

The Ferns Medieval Feast



A garland of recipes
selected by the Ferns Heritage Project



Designed and produced by Crane Bag Consulting
Cover image by Tomás Tyner, University College Cork.

This project was made possible thanks to the generous support of The Heritage Council



Foreword

The Ferns Medieval Feast demonstration was organised to give people an opportunity to see and sample recipes using ingredients available during the medieval period. The inspiration to hold the event was as a result of our community's wish to explore and deepen our understanding of our rich medieval heritage. It was a different way of approaching our past, very much a sensory one, and one which can be enjoyed even by people who might have thought they had no interest in the past or their cultural heritage. Using food as a tool enabled us to learn about early globalisation and international trade, with exotic ingredients such as spices reaching Ireland from the other side of the world courtesy of the Arab-controlled trade-routes to the Far East.

Known as the 'Ancient Capital of Leinster', Ferns in County Wexford has a fascinating medieval story. From the 6th century as a monastic settlement, through to its ambitious King Diarmuid MacMurrough, who in the 12th century invited the Normans to Ireland to help him regain his kingdom. Ferns has, over the centuries played a central role in Wexford's and indeed, Ireland's medieval story.

The demonstration by Regina Sexton of University College Cork helped by David Ryan of the Cork Folklore Project, which was held during Heritage Week, included a talk on how food was sourced, whether it was local or imported. It gave people an opportunity to see and sample recipes using ingredients available during the medieval period. The availability of ingredients not usually associated with Ireland such as almond milk, figs and spices point to a less restricted diet than was imagined as well as connections and trade with other European countries and beyond.

The event was organised by the Ferns Heritage Project, a voluntary community initiative established in 2015 as a sub-committee of the Ferns Development Association. Ongoing activities of the Ferns Heritage Project include: the annual Ferns Conference, sourcing funding for geo-physical studies in Ferns, organising guided tours, and the *Ask the Locals* campaign which encourages visitors to ask locals about what to see and do in Ferns and surrounding area. We work in collaboration with a number of individuals, groups and agencies to develop Ferns' tourism potential, showcasing the Christian, Gaelic kingship and Norman elements of our medieval past.

The Ferns Heritage Project wishes to thank:

- The Heritage Council for providing the funding for this project
- Those who attended and contributed to the exploration of our food heritage – as always it's the lively debate and discussion at such events which makes them so rewarding.
- Church of Ireland Select Vestry for facilitating the use of St. Mogue's Cottage – a treasure of a venue for such an event.
- Regina Sexton and Ronan O'Flaherty for their invaluable advice and encouragement, and David Ryan for his help on the day of the demonstration.

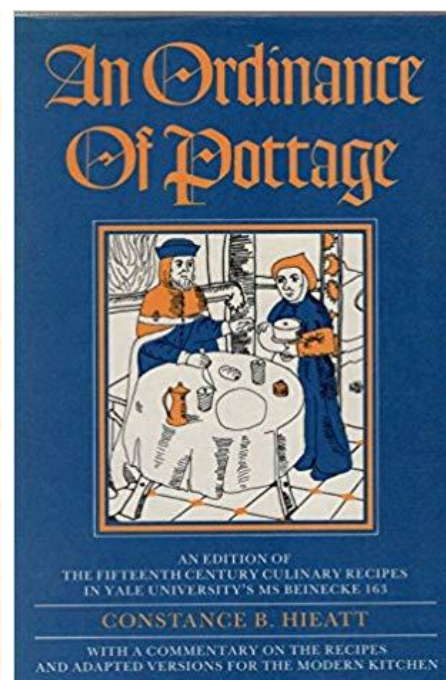
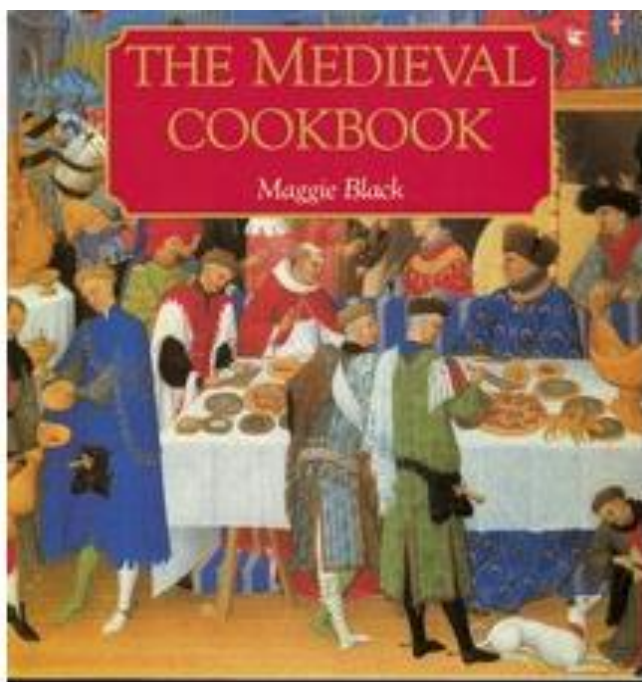
Catherine MacPartlin,
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Introduction

