

A LOOK AT SOME 18th AND 19th CENTURY RECIPES

Of the six collections used only one, by the Gloucester School of Cookery and Domestic Economy, was printed and is in fact the latest, being published in 1893. The other five are all handwritten and two have names attached; one made by Charlotte Guise, 1817-1826 and one in a memorandum book kept by William Cother of Longford, 1831-1837.

In the handwritten collections the usual spelling of recipe is 'receipt' probably explained by the fact that both words have the same latin origin and 'receipt' was commonly put at the head of a list of ingredients of a medical prescription. This may also account for cures for ailments both animal and human, being found with the cookery recipes and, perhaps, for the inclusion of items we should now classify as household hints:- how to get rid of rats, how to prevent iron rusting, and how to stick chairs together.

The handwritten collections include recipes for puddings, wines, jams, cakes, sauces, pickles, meat and fish dishes and many are obviously personal ones - "Lady Oxford's carp sauce, Mrs. Saunders catchup and fish sauce, Sauce for boiled carp, Mrs. Langton; Sauce for boiled carp, Mrs. Master; Witcombe receipt for curing hams, Mrs. Grisedale's receipt for curing hams, Mrs. Folkes receipt for curing hams, Mrs. Pearce's receipt for curing hams" (1). The cures too, have this personal aspect as Charlotte Guise recorded "Dr. Warren's Restorative, excellent remedy for a cough, Mr. P. Hicks: Mr. Abel's cough mixture for children." "Dean Chamberlayne's receipt for curing rheumatism, Mr. Trigg of the Rainbow in the Bowling Alley Westminster, cure for the bite of a mad dog; and a cure brought from Tonquin by Sir George Cobb, baronet" are in a collection made by the Leigh family of Broadwell. (2)

The printed collection differs from the others in that it does not include recipes for jams, wines, pickles and curing hams, nor are there cures for any ailments. The only household hints relate to cookery and all the recipes are costed. The only other reference to cost is given by William Cother who says that he paid 6s. for sugar for preserving damsons. Perhaps these differences indicate for whom it was published and why: to help the middle class housewife, who did not have to deal with the produce of a country estate, provide her family with good nourishing meals.

Some recipes have a local connection like that given by Charlotte Guise for making Gloucester Jelly:- "2ozs pearl barley, 2ozs sago, 2ozs candied eringo root. Boil in two quarts of water and reduce to one. It may be taken in milk or wine, a teacupful every day at noon." The instruction for use suggests that it was a tonic, rather far removed from our twentieth century idea of a jelly. She also gives two recipes for stewing lampreys and there are two in a book belonging to the Beake-Browne family of Salperton, and as it is traditional for Gloucester to present a new monarch with lamprey pie I consider these to be of local interest. "Clean the fish very carefully. Remove the cartilage which runs down the back and season it with cloves, mace, pepper, alspice, put it into a small stewpan with a little strong gravy,

then add port wine, and an equal quantity of sherry, cover it close and stew till tender, take out the lamprey and keep hot. Boil the liquor with an anchovy or two chopped, tablespoonful of mushroom catchup, some flour and butter, strain the gravy add lemon juice and a little made mustard. Cyder will do instead of sherry" (3) Charlotte Guise uses cyder instead of sherry and says they will take about 3 hours doing.

Just as there is much similarity between the recipes for stewing lampreys so there is between those for curing hams. Charlotte Guise gives two, William Cother includes three, one belonging to a Sister Commeline, on of the other collections has instructions for making Westphalia Ham, and the other has **five** recipes, all bearing peoples names, for curing hams. (4) All use coarse sugar, brown sugar or treacle, salt, bay salt and salt petre mixed together and rubbed into the ham over a period of 3-4 days after which water is added and the hams left to soak for anything from 3-6 weeks. One of Charlotte's recipes specifies spring water while the other uses strong beer instead. After this the hams are hung up to dry usually in a chimney, one recipe saying cottage chimney while another insists on a coal chimney. Among these recipes are the following hints "if your pickle should mother you may boil it up, let it stand to be cold" (5), Mrs Folkes "always had a large handful of common salt rubbed on the skin of the ham and then rub on the mixture and just a little ground pepper on the fleshy side before they are hung" (6) and "To prevent insects getting into the hams strew pepper over them and paste some brown paper over the meat. The paper must be occasionally looked at, and if it appears damp, dried or changed for fresh should it be torn, or as it is necessary. By burying the hams for 6 or 7 days in the group previous to soaking them they are rendered more mellow. N.B. the hams should be first sprinkled with a handful of common salt before they are put into pickle and let them lie to drain the blood from them for two days." (7)

