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Old Recipes in the Kitchen
Culinary Historians of Southern California

Anne Willan

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Per fare torta di carote, & d'altre radiche, & altre materie (Carrot Torta)

Scappi, Bartolomeo. *Opera di M. Bartolomeo Scappi*.

Venetia: Ad instantia de Giorgio Ferarii, 1596. First, 1570.

A Rich Seed-Cake, call'd the Nun's Cake

Smith, Mrs. E. *The Compleat Housewife*.

London: For J. and H. Pemberton, 1742. First, 1727.

Chocolate Cream

Glasse, Hannah (A Lady). *The Art of Cookery Made Plain and Easy*.

London: Printed for the author, and sold at Mrs. Ashburn's, 1747.

Syllabub

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Anne Willan and her husband Mark Cherniavsky have been collecting antiquarian cookbooks for many years, and theirs is a vibrant working collection. Old cookbooks and their recipes are windows into the kitchens of great lords, kings, even popes for whom these books were commissioned. Recreation of these recipes in a modern kitchen can bring many delights. The dishes are often delicious but sometimes disastrous; usually quite strange, and fascinating. Anne will discuss how she tests historical recipes and adapts their instructions for the modern kitchen, as she has done for her upcoming book for California Press on the history of printed cookbooks.

Per fare torta di carote, & d'altre radiche, & altre materie.

Scappi, Bartolomeo. *Opera di M. Bartolomeo Scappi*. Venetia: Ad instantia de Giorgio Ferarii, 1596. First, 1570.

This recipe, together with Pour Faire Tourtes Verdes by Lancelot de Casteau (page 00), marks a high point in the creation of savory pies. Earlier, in medieval times, the pastry enclosing the filling was regarded more as a container to hold ingredients during cooking than to be eaten as an integral part of the finished dish. Fillings tended to be haphazard and large pies were often made with a plain dough of only flour and water. However by late sixteenth century pies closely resemble our modern ones and shapes had become clearly defined. Both authors assume that the reader has a preferred pastry dough and knows how to make it. In Scappi's pages illustrating kitchen equipment, he shows several pans for *tortere* and *torta alte* (tall pies). Here he calls for "pastry below and above and a pastry border around" to enclose his spicy filling of carrot and three cheeses..

Scappi was a working cook, not a *scalco* (steward), and this distinction jumps off the page. He revels in passing on knowledge, often describing several recipes in one, and he includes much more than just cooking instructions. The pastry for this impressively spicy pie, he says, "should be made with sugar and cinnamon, and rose water." Many of his recipes have no precise quantities, but here Scappi lists pounds and ounces so we know exactly how much sugar and spice he liked in the filling (mainly black pepper, which was then fashionable). Turnips, parsnips, or parsley roots can replace carrots, provided the cores are removed, he comments. Fresh buffalo mozzarella is a close match for provatura, and I like to use farmers' cheese or whole milk ricotta for the fresh cheese. Salt is not mentioned by Scappi but Parmesan cheese adds the requisite balance so that, despite the generous amounts of sugar, to our tastes this pie is a first course rather than dessert.

Translation of Original

To make a pie of carrots and of other roots and other ingredients

Wash and scrape the carrots and blanch them in water; remove from the water and cook in a good meat stock, and when done take the carrots and chop finely with a knife adding mint and marjoram and for every two pounds of chopped carrots add a pound of Parmesan cheese or grated Riviera [another aged cheese], and a pound and a half of softer cheese and six ounces of Provaturo cheese, an ounce of ground pepper, two ounces of ground Neapolitan nutmegs, an ounce of cinnamon, two ounces of candied finely chopped bitter orange peel, a pound of sugar, eight eggs, three ounces of butter and make a pie with pastry below and above and a pastry border around, and cook in the oven or under the griddle, and the pastry should be made with sugar and cinnamon and rose water. In this way you can make pies of all sorts of parsnips and parsley roots, having removed the core.

A Pie of Carrots and Other Roots

Serves 10 to 12

Pastry dough

- 4 cups/500 g/18 oz flour, more for sprinkling
- 2 egg yolks
- 1 1/2 teaspoons salt
- 1/4 cup/60 g/2 oz sugar
- 1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
- 1 cup/225 g/8 oz butter
- 5 to 6 tablespoons water
- 1 teaspoon rose water

Filling

- 1 1/2 pounds/675 g carrots, peeled
- 2 cups/500 ml/16 fl oz veal or beef broth, more if needed
- 3 to 4 sprigs mint
- 3 to 4 sprigs marjoram
- 1 1/2 cups/330 g/12 oz farmers' cheese or whole milk ricotta
- 3 ounces/90 g fresh mozzarella cheese, chopped
- 2 cups/225 g/8 oz grated Parmesan cheese
- 1 cup plus 2 tablespoons/225 g/8 oz sugar
- 3 tablespoons ground nutmeg
- 1 1/2 tablespoons ground cinnamon
- 1 1/2 tablespoons ground pepper
- 2 tablespoons finely chopped candied orange peel
- 2 tablespoons butter, melted
- 2 eggs, beaten to mix

- 1 egg, beaten to mix with 1/2 teaspoon salt (for glaze)

- 11 to 12-inch/28 to 30-cm tart pan with removable base

To make the pastry dough: Use the quantities above, following the directions in *How to bake Orenes* (p.00), adding the cinnamon with the salt, and the rose water to the water. Wrap and chill the dough until firm, at least 30 minutes.