Regina Sexton, Lecturer in Food History, University College Cork

Although Ireland does not have any surviving collection of recipes from the medieval period, we do know quite a lot about medieval cooking and recipes from English and European works. Some of the earliest collections in manuscript form include the 14th century *Liber de Coqunia* (The Book of Cookery), which was possibly produced in Italy; the early 14th century French collection *Le Viandier of Taillevent* (Taillevent's Book of Food) and the late 14th century English collection *The Forme of Cury* (The Method of Cooking).

The recipes included here, and especially those which formed part of the public demonstration in Ferns during Heritage Week 2018, come from two main sources: Constance Hieatt's *The Ordinance of Pottage*, which is a collection of 15th century English recipes and from Maggie Black's *The Medieval Cookbook*. Both of these publications give a wonderful insight into medieval ways with food, ingredients and cooking methods. Where other sources are used, these have been clearly indicated.



These recipes were associated with the wealthy classes. Recipe-writing began as an activity in the courts, chefs were male and the good ones were highly sought after. The fashion for keeping recipe collections trickled downwards to the elite, whose social aspirations and ambitions demanded that they could reproduce extravagant dishes with some element of consistency for lavish feasting. As a result, the dishes in the collections mentioned above are laden with spices, dried fruits, sugar and honey. These were expensive and exotic ingredients that demonstrated the wealth and indeed the taste of the household. For the most part, these collections do not tell us about the more routine and everyday foods but what we can say is a form of pottage, bulked out with leeks (or some variety of brassica), beans, grains and perhaps a small amount of meat, formed the daily pattern of most people.

So in general the food we encounter in the collections is **special and festive food** and the main characteristics of this cookery are as follows:

1. A liaison for sauces with bread or almonds
2. A taste for tart flavours
3. The flavour of spices
4. Combination of sweet, sour, tart and savoury in the one dish
4. Stock for sauces
5. Meat or poultry grilled or cooked in sauce
6. Tarts, pies, and pastries
7. Propensity for colours and use of colouring agents
8. A clear division between fish days and meat days - between fast and feast days.

While much has been made of Anglo Norman innovations here in Ireland in the area of arable agriculture, horticulture and the introduction of new animal foods, (like rabbits, for instance), little if any attention has been given to how these impacted on the diet or how the structure and strategies of the manorial system impacted on the table. The careful management of rabbit warrens and dovecots, for instance, ensured a predictable supply of fresh and young small meats for the table. The resultant broadening of the ingredient-base was also complemented with overseas trade in the period, which saw the small but steady importation of luxury foods: spices like pepper and ginger, dried fruits and figs, almonds and rosewater.

It may be suggested then that these developments also coincided or worked in tandem with changes in cooking styles, the types of dishes prepared and an alignment of the palate to the medieval European norm in areas of Norman influence. Areas of Anglo Norman presence have a number of important sources that indicate new styles with food and that exotic ingredients were making their way to Ireland. What this also

suggests is that there could have been a cultural divide between the Gaelic Irish, with their reliance on oats and dairy produce and the newcomers who favoured the produce of the fields-wheat, herbs and a greater variety of vegetables along with the spices, sugar, dried fruits, rosewater and verjuice (a type of vinegar made from grapes or apples). The implication for places like Ferns, with its strong Norman identity is that it could have been the location for cultural transmission in terms of new ingredients, new dishes and new cooking methods.

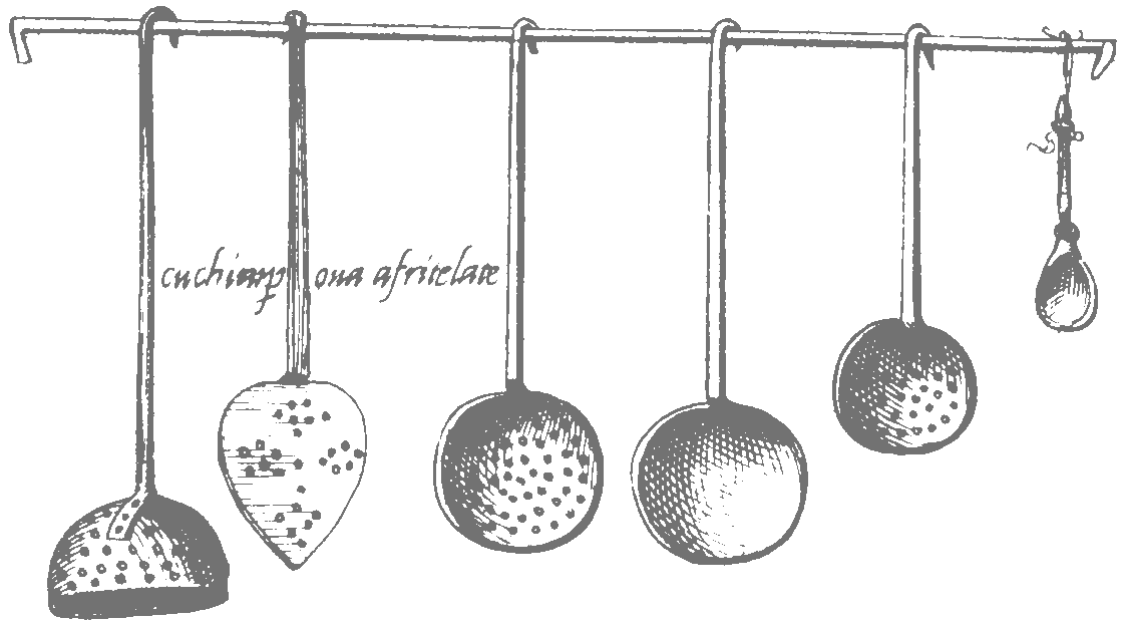
The Ferns Medieval Feast was an opportunity to present a newly emerging area of academic research in a public forum. By nature of the content, food and culinary history offer the opportunity to present aspects of Irish heritage in a theoretical and practical manner, and from the outset, the Ferns Medieval Feast was designed to deliver new research findings in an entertaining, inclusive and practical manner. The objective of the Heritage Week event, which combined a structured talk with a medieval demonstration, was to turn public attention to a neglected area of Irish heritage - medieval food and cookery.

However, food and cookery do not exist in isolation and the subject is conducive to linking public interest in and appreciation of Ireland's built, material and literary cultures. In the context of the Ferns Feast, the talk and demonstration were tangible ways of illustrating the region's Norman built, material and written heritage. It also encouraged participants to reflect on the region's broader national and international connections in the later medieval period.

The event brought together academics, local heritage projects/providers and local producers. Within this community of shared interest, bringing the past to life was made relevant, engaging and prompted participants to reconsider Ireland's heritage from hitherto unexplored angles.

Regina Sexton

October 2018



The Recipes



Yellow Pea Soup
Canabenys with Lekys

✘

Cold bruett of Chikens

✘

Hericot de Mouton

Gammon of Bacon

✘

Buttyrd Wortys

Pome Pore

Frumente

✘

Perys in Confyte

Junket

Dyscheful of Snowe

Tartys in Aplis

Leche Lombard

A note on Poudre douce

Poudre douce, or Powder-douce - literally "sweet powder" - was a spice mix widely used in Medieval cookery. Like modern spice mixes and seasonings, there was no set ingredient list and it varied from cook to cook. As it features in some of the recipes we have collected, we are providing the following recipe which will be easy enough to make up at home.

1 tablespoon Pepper corns

2 tablespoons Ground cinnamon

1 teaspoon Ground ginger

3 tablespoons Sugar

1 pinch (optional) other ground spice like allspice, nutmeg, cloves



Grind it all up in a pestle and mortar and sprinkle on savoury and sweet dishes.



FERNS MEDIEVAL FEAST ✖ 'BLAUNCHE PERREYE'

White or yellow pea soup

Take Pesyn, and waysshe hem clene, and then take a gode quantyte of fyne leye, and putte it on a potte, and a lytil water ther-to; and when the ley is sethin hot, caste the Pesyn ther-to and ther late hem soke a gode whyle; then take a quantyte of wollen clothe, and rubbe hem, and the holys wyl a-way; thenne take a seve or a wheterydown, and ley thin pesyn ther-on, and go to the water, and waysshe hem clene a-way the holys, then putte hem in a potte, and they wyl alle to-falle with a lytil boylynge, to pereye, saue the whyte Pepyn is ther-in, and that is a gode sy3th; then Salt hem, and serue hem forth.

Partially precook the peas using 1 cup of dried peas to four cups of salted water, bringing it to a boil for five minutes, and then letting the peas sit in the pot until the water has cooled. Heat the water and the wine and add the partially cooked peas to it. Once the peas are cooked mash them slightly with a potato masher and add salt and black pepper to taste.

Interpreted recipe and image from giveitforthblogspot.com

Ingredients

One cup yellow peas

Half cup white-wine

One and a half cups water

Salt and pepper to taste

Serves 4



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FERNS MEDIEVAL FEAST ✳ 'CANABENYS WITH LEKYS'

Dried beans with leeks and bacon

Place the meat, broth, savory or thyme in a pot. Bring to a boil, turn down the heat and leave to simmer gently.

Trim the leeks, discarding the tough darker tops, slice and chop roughly. Add the leeks to the pot and continue to cook for about 40 minutes or until meat is cooked.

Add in the beans and allow to cook for another 5-10 minutes or until beans are mushy.

Strain the broth through a colander, retaining the liquid. Transfer the meat, vegetables and beans to a food processor. Moisten with some of the liquid broth. Puree to a rough consistency.

Return the puree to the reserved broth and return to the boil.

Add in the parsley and greens and continue to cook about for a few minutes.

Season with a little salt, if necessary, and serve.

Ingredients

75g/3oz dried beans or
150g/6oz. canned broad
beans (*European broad
beans*)

225g/½ lb bacon

c.5 pints of broth/meat stock

2 tsp savory or thyme

4 bunches leeks/450g/1lb
whites of leeks, chopped and
rinsed

Large handful of parsley,
chopped

450g/1lb spinach, washed
and chopped

1 tsp salt



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FERNS MEDIEVAL FEAST ✖ 'COLD BRUET OF CHIKENS'

Sweet & Sour Chicken

Poach the chicken breasts in the chicken broth until done. Remove and allow to cool. When cool enough to handle, cut up and keep warm while you make the sauce.

Draw up a thick almond milk using the ground almonds mixed with 2 cups of water, simmer until thick and strain through a cheesecloth so that you have a thick cream left. Grind the raisins and dates with half the wine. Dissolve the cinnamon in the rest of the wine.

Combine the two wine mixtures, add in the almond cream and the other seasonings (inc sugar) dissolved in vinegar. Simmer this sauce, stirring until it is reasonably thick.

Pour the sauce over the chicken and serve hot or cold.

