

Winchester Feast – A menu reproduction –within a modern SCA feast July 2018

Introduction

Within the SCA there is a long tradition of creating excellent medieval feasts using original recipes and often using original techniques. I am also aware of occasions where an extant menu has been reproduced for a small number (10/15 or so). What is perhaps a rarer and a harder quest is to recreate an extant menu and serve it at a full scale SCA feast

My aim with this feast was to test what is possible within the constraints of an SCA feast, whilst staying as close as possible to extant menu. 'Modern cooks must accommodate guests' allergies, food restrictions, dining habits and tastes

Do the necessary changes to a period menu take it so far away from the original that it is unrecognisable?

The site of this feast was the Hospital of St Cross, Winchester, UK in July 2018

The menu I choose was from an original menu from Bodleian 279, this was likely for Henry IV (Born 1367 – Died 1414, Reign 1399-1413). Henry's half-brother was Cardinal Henry Beaufort (1375-1447), who at this period was Bishop of Winchester, and a close personal and political ally of the fragile King's regime.

Beaufort endowed The Hospital of St Cross in Winchester with the funds for its second order "The Order of Noble Poverty" or the so called Red Brothers in 1445.

This feast was served in hall of the Hospital, which Beaufort improved and expanded, and his arms are in evidence in hall, and the hall is known as the "Beaufort Hall".

With the close connection between Beaufort and his half brother the King, it therefore not so farfetched to imagine that the Cardinal would have eaten many of the dishes, and perhaps even attended the original feast with his brother.

And this I think is the best part about this feast – the close recreation of an extant feast, served in a site supported by a man who could have eaten the original. A 15th Century Feast, From a 15th Century menu, Served in a 15th Century Hall

Scope

This essay will cover:

- examining the original menu
- dish choices and alterations – recipes and redactions chosen.

It does not cover how four volunteers and I ran a feast for 60 people out of a small on-site kitchen. I'm hosting a discussion about feast logistics at Raglan ffair, August 2018.

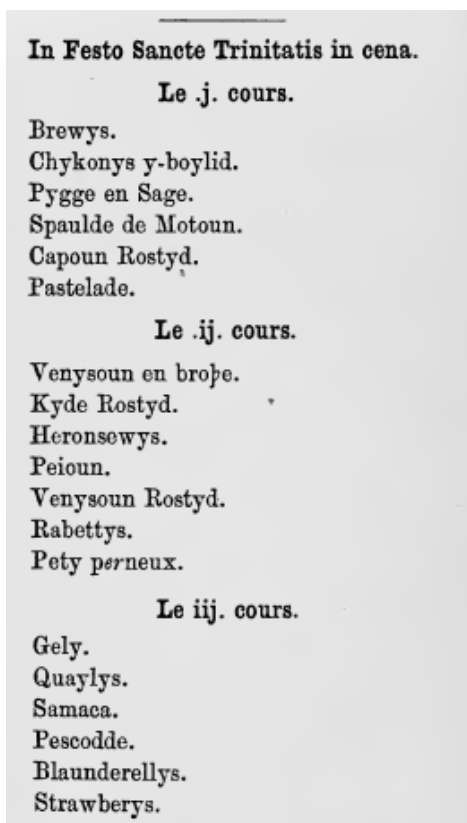
Menu selection

Many of the menus that are still in existence are long and highly complex. As today, the menus for important state and national events are recorded in ways that a day to day occasion are not. For example, the recent wedding breakfast of Prince Harry and Megan Markle was published and talked about widely, in a way that the menu for my own wedding dinner (though excellent) wasn't!

The menus that survive are for weddings, coronations, investitures etc: spectacular, national events. Most are beyond the reach of an SCA kitchen and budget.

For example, *Two Fifteenth-century Cookery-Books: Harleian MS. 279 (ab. 1430), & Harleian. MS. 4016 (ab. 1450), with extracts from Ashmole MS. 1429, Laud MS. 553, & Douce MS. 55.*, published by Early English Text Society in 1888 has 13 different menus (called Bills of Fare). It includes Henry IV wedding feast, which has 33 items ranging from Bitterns and Sturgeon to a more manageable Pears in syrup. The same manuscript lists another menu, titled - *In Festo Sancte Trinitatis in cena*” or “Dinner for the Festival of the Holy Trinity” It is in three courses, each with 6 to 7 items per course each with an array of meats, vegetables and sweet dishes.

