1545 Remove for a Dinner Party*

*by Baroness Briana Etain MacKorkhill*

**T**he 16<sup>th</sup> century was a time of change in what was commonly available for the table. Venice was the queen of the trade routes and with the firm establishment of the spice trade in Venice, households were now able to experience new tastes and combinations like never before. And since Venice was the cornerstone of that lucrative trade, citizens benefitted from the increased economy and provided many with the bounty that the merchants brought with them. Many flavors and items flooded into Venice from not only other European countries but also from the Middle East and North coast of Africa.

Great food was yet another of the aspects of the allure of being a courtesan. She was there to provide a feast in every way - intellectual, cultural, emotional and culinary. As a successful courtesan, her table was expected to offer the best and the most bold and inventive dishes served. They were to entertain not only their patrons but at the frequent dinner parties given, any guests that the patron might want to impress. Many partnerships were forged, intelligence gathered and economic deals transpired during these little parties, so a success was certainly more important than merely sustenance.

## **Beginnings**

In this menu, to start, it has some roasted pine nuts, almonds, olives and dried apricots on the table. I have catered to my patron of honor's request for a pork dish, a recipe inspired by two other period recipes, This is accompanied by a Green Sauce. The Dried Fava Bean Puree with Onion, Apple and Sage is a French recipe. This is also served with an Everyday Torta, a very popular side dish. We finish up with Apple Jelly Candies referred to by one expatriot of Venice as Paradise apples.

## **Meat Dish**

In my research, the first thing that I read was a quote from Platina that there were hundreds of pork recipes. But once I started digging deeper, I realized that most of the recipes that were written down were for sausages and the like. But I knew that they did roast pork on a regular basis, just like they did for veal, mutton and beef and that pork was popular in Venice. So I started looking for similar Veal rolls and Beef rolls recipes. Here are the recipes that inspired my pork version.

### ***Polpette di Carne de Vitello o de Altra Bona Carne***

*In prima toglì de la carne magra de la cossa e tagliala in fette longhe et sottili et battile bene sopra un tagliero o tavola con la costa del coltello, et toglì sale et finocchio pesto et ponilo sopra la ditta fetta di carne. Dapoi toglì de petrosimolo, maiorana et de bon lardo et batti questi queste cose insieme con un pocho de bone spetie, et distendile bene queste cose in la dicta fetta. Dapoi involtela insieme et polla nel speto accocere. Ma non la lassare troppo seccar al focho.*

### **Veal Rolls with Herbs**

First take lean meat from the rump and slice it in long thin pieces and beat well with the blade of the knife on a board or table, and take salt and ground fennel seed and sprinkle it over the pieces of meat. Then take parsley, majoram and some good salted pork fat and chop all these together with a small amount of good spices and spread over the slices of meat. Then roll up together and put on the spit to cook. But do not let it become too dry at the fire. (Libro de Arte Coquinaria printed in the *Original Mediterranean Cuisine*)

### ***Alloyaux de Beuf***

*Faictes lesches de la char du trumel, et enveloppez dedans mouelle et gresse de beuf; puis embrochiez, rotissiez et mengez au sel.*

### **Beef Rolls**

Make thin slices of round, and wrap in them beef marrow and beef fat; then put them on the spit, roast them, and eat them with salt. (Le Managier de Paris 177 printed from *The Medieval Kitchen*)

From the veal rolls, I have used the idea of the herbs. The cheese and proscuitto serves the same purpose as the marrow and fat in the beef rolls.

And here's mine:

### ***Pork Rolls with Tarragon and Provolone***

Pork loin sliced thin	Tarragon leaves
Provolone, sliced	Salt and pepper
Proscuitto	Olive oil

Take a slice of pork loin and pound it out to make it thinner. Place several leaves of tarragon, salt and pepper on pork. Next add proscuitto and top with half a slice of provolone (to fit the shape of the pork). Roll as if a jelly roll and tie the bundle. Brush generously with olive oil. When all rolls are completed, place on grill and cook for 5-6 minutes until done depending on thickness of package. Serve immediately.

## **Green Sauce**

### ***Salsa viridis***

*Salsa viridis hoc modo fit: accipe zinziber, cinamomum, piper, nucem muscatam, gariofilos, petrosillum atque salviam. Terantur primo species, post herbe et ponatur tertia pars salvie et petrosilum, et qui voluerit 3 uel 2 spice de aleis. Dis temperentur aceto vel agresta. Nota quod in omni salsamento et condimento, sal est apponendum, et mica panis ad inspissandum.*

Here is how to make green sauce: take ginger, cinnamon, pepper, nutmeg, cloves, parsley, and sage. First grind the spices, then the herbs and add a third of the sage and parsley, and, if you wish, three or two cloves of garlic. Moisten with vinegar or verjuice. Note that to every sauce and condiment salt is added, and crumb of bread to thicken it. (Tractus de modo preparandi et condiendi omnia cibaria 394 printed in *The Medieval Kitchen*)

My redaction:

1 slice dry country bread  
5 Tbsp finely chopped Italian parsley  
2 leaves fresh sage, finely chopped  
1 pinch freshly ground black pepper  
1 pinch ground cloves  
1 pinch freshly grated nutmeg  
¼ tsp cinnamon  
¼ tsp ground ginger  
3 Tbsp red wine vinegar  
2 cloves garlic, pureed  
scant ½ cup water  
salt

I soaked the bread in the water. When it was softened, I mashed it with a fork and placed it in my food processor. I added the herbs, spices and the garlic and blended it thoroughly until it was a smooth puree. I then added the vinegar gradually. I added salt to taste and it was done.

## ***Puree of Dried Young Fava Beans***

### ***Feve frese en potage***

*Metz ta feve frese, bien nettoeye et lavee, empres le feu, et quand commencera a boullir, exprimis l'eaue et la metz hors du pot, et y en metz de rechef de fraiche par autant que surmonte quelque deux doyz et y metz du sel a ton advis, et fais bouillir ta potee bien couverte loing de la flambe, pour cause de la fumee, et ce jusques ta dicte potee sera bien cuyte et redigee forment en paste. Apres, la mettras au mortier et agiteras, et mesleras icelle tres bien, et la reduyras en unq corps, puis, de rechief, la tourneras a son dict pot et le feras chauffer. Et quand vouldras faire tes platz ou escuelles, confiras toa viande en ceste composte qui sensuit. Et cuyras, premierement, des oignons decoupez bien menu en huyle fervent dedans unq pot, y mettras de la saulge, des figues ou des pommes, decoupees bien menu a pettts loppins. Et ceste confection toute boulant et fervente infondiras, et mettras dedans tes platz ou escuelles ou sont tes dictes feves, et presenteras sur table; aulcuns y veulent par dessus inspargitr des especes.*

### **Potage of young fava beans.**

Put your skinned, well-cleaned and washed fava beans on the fire, and when they begin to boil remove the water from the pot, and replace it with cool water to cover the beans by two fingerbreadths; add salt to your taste, and boil your dish, tightly covered, at a distance from the flame, because of the smoke, until that dish is thoroughly cooked and forms a sort of paste. Then put it into a mortar and stir and mix it well and make it homogeneous; then return it to the pot and heat it. And when you wish to dress your platters or plates, serve your food with the following preparation: First cook thinly sliced onions in hot oil, add sage, and figs or apples cut into little pieces. And put this preparation, boiling hot, into the platters or plates already containing the fava beans, and bring to the table; some like to sprinkle spices over the top. (Le Viandier de Guillaume Tirel de Tallivent 206 printed in *The Medieval Kitchen*)

My redaction:

1 pound of dried fava beans (skins removed)  
2 pounds of tart apples (I used 3 McIntosh and 2 Granny Smith)  
4 medium onions  
3 tbsp olive oil  
6-7 leaves fresh sage, chopped  
salt

I began by washing the fava beans and then soaking them overnight, changing the water a couple of times. The next day, I drained the beans and put them in a pot and added cold water to cover. I brought it to a boil and then drained. Returned the fava beans to the pot and covered it with plenty of cold water. The

beans cooked until they were very tender and breaking apart, at this point some salt was added. I continued to cook them over low heat until most of the water was gone and they had totally broken down. They were then drained and pureed to a very smooth texture, adding salt to taste.

I then turned my attention to the onion-apple mixture. I peeled the onions and thinly sliced them. I then peeled and cored the apples and cut them into thin slices also. The skillet was then heated with the olive oil and the onions were added. These were allowed to sauté until they were about half done. The apples and sage was then added and the mixture was allowed to continue to cook over low heat until the apples fell apart, about 15 to 20 minutes.

When it was ready to serve, I reheated the bean puree, placed it on the plates and spooned the onion-apple mixture over it.

## ***Everyday Torta***

### ***Torta commune***

*Habi di bon caso con octo ova et con bon grasso di porcho o di vitello, overo del butiro, dell'uva passa integra, del zenzevro, de la cannella, et un pocho di pan gratato, con un pocho di brodo grasso che sia giallo de zafrano et conciare la farai como di sopra e ditto de la torta bianca.*

Take good cheese with eight eggs and with some good pork or veal fat, or butter, some whole currants, ginger, cinnamon, a little grated bread, a little fatty stock made yellow with saffron and prepare a *torta* following the recipe for *torta bianca*. (Libro de arte coquinaria printed in *The Original Mediterranean Cuisine*)

My redaction:

	1 pound of ricotta
Short crust made of:	8 large eggs
1 cup flour	1 Tbsp melted butter
2 oz butter	1 Tbsp soft white breadcrumbs
1 egg yolk	3 Tbsp of sugar
scant cold water	1 ½ tsp ginger
	½ tsp cinnamon

I prepared the pastry first and set it aside to rest. Next, the cheese, eggs, butter breadcrumbs, sugar and spices were blended until smooth. The original recipe does call for currants to be added but they were omitted by request.

I preheated the oven to 350 degrees and then rolled out the pastry and placed it in a shallow tart tin. The filling was spooned in and then smoothed with the back of the spoon. The torta was then baked for about 40 minutes and then let cool.

## ***Apple Jelly Candies or Paradise apples***

### ***Confetti de melle apio o de pome paradiso***

*Se le voy fare subito chomo e gratate le poy fare come ti pare. Toy la mella e mondala, poy la grata; varda che non vada le granelle dentro la gratitura e lassala sugare per dui iorni. El sucho che fa la mella lassalo pur con la mella; passa le pome gratate e per ogni tri libre de pome metri libre tri de mele e lassale stare dui zorni le pome chomo el mele; poy fale bolire sempre menandole con specie tanto che le mele sia cocte, abi a mente le spezie voleno essere messe quando l'e quasi cocto el confetto, cossi quelle de chodogni. Poy la distendi suso una tavola o suso una pietra bagnata e fay a modo di foio grosso men de mezzo dido; poy lassala refredare e fane a modo de schachieri in pezetti picholi e reponile in una schatolla con foie de laurano de sotto e poy de sopra dall'altra mano va mentando foie de suolo in suolo; et se voi mettere spezie tra foio e foio sera molto bono. Agi a mente ch'el vol per lo men bolire una hora grossa e forsi dui sempre menandole bene e guardale dal fumo.*

### **Preserve of Apio apples or Paradise apples.**

If you wish to make this as soon as they are grated, you may do so as you prefer. Take the apples and peel them, then grate them; make sure the seeds do not fall into the grated flesh, and let them macerate for two days. Leave the juice from the apples together with the apples; put the grated apples through a sieve, and for every three *libri* of apples, add three *libri* of honey, and leave the apples and honey for two days; then boil them, stirring constantly, with spices until the apples are cooked; remember that the spices should be added when the preserve is nearly cooked, as for that of quinces. Then spread it on a table or on a moistened board and make it into a sheet thinner than half a fingersbreadth; then let it cool, and cut it like a chess board into little pieces, and put it into a box adding, with the other hand, bay leaves beneath and then on top; adding these sheets layer by layer; and if you want to put spices between the sheets, this will be very good. Remember that this should boil for a good hour at least, perhaps two, stirring constantly and protecting it from smoke. (Libro di cucino del secuolo XI 71 printed in *The Medieval Kitchen*)

My redaction:

1 <sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> pounds apples, peeled and cored (I used Galas)  
2 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>3</sub> cups of honey  
1 tsp sweet spice mixture (recipe to follow)

Once the apples were peeled and cored, I ran them through my food processor and pureed them to a very smooth consistency. I combined the honey and apples in a heavy saucepan and started them over low heat. I continually stirred the mixture with a wooden spoon for about an hour and once it had reduced about half, the spice mixture was added. It was then cooked about 20 minutes more

until the mixture held its shape when spooned onto a plate. When it arrived at this state, I quickly spread it in a glass baking dish to a layer less than ½ inch. It set quickly. I let it cool and then left it to cure for several days under plastic wrap. Once it was dry, it was cut into diamond shapes and arranged on the platter.

### Sweet Spice Mixture

#### *Specie dolce per assay cosse bone e fine*

*Le meior specie dolze fine che tu fay se viori per lamprey in crosta e per altri boni pessi d'aque dolze che se faga in crosto e per fare fono brodetto e bon sapore. Toi uno quarto de garafali e una onza de bon zezevro e toy una onza de cinamo leto e toy arquanto folio e tute queste specie fay pestare insiema caza como te piaxe, e se ne vo' fare piu, toy le cosse a questo medesima raxone et e meravigliosamente bona.*

### Sweet spices for many good and fine foods.

The best sweet spices you can make are good for lamprey in pastry and for other good freshwater fish cooked in a crust, and to make good *brodetto* and good sauces. Take a quarter of cloves and an *onza* of good ginger, and take a onza of fine cinnamon, and take the same quantity of leaf; and pound all these spices together as you like; if you want to make more, use the ingredients in the same proportions; this is wonderfully good. (Libro di cucino del secuolo XI 40 printed in *The Medieval Kitchen*)

My redaction:

1 rounded Tbsp. ground ginger  
1 rounded Tbsp. cinnamon  
1 tsp. of cardamom  
¾ tsp. of ground cloves

According to *The Medieval Kitchen*, there has been some debate as to what “leaf” meant. Even though that term appears in the French texts and commercial records, it has not been identified. Since this dish was a sweet, I chose to substitute cardamom for the “leaf” part but knowing that it can be overpowering, I kept it to a teaspoon rather than a rounded tablespoon as the book suggests. If this had been used for a meat accompaniment, I probably would have used bay leaves.

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