Ingredients

8 chicken breasts

6 – 8 pints of chicken broth
or as much as will
comfortably cover the
chicken

150g/5oz raisins and dates

16 fl. oz/450ml red wine

75g/3oz ground almonds

2 tsp cinnamon

2 tsp mixed spice powder

½ tsp cardamom

½ tsp ground ginger

150ml/¼ pint wine red
vinegar

110g/4oz sugar



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FERNS MEDIEVAL FEAST ✳ 'HERICOT DE MOUTON'

Lamb stew with turnips, leeks and herbs

Cut it up into little pieces, then put it to parboil in a first water. Then fry it in fresh fat, fry it with onions minced small, and add beef bouillon, add haricot and put with it maces, parsley, hyssop and sage. Boil it together

Chop the lamb or mutton into small pieces. If using mutton, parboil to tenderise the meat, if using lamb, you will not need to do this.

Melt the fat in a pan. Add the meat and brown. Add the onions and brown.

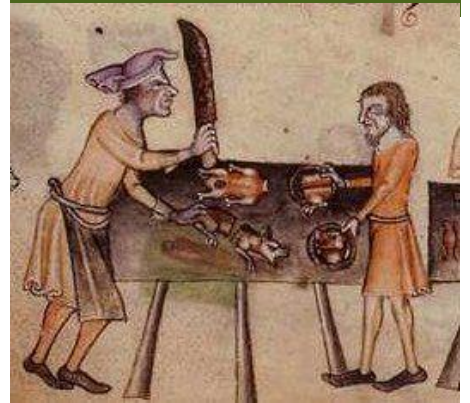
Chop and add the turnips and leeks. Add the beef bouillon or beef stock. Chop and add the parsley, mint (*replaces hyssop*) and sage. Add the mace.

Bring to the boil and simmer for 40-50 minutes until the meat is tender. Serve hot.

Interpreted recipe and image <http://cookit.e2bn.org/historycookbook>

Ingredients

3lbs (1350g) lamb or mutton
4 onions, minced
2 leeks, chopped (optional)
3 turnips, peeled and chopped
1 tbsp butter or lard, for browning the meat
1 pint (600ml) beef bouillon (we used beef stock)
1-2 tbsp fresh parsley, chopped
1 tsp salt, to taste
1/2 tsp chopped sage
1/2 tsp chopped mint
1/4 tsp ground mace



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FERNS MEDIEVAL FEAST ✖ 'GAMMON OF BACON'

Baked stuffed gammon in pastry

To bake a gammon of Bacon. Take your Bacon and boyle it, and stufte it with Parcely and Sage, and yolks of hard Egges, and when it is boyled, stufte it and let it boyle againe, season it with Pepper, cloves and mace, whole cloves stick fast in, so then lay it in your paste with salt butter.

Remove skin from gammon or ham and discard. Place in a large pot and add enough water to cover. Cover, bring to a boil, and cook for 30 minutes.

Put parsley, sage, egg yolks, and spices into a bowl and mix well. Remove meat from pot, cut open, and stuff with mixture.

Wrap in pastry and bake at 180°C until done - about 1 hour. Then cut in slices and serve.

Interpreted recipe and image from giveitforth.blogspot.com

Ingredients

2 lbs. bacon, unsliced

1/2 cup chopped fresh parsley

1/4 cup chopped fresh sage

6 egg yolks, hard boiled

1/2 tsp. pepper

1/4 tsp. cloves

1/8 tsp. mace



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FERNS MEDIEVAL FEAST ✧ 'BUTTYRD WORTYS'

Buttered cabbage

To make buttyrd Wortys. Take all maner of gode herbys that ye may gette pyke them washe them and hacke them and boyle them vp in fayre water and put ther to butture clarefied A grete quantite And when they be boylde enough salt them but let non Ote mele come ther yn And dyse brede in small gobbetts & do hit in dyshys and powre the wortes a pon and serue hit furth.

Bring a pot of water to a boil. Once boiling, add cabbage, leeks, and parsley and cook until just tender. Drain cabbage, leek and parsley and put on top of the bread pieces. Pour butter over cabbage (more or less can be used as according to taste) and salt to taste.

Ingredients

One head of green cabbage, shredded.