These recipes give some idea of the time and energy spent in the kitchen in the 18th and 19th centuries when kitchen equipment as we understand it today was non-existent and when many of the ingredients could not be purchased in packets or tins ready for use but had to be prepared. Among Charlotte Guise's recipes are the following:- "Take 1 lb salt, $\frac{1}{2}$ lb bay salt, 3oz salt petre, $1\frac{1}{2}$ ozs black pepper pounded and sifted through a fine sieve." "1lb loaf sugar pounded and sifted and the white of an egg well beat, then mix it together, let it be beat with a whisk for a full two hours." "1lb bitter almonds, blanch and pound them very fine in a mortar, $\frac{1}{2}$ lb stoned raisins, pound them."

Cooking instructions, if given at all, are very vague compared with those of today because the heat of a fire cannot be controlled like that of our gas and electric cookers. When cooking red soup the Gloucester School of Cookery and Domestic Economy say "simmer for $1\frac{1}{2}$ hours"; for potato soup in which there is one ounce of sago "boil till sago is clear"; for roasting, baking, boiling beef and mutton allow $\frac{1}{4}$ hour per lb plus $\frac{1}{4}$ hr; for veal and pork 20 minutes per lb plus 20 minutes, for fish except salmon 5 minutes per lb plus 5 minutes and for salmon 8 minutes per lb. plus 8 minutes. Their readers are also given this instruction:- "Flues of stoves must be thoroughly swept or it will be impossible to depend on getting the required heat." Cooking

instructions in the handwritten recipes vary from the non-existent to the obvious:- "Air cakes. Whisk up the whites of 4 eggs to a froth, put 10 spoonfuls of fine loaf sugar pounded, into it and the rind and juice of a lemon. When you put them in the oven sift a little sugar on the top". (8) When trying this recipe the only thing to do was to follow the cooking instructions for meringues. As for "Orang nackerons. Drop them in little cakes on a pewter dish, put them before the fire to dry, and as they skin over turn them not too near the fire, they burn." (9) Colour is the governing factor for cooking Corporation Cake, "bake them light brown" (10) Cooking Mulford's cakes suggests a way of dealing with underdone baking "let not the oven be too hot before you bake them, they may afterward be baked by the fire as muffins." (11) This suggests hotter summers than nowadays, "then put it into plates and place them where the sun has most heat, when the sweetmeat is dry on the top turn the cakes and dry the other said." (12)

Judging by the frequency with which they are given some dishes seem to have been more popular than others. Such was rice pudding. " $\frac{1}{4}$ lb rice, 3pts milk, 3 eggs and 3ozs powdered sugar. Rice to be boiled in the milk till tender. You may add a little grated lemon peel and nutmeg." (13) "Boil $\frac{1}{2}$ lb best rice in a quart of best milk one hour, keeping it well stirred, the night before and let it remain in a basin until the next day, then add $\frac{1}{2}$ lb good raisins, $\frac{1}{2}$ lb suet, one nutmeg grated fine, 3 eggs, $\frac{1}{2}$ pt milk. Let it all be well stirred together and well baked in 2 or 3 dishes." This is given by William Cother who has a second recipe, similar, except that you are told to boil it in a kettle and use best beef kidney suet chopped to the size of a pea and from which all skin has been removed. Charlotte Guise lists a baked rice pudding " $\frac{1}{2}$ lb ground rice, put it into a quart of boiling milk, keep stirring it over the fire till it is quite thick, then put it into a pan, stir into it when hot $\frac{1}{2}$ lb butter, when nearly cold grate in half a nutmeg, add 8 yolks and 3 whites of egg, $\frac{1}{4}$ lb white sugar. Bake it."

