

## Medieval recipes for a cold winter's day

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“One must set a table according to the time of year: in winter, in enclosed and warm places [and] the air should be redolent with perfumes...” (Platina, book 1, chapter 12.)

A hot winter's lunch on a cold winter's day can make the difference between a good event and a great event. Here are some reasonably quick, straight-forward, practical recipes that can fill bellies and make hearts merry.

### Menu

**Scrambled eggs**

**Sausages**

**Meat stew thickened with bread and eggs**

**Vegetable stew, with beans and barley**

**Bread, butter, honey, apples, dates**

### Recipes

#### Scrambled Eggs

Best cooked slowly to allow long, soft curds to form. If you cook them quickly, little rubbery bits of curd will form that are less pleasant to eat. (McGee, page 91.)

“Eggs however you want them cooked, but first about scrambled eggs: With a paddle or spoon, mix with ground cheese eggs which have been cracked and well beaten with a bit of water or milk. When these are mixed, cook in butter or oil. They will be more pleasant if cooked only a little and never turned while cooking. If you want the colour of herbs in them, add chard, parsley, some borage juice, mint, marjoram, and a little sage.” (Platina, book 9, chapter 23.)

#### Sausages

Cook them on a spit at the hearth of a slow fire, fry them slowly on a low heat in a frying pan with lard, or cook them in a pot. (Platina, book 6, chapters 20 through 23.)

## **Meat stew thickened with bread and eggs**

With consideration to the modern availability of ingredients, one could if necessary use bread crumbs instead of ground bread crust, omit the saffron or replace it with turmeric, and replace the verjuice with wine and/or grape juice. The eggs must be stirred quickly when they are added to the stew, to prevent them curdling too quickly. Using organ meat instead of muscle meat as optionally suggested is less likely to elicit a favourable response from modern diners!

“Dish made from meat: Cut up boiled lean meat finely, and when it has been cut up, cook it again in rich broth for half an hour, first adding ground bread crust, a bit of pepper, and a little saffron. When it has cooled a little, add beaten eggs, ground cheese, parsley, marjoram, and finely chopped mint with a bit of verjuice. Put these in the same pot, mixed and stirred at the same time, stirring slowly with a spoon so they do not stick together. The same can be done with livers and lungs.” (Platina, book 7, chapter 34.)

## **Vegetable stew, with beans and barley**

A medieval staple, for which there many extent recipes, but no doubt a countless number of variations.

Cook cut up green vegetables in water with oil or butter, and sugar. (Platina book 7, chapters 66 and 67.)

For modern tastes, add salt and pepper to taste as well.

Also add some cooked fava beans, broad beans or other beans (or cooked shelled chickpeas, or peas) for protein; and some cooked barley (or rice, or oats, or another old world grain) for bulk.

Good medieval old world vegetables for a vegetable stew are cabbage, spinach, broccoli, cauliflower, lettuce, turnip, parsnip, onion, carrot. Turnip can be quite bitter, so a good way to cook it is to peel it well, roughly dice it, parboil it, throw the water away, and then stew it. New world pumpkin in place of the difficult to obtain medieval gourd is in my opinion a reasonable substitute for the modern cook of medieval fare. On the other hand, avoid using obvious new world plants like potatoes, tomatoes, corn (maize) and peppers (capsicum and chilli).

## **References**

Platina: “On Right Pleasure and Good Health” by Platina de Cremona aka Bartolomeo Saachi, originally written in Rome c.1470, translation by Mary Ella Milham (MRTS, 1998).

McGee: “On Food and Cooking” by Harold McGee (Scribner Press, 1984 and 2004).