2 leeks, cut in rounds

½ cup parsley, loosely chopped

½ cup of butter

Salt

3 slices good 'rustic' bread (white), broken into pieces



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FERNS MEDIEVAL FEAST ✖ 'POME PORE'

Boyle white peseyn. Take hem fro the fyre when they have restyd a whyle, then take the cleryst into another pott. Then have mylke of almonds drawyn up ith white wyn, figes of amely, sigure and salte, and yf thou wylte, reyons fryed a lytyll, & do togedyr. Boyle hit, and serve forth.

Fruit Pottage or Figs in Peas

Drain one can of marrowfat peas and place in a pot.

Add enough almond milk to give the peas a thick porridge-like consistency.

Add in a handful of figs and a handful of raisins.

Season to taste with salt and sugar, and serve.

Ingredients

One can of marrowfat peas
Almond milk (as required)
Handful of figs
Handful of raisins
Salt and sugar to taste



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FERNS MEDIEVAL FEAST ✧ 'FRUMENTE'

Frumenty

Stir all the ingredients together except the eggs.

Bring to boil, keeping stirring. Then cover and cook over a very low heat for c. 45 minutes.

Check half way through the cooking and add more liquid if needed.

Take off the heat and stir in the eggs.

Return to a low heat and stir for a few more minutes.

Serve.

Ingredients

12 oz/350g/1 cup of cracked wheat

c. 2 1/2 pts of milk

2 pinches of saffron

2 eggs

1 tsp salt



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FERNS MEDIEVAL FEAST ✧ 'PERYS IN CONFYTE'

Spiced Pears

Heat the honey, mixed with sugar, anise, cloves and ginger/galingale until the sugar is completely dissolved.

Add in the cinnamon dissolved in vinegar and wine.

Peel the fruit and cut into quarters. Remove the stems and core.

Stir fruit into the syrup and poach very gently for at least 30 minutes.

Serve.

Ingredients

3 lbs firm, ripe pears

¼ tsp ground
galingale/ginger

2 tsp cider vinegar

1 tsp cinnamon

110ml/4 fl.oz. red wine

110ml/4 fl. oz. clear honey

75g/3oz sugar

¼ tsp crushed anise seed

1/8 tsp ground cloves



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FERNS MEDIEVAL FEAST ✖ 'JUNKET'

Light 'panna cotta' type dessert

Warm the milk to 32°C/90°F, stir in the tablespoon of sugar and the vanilla essence, add the rennet (see ingredients), pour into one big dish or individual smaller ones and allow to cool. The liquid will thicken within an hour or so.

If you are using wild blackberries put them in cold water with a pinch of salt for about half an hour (to get any bugs out), then drain and rinse. Place the berries in a pan with a small glass of water and the 25g (1oz) sugar and cook gently for seven minutes or until soft. Strain out the berries and return the juice to the pan, adding extra sugar to taste, and boil the liquid on a high heat for three minutes until syrupy. Leave to cool and pour over the berries. Serve with the junket.

Other popular medieval flavourings include Cinnamon (½ tsp), Nutmeg (½ tsp), or a dash of rosewater and pinch saffron

Image by Yuki Sugiura.

Ingredients

600ml (1 pint) milk

1 tbsp caster sugar

a few drops of vanilla essence
rennet (*follow instructions on the bottle as this varies*)

For the fruit....

25g (1oz) caster or granulated sugar

250g (9oz) blackberries



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Ingredients

8 egg whites
1 pint whipping cream
1/2 cup sugar
1-2 Tbsp. rose water

700g strawberries
1 cup red wine
1/4 cup sugar
1/2 tsp. cinnamon
1/4 tsp. ginger

FERNS MEDIEVAL FEAST ✧ 'DYSCHEFULL OF SNOWE'

Egg whites and cream

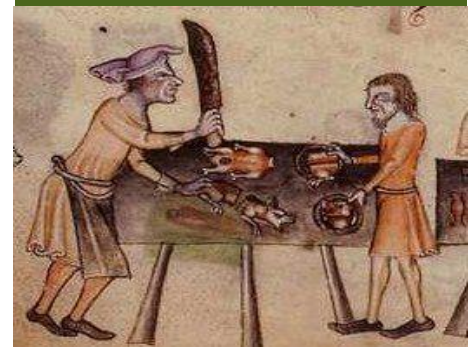
To make dyschefull of Snowe: Take a pottel of swete thycke creame and the whytes of eyghte egges, and beate them altogether wyth a spon, then putte them in youre creame and a saucerful of Rosewater, and a dyshe full of Suger wyth all, then take a stick and make it cleane, and than cutte it in the ende foure squre, and therwith beate all the aforesayde thynges together....