These recipes are all rich compared with the printed recipe for rice pudding:- "2 tablespoons of carolina rice, 1 tbsp brown sugar, a little nutmeg, 1pt skim milk, a little chopped suet." These ingredients are mixed together and baked in a moderate oven for 2 hours. It does suggest adding a beaten egg or using new milk instead of skim milk and suet. The School of Cookery use the following to make Bath buns - 1lb flour, 3ozs butter, 3ozs sugar, 2 small eggs, $\frac{1}{4}$ pt milk, 1 tsp caraway seeds, $\frac{1}{2}$ oz yeast and a few lumps of sugar. In the handwritten recipes the following was necessary to make Bath Buns - $\frac{3}{4}$ lb flour, $\frac{1}{2}$ lb butter, 4spnfls white wine, 4 spnfls barm, 4 eggs, 2 spnfls cream, $\frac{1}{2}$ lb caraway comfits, and sugar. Surely these examples support the idea that it was published for the less well-off members of late Victorian England.

Sometimes there appears to be a recipe for the same dish in two collections but on closer examination they are very different. Bath Pudding. 3ozs ground rice to a pint of cream. Boil till thick then put it to cool. When cold put to it 6 yolks and 3 whites of eggs well beaten, 6ozs sugar, 6ozs butter, 12 sweet and 12 bitter almonds pounded and a glass of white wine. Bake for $\frac{1}{2}$ hr." (14) "Bath Puddings. 1lb bread cut into thick slices, pour almost a quart of boiling milk over it with 2 or 3 good slices of butter cut into it. Let it stand covered over all night, then beat it very fine and add the rind of a lemon

grated, 7 eggs leaving out 2 of the whites, sugar it to your taste and put in a wine glass of brandy. The puddings must be baked in small lampen pots or they will not be good - when done turn them out on to a dish and send them to table with white wine sauce. One hour will bake them in a quick oven." (15)

Without a knowledge of the properties of the various plants and other ingredients listed in the cures given it is not possible to comment on their efficiency. People in 18th and 19th century Britain suffered from much the same ailments as we do today:- headache, bilious complaint, chilblains, cramp, general weakness and rheumatism. The one exception seems to be the bite of a mad dog for which many cures are given suggesting this accident occurred frequently in the past. The basis of many of these remedies was a salt solution applied to the wound which sounds agonising but from the comments given seems to have been effective. "The discoverer of this recipe was bitten six times by mad dogs and cured by it. A poor man was also cured by it after hydrophobia had commenced." (16) At the end of Mr Trigg's recipe quoted in the London Evening Post of Thursday August 15th 1728 it says "he was bitten six times and cured himself." These prescriptions often give directions for use with humans and animals, Mrs Rosier's remedy says "8 or 9 spoonfuls warm to man or woman three mornings fasting and cold to any beast fasting. A smaller quantity to weaker people. 10 or 12 spoonfuls to a horse or bullock. 3, 4 or 5 spoonfuls to sheep, dog or hog."

Finally to quote two remedies from one collection which conjure up some amusing pictures:-

"For sore eyes, coughs, rheums and to free the head from pains. Lignum, aloes, borax, saffras bark and amber. $\frac{1}{2}$ dram of each. Cut belony $\frac{1}{2}$ oz. Rosemary flowers or leaves $\frac{1}{4}$ oz and same quantity of tobacco. Mix all together and take in a pipe going to bed. (enabled Lady Mallet to leave off spectacles after 30 years at her age of 83)."

"A mouth water to keep the teeth sound and fasten them when loose. 8pzs sage water distilled. $\frac{1}{2}$ drachm spirits of sea salt. $\frac{1}{2}$ oz lemon juice. Mix together and wash mouth with a little every morning." (17)

P. Bath

Sources

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- Glos. R.O. CC/C 1893A Recipe book of Gloucester School of Cookery and Domestic Economy
- Glos. R.O. D326/F43 Recipe Book of Charlotte Guise, 1817-26
- Glos. R.O. D1928/Z2 Household and medical recipes 18th to 19th Century
- Glos. R.O. D177 List of recipes and remedies in memorandum book of William Cother of Longford, 1831-7.

References

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5. D269C/F16, Witcombe recipe for curing ham
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17. D610/F18