To make the filling: Quarter the carrots lengthwise, then cut out and discard the cores. Put the carrots in a pan of cold water, bring to a boil and blanch them for 5 minutes. Drain and return them to the pan with enough broth to cover. Cover the pan and simmer until the carrots are tender, 12 to 15 minutes. Meanwhile, remove the mint and marjoram leaves from the stems and chop the leaves. Crush the farmers' cheese with a fork in a large bowl and stir in the chopped mozzarella. Drain the carrots, coarsely chop them, and

stir them into the cheese mixture along with the chopped herbs, Parmesan, sugar, nutmeg, cinnamon, pepper, orange peel, butter, and eggs.

To shape the pie: Cut off and set aside one third of the pastry dough. Roll out the remaining two thirds to a 14-inch/35-cm round and transfer it to the tart pan, using your fingers to gently press the dough into place. Spread the filling in the pan and fold the overhanging edges of dough over the filling. Brush the dough edges with the egg glaze. Roll the remaining dough to a 12-inch/30-cm round and lift it onto the filling. Roll the rolling pin over the lid; this flattens the pie, seals together the rounds of dough, and trims any excess dough all in one movement. Brush the lid with glaze, then trace a lattice with the tines of a fork, or add whatever decoration you like. Chill the pie until the dough is firm, at least 30 minutes. Heat the oven to 375°F/190°C and put a baking sheet on a low shelf.

To bake: Set the pie on the heated baking sheet and bake until the crust is brown and starts to shrink from the edges of the pan, 50 to 60 minutes. A metal skewer inserted in the center should come out hot to the touch when withdrawn after 30 seconds. Let the pie cool 10 minutes, and then unmold it. Serve it warm, or at room temperature. The pie keeps well at room temperature, loosely covered, for a day or two.

A Rich Seed-Cake, call'd the Nun's Cake.

Smith, Mrs. E. *The Compleat Housewife*. London: For J. and H. Pemberton, 1742. First, 1727.

How cake-making has been revolutionized! As a child in rural Yorkshire I would join in making the Christmas cakes following almost exactly the ritual described by Mrs. Smith. Our stout old cook would rise before the sun to stoke the wood-burning fire that heated the oven beside it. After five hours or more of preheating, the oven temperature would have mellowed to the desired even, medium level that old Emily would test with a leaf of newspaper; when it took one minute to scorch, the heat was just right.

Meanwhile the ingredients were prepared. The flour was spread on a baking tray, set before the fire, and stirred from time to time to dry out the all-pervasive winter damp. The sugar would be sifted to eliminate lumps, again caused by damp. The whites of our farm eggs had fertilized threads in them, so they needed to be strained too. Dried fruits and nuts (not called for in Mrs. Smith's seed cake) were picked over and then rinsed and dried. The cake pan was lined with more newspaper for insulation, then with a layer of buttered parchment.

At last the mixing began. By then all the ingredients, and we ourselves, were at warm room temperature. Emily would install me in a low chair where I clutched the largest pottery mixing bowl in the house to my chest. First the butter: I would squish with my fingers, then curving my hand like a spoon would beat it to a cream, the warmth of my hot little eager hand helping the mix. Then came the eggs, beaten into the butter one by one. By now muscle power was needed and Emily would take over, beating rhythmically and taking turns with either hand. Finally came the flour, beaten in too with no effete nonsense about "folding as lightly as possible." Once the cake was in the oven, we would creep about the house lest a banging door create a draft on the fire so the cake fell. A fallen Christmas cake betokens a death in the house in the coming year.

The sheer muscle power needed to beat as much cake batter as Mrs. Smith describes is prodigious. Old Emily and I never ventured beyond a couple of pounds of flour and 16 eggs, half Mrs. Smith's quantities. Here I've quartered them, revealing almost perfect proportions for a classic pound cake batter. I urge you to try mixing by hand—the direct contact with the batter as it develops from a soft cream to a smooth, fluffy batter is an experience not to be missed. In an electric mixer, the cake batter is fluffier but bakes to be less moist with a darker crust. Ambergris, a waxy secretion from a sperm whale, was once used to perfume foods. As it is now a rare ingredient, I've opted for Mrs. Smith's second suggestion of cinnamon which marries unexpectedly well with caraway.

Image of Original

A Rich Seed-Cake, call'd the Nun's Cake.

Take four pounds of your fineft flour, and three pounds of double-refin'd fugar beaten and fifted, mix them together, and dry them by the fire till you prepare your other

materials. Take four pounds of butter, beat it in your hands till it is very foft like cream, then beat thirty-five eggs, leave out fixteen whites, and ftrain out the treddles of the reft, and beat them and the butter together till all appears like butter; put in four or five fpoonfuls of rofe or orange-flower-water, and beat it again ; then take your flour and fugar, with fix ounces of carraway-feeds, and ftrew it in by degrees, beating it up all the time for two hours together ; you may put in as much tincture of cinamon or ambergreafe as you pleafe ; butter your hoop, and let it ftand three hours in a moderate oven.

Rich Seed Cake

- Makes a 9-inch/22-cm cake to serve 10 to 12
- 3 1/2 cups/450 g/1 pound flour
- 1 2/3 cups/330 g/3/4 pound sugar
- 6 tablespoons/45 g/1 1/2 oz caraway seeds
- 5 eggs
- 4 egg yolks
- 2 cups/450 g/1 pound butter, more for the pan
- 1 1/2 tablespoons rose water, or orange flower water
- 2 teaspoons ground cinnamon
- 9-inch/22-cm springform pan

Heat the oven to 325°F/160°C. Butter the cake pan. Sift the flour with the sugar into a medium bowl and stir in the caraway seeds. Separate the whole eggs, putting all the yolks together and straining the whites into a small bowl to remove the threads.

Cream the butter either by hand or using an electric mixer fitted with the paddle. Add the yolks a few at a time, beating well after each addition. Beat in the rose water or orange flower water. Whisk the egg whites just until frothy and beat them, a little at a time, into the egg yolk mixture. Beat in the cinnamon. Finally beat in the flour, sugar and caraway mixture, sprinkling it a little at a time over the batter. This should take at least 15 minutes by hand, 5 minutes in a mixer. The batter will lighten and become more fluffy.

Transfer the batter to the cake pan and bake in the oven until the cake starts to shrink from the sides of the pan and a skewer inserted in the center comes out clean when withdrawn, 1 1/4 to 1 1/2 hours. Let the cake cool to tepid, then unmold it and leave it to cool completely on a rack. It keeps well several days when carefully wrapped and the flavor will mellow.

Chocolate Cream

Adapted from Anne Willan's Great Cooks and their Recipes

We are so used to mixing spices like cinnamon with chocolate, that the addition of a herb seems strange; however, chocolate and the aromatic flavor of rosemary blend remarkably well. This quantity serves 9 as the dessert is very rich. Rolled cookies or ladyfingers would be a suitable accompaniment.

- ¾ cup sugar
 - 1 cup sweet white wine
 - Juice of ½ lemon
 - 2 cups heavy cream
 - Sprig of fresh rosemary or 1 teaspoon dried rosemary
 - 4 squares semisweet chocolate, grated
-
- 8 mousse pots, stemmed glasses, or custard cups

In a heavy-based pan stir the sugar into the white wine and lemon juice until dissolved. Stir in the cream—it will thicken slightly and be full of bubbles. Add the rosemary and chocolate and cook over low heat, stirring until the chocolate melts. Bring to a boil and boil, stirring, for about 5 minutes or until the mixture is the consistency of thick cream. Take from the heat, let cool slightly, then strain into mousse pots, glasses, or custard cups. Serve cold.

Syllabub

Glasse, Hannah (A Lady). *The Art of Cookery Made Plain and Easy*. London: Printed for the author, and sold at Mrs. Ashburn's, 1747.

Syllabub is an ancient English dessert dating from medieval times. It is made of cream beaten with fruit juice or wine until thick. The origin of the name is obscure; it may come from *sille* (white wine from the Champagne region of France) and *bub*, meaning a bubbling drink. Hannah Glasse gives several recipes; this one has a base of wine with the syllabub spooned on top. Another less practical version calls for milking the cow directly into the syllabub mixture.

Serves 6

For the colored layer:

- 1 cup red wine or cider, or ½ cup sweet or medium sherry
- 2-3 tablespoons sugar, or to taste

For the Syllabub:

- ½ cup sweet or medium sherry
- Grated rind and juice of 1 lemon or 1 orange
- ½ cup sugar
- 2 cups heavy cream

For the colored layer, sweeten the red wine, cider, or sherry with sugar to taste and spoon it into 6 stemmed glasses. For the Syllabub, stir the sherry, lemon or orange rind and juice, and the sugar together in a large bowl until the sugar is dissolved. Beat in the cream and continue beating until thick froth rises to the surface. Skim off the froth with a metal spoon and spoon carefully into the stemmed glasses to form a layer on top of the liquid. Continue beating and skimming off the froth until only a little thin liquid is left in the bowl; the glasses should be full to the brim. Serve chilled or at room temperature.