The menu reads below (from p 59 of reprinted book):



Original text from MS Harleian 279

Course 1	Course 2	Course 3
Brewys	Venysoun en brofe	Gely
Chykonys-y-boylid	Kyde Rostyd	Quaylys
Pygge en Sage	Heronsewys	Samaca
Spaulde de Motun	Peioun	Pescodde
Capoun Rostyd	Venysoun Rostyd	Blauderellys
Pastelade	Rabettys	Strawberys
	Pety Perneux	

Modern English

Course 1	Course 2	Course 3
Brewys	Venison Boiled	Jelly
Chickens boiled	Goat roasted	Quails
Pigs in Sage	Heron	Samaca
Shoulder of mutton	Pigeon	Pea pods

Capon roasted	Venison Roasted	Blauderellys
Pastelade	Rabbit	Strawberries
	Pety Perneux	

This menu has an advantage: the meats listed, with the exception of the Heron, are all still available to the modern cook.

Seasonality

The Feast of the Holy Trinity is the first Sunday after Pentecost, which itself is seven weeks after Easter. This would put this feast between mid May (after 10th May) and mid June (the Sunday after 13th June). The manuscript has no internal date, so we can't look up the date of Easter when it was served. However the placement of both peapods and strawberries on the menu suggests a date in later May / early June based on the availability of fruit and peas in southern England.

Recipe selection

Where possible when selecting recipes for this feast, I used recipes found in the Harleian manuscript. and if not possible I have selected from the *Form of Cury* and *Le Menagier De Paris*, two sources dated to the late 14th century. This ensures that all the recipes for the feast are from a relatively tight time period of the late 14th Century to the mid 15th Century.

The Feast for Trinity is not dated in the manuscript, unlike the many of the other menus around it. It appears straight after the Feast for the wedding of Henry IV who married Joan of Navarre in 1403. Later in the list of menus is the feast for the funeral of Nicholas Bubwith, Bishop of Bath and Wells, who died in 1434. These external dates suggest when our Feast took place.

The one dish outside this strict time period is the Marchpane , used for one of our subtleties. Marchpane is typically a 16th century recipe and becomes popular as sugar become more widely available. However, I wanted an additional subtlety, and had an expert marchpane maker on the feast team.

In the recipe discussions where I have taken a transcription or translation that is not mine own, I have listed the source of translation along with the source of the recipe.

Too Much Meat?

In the original feast of 19 dishes, 11 of them are meat, and one is heron, which is a protected species I cannot serve. It also has only one wholly vegetable dish in the Peascodde. I needed to balance the needs of the modern eater, including vegetarians and those with allergies, with the limited budget of an SCA feast, to my stated intention of a complete medieval menu.

The solution I choose was the completely period appropriate one: namely, sleight of hand and trickery. I used "illusion food". For example instead of "Pigges in Sage" we had "Sage in Pigs" – using an herb custard recipe from the Form of Cury, served in a pig's head mould.

To add more vegetables and greens and give a balance that a modern eater would expect, I replaced the goat, heron and pigeon in the second course with a grand salad, and used various techniques to invoke the missing animals; toast and pastry cut in the appropriate shapes, and the various dried fruits formed in the right shape. Rabbit in the 2nd course was served as jelly in a bunny mould.

I also changed the order of the feast in order to balance things more for a modern eater. The finished menu:

Course 1		Course 2		Course 3	
Original	Change	Original	Change	Original	Change
Brewys		Venison Boiled		Jelly – Rabbit	Jelly in the shape of Rabbit
Chickens boiled		Goat roasted	Grand Salad	Quails	Gingerbread
Pigs in Sage	“Sage in Pig” – herb custard	Heron		Samaca	
Shoulder of mutton		Pigeon		Pea pods	Moved to 2 nd course
Capon roasted	Deep fried pastry in the shape of chicken	Venison Roasted	Marchpane	Blauderellys	
Pastelade		Rabbit	Moved to 3 rd course	Strawberries	
		Pety Perneux			

More meat?

The removal of the goat, pigeon, roasted venison rabbit and quail are major changes and they are meats that are available to a modern cook, so should I have kept them in? I did consider if they could have stayed in the menu. However, it was not practically possible to cook and serve another 5 extra meats with the kitchen available to myself, and the budget would not have extended to serve this extra protein, even just to the high table.