Whip cream and set aside. Then beat egg whites until they form soft peaks. Add egg whites to whipped cream and fold together. Add rose water and sugar - adding a little sugar at a time.

Clean strawberries and place into bowl. Mix red wine, sugar, cinnamon, and ginger. Pour mixture over strawberries and allow to marinate for an hour or so.

Serve "snow" with strawberries on top and with a couple shortbread cookies on the side.

Interpreted recipe from www.medievalcookery.com



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FERNS MEDIEVAL FEAST ✖ 'TARTYS IN APLIS'

Grated Apple Tart

For To Make Tartys In Applis. Tak gode Applys and gode Spycis and Figys and reysons and Perys and wan they are wel ybrayed colourd wyth Safroun wel and do yt in a cofyn and do yt forth to bake wel.

A very simple but delicious tart, with the figs and raisins providing natural sweetness.

First make the pastry. Mix flour, salt, and saffron together in a large bowl. Cut or rub the butter and eggs into the flour mixture until it forms fine crumbs. Add water a little at a time until it just sticks together - too much water will make the dough too soft and sticky. Cover with a towel and allow to rest for 30 minutes. Roll out on a well- floured surface.

Peel, core, and grate apples. Add figs, raisins, and spices. Mix well and put into tart crust. Bake at 180° until done - about 40 minutes. Serve warm or cold.

Interpreted recipe from www.medievalcookery.com ;
image midenglishrecipes.blogspot.com

Ingredients

4 - 5 apples
6 figs, chopped
1/4 cup raisins
1 1/2 tsp. powder douce
1/4 tsp. salt
pinch saffron

For the pastry

1 1/2 cups flour
4 Tbsp. butter
2 egg yolks
1/2 tsp. salt
pinch saffron
about 3/8 cup water



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FERNS MEDIEVAL FEAST ✳ 'LECHE LUMBARD'

Lumbard Slices

Sieve the hard-boiled egg yolks on to a sheet of paper.
Bring the honey for the slices to a boil and simmer for 2 minutes and then take the pan off the heat.

Add the egg yolks little by little to the pan, beating or stirring rapidly to blend them in smoothly.

Then blend in the breadcrumbs and pepper - add enough breadcrumbs to make the mixture stiff enough to mould. Shape into a brick and chill until cold and firm.

When ready to serve, cut the chilled slab into small slices (like *halva*). Simmer the ingredients for the syrup until the wine is well reduced.

Spoon a little of the syrup over each slice before serving.

Ingredients

12 hard-boiled egg yolks
8 tablespoons clear honey
175g/6oz fine bread crumbs
Pinch ground black pepper

Syrup

225ml/8fl.oz red wine
Good pinch ground
cinnamon and ginger
5 tablespoons clear honey



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We hope these recipes have given you a 'taste' for our shared medieval heritage!

Why not visit us in Ferns, County Wexford, Ireland – a window on the past. We'd love to see you!



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On Saturday 25th August, 2018 a 300 year old thatched cottage in the grounds of the medieval Ferns Cathedral was filled to capacity as history buffs and food enthusiasts of all ages watched food expert and historian, Regina Sexton, bring a medieval menu to life.

Five separate dishes were prepared using authentic ingredients and recipes from the period, which were then tasted and shared by all. Most were delicious, some were more challenging for a modern palate(!) but all brought us that bit closer to our medieval ancestors.

In this little book you will find recipes for all the dishes prepared that day in Ferns - pottages, meat dishes, vegetable dishes and desserts – along with a few more we have tried since then. The makings of a medieval feast for you and your family are right here – all you need to do is get cooking!

The Ferns Feast was organised as part of Heritage Week with the generous support of The Heritage Council.

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The Heritage Council



2018 
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