Menu Breakdown

Course 1

Brewys
Chickens boiled
Pigs in Sage
Shoulder of mutton
Capon roasted
Pastelade

Brewys

Often spelt in various ways Brewes / Brewes / Bruces is a type of soup or light stew thickened with bread. Below the description from the online Middle English dictionary

bröues (n.) Also brewe(i)s, brow(e)is, broys, brues, brus.

[[OF](#) bröez, pl. of bröet broth.

(a) Broth, soup, stew; (b) strips of bread soaked in broth or other liquor; (c) broth or sauce for meat [= brouet].

<https://quod.lib.umich.edu/cgi/m/mec/med-idx?type=id&id=MED6186>

Brewys is fairly common recipe in the middle ages and various versions of it appear in a number of the manuscripts in the 14th and 15th centuries. Harleian 279 has 5 references to Brewys in his index. There are also various references to “as in the manner of Brewys” in other recipes, which implies it is a common dish, or technique. See this example from Harleian 279 manuscript:

xxviiij. Soupes Jamberlayne. 2 Take "Wyne, Canel, an powder of Gyngere, an Sugre, an of eche a porcyow, fan take a straynoure & hange it

on a pynne, an caste ale f er-to, an let renne twyis or fryis throgh, tyl it renne clere ; an fen take Paynmaynne an **kyt it in maner of brewes**, an toste it, an wete it in fe same lycowre, an ley it on a dysshe, an caste blawnche powder y-now fer-on; an fan caste fe same lycowr vp-on fe same soppys, [an] serue hew forth in maner of a potage.

For the feast, I chose the Lenten version listed below, though this feast is out of the Lenten period. It provided a light vegetarian-friendly dish to the first course, which already had a soup / pottage in the form of boiled Chickens.

Brewys in Lenten

Take a few fygs and sope hem and draw hem throw a straynoure with wyne. Then putte there to a lytil hony. then toste brede and salte it and so broune and remnyig as Brewes serue hem in and straw poude canelle y now there on atte the dressoure and serue it forth

Take a few figs and soak them and draw them through a strainer with wine. Then put there to a little honey. Then toast bread and salt it and so brown and remaining as Brewes serve them and scatter powder cinnamon now there on the dress and serve it forth.

The final dish looked like this:



Chickens boiled – a clear indication to the cook what is required. I selected the recipe “Chicken or hen in a clene broth” from the second manuscript, Harleian 4016, in Austin's edition, as this uses boiling as the method for cooking the chickens and gives a good pottage to start the feast with.

Chicken or hen in a clene broth

Conyng or hen in clene broth, Take a Conyng or a hen, and seth him ynowe in good fresh broth, and drawe þe same broth thr[o]gh a Streynowr ; And take half a pynte of white wyn, and caste there-to ; And then sette it ouer the fire, and then choppe the Conyng or the hen, and take of the Skyn, and pike hem clene, and caste thereto, And lete boile togidre ; And whan hit is boiled ynogh, caste there-to powder of ginger, vergeous, and salt also ; And then thou shall serue it forth.

Chicken or hen in clene broth. Take a chicken or a hen and seethe him now in good fresh broth and drawe of same broth through a strainer. Take half a pint of white wine and caste there to. Then set it over the fire and chop the chicken or the hen and take of the skin and pike them clean and cast

thereto, and let them boil together. When it is boiled enough, caste there to powder of ginger, verjuice and salt. And then thou shall serve it forth.

The final dish looked like this:



Pigs in sage – it is not clear how the pig (pork) was cooked with sage, whether roasted or boiled. It is also not clear which part of the pig was served. This dish changed to “Sage in Pigs”, a vegetarian-friendly herb fritter recipe called Eroblet from *Form of Cury*

Take persel, myntes, savery & sauge, tansy, vervayn, clarry, rewe, ditayn, fenel, southrenwode; hewe hem & grinde hem smale. Medle hem up with ayren. Do butter in a trap & do be far herto & bake it & messe forth.

Take parsley, mint, savory & sage, tansy, vervain, clary, rewetc.... cut then and grind them small. Mix them up with eggs. Do butter in a trap and do so thereto and bake it and mess forth

Recipe from *Form of Cury*, published in Pleyn Delit: Medieval Cookery for Modern Cooks

In order to create the pig effect the custard was cooked in a pig’s head mould. The final dish came out like this:

In the moulds



As served:



Here is a close up of the version I made whilst planning the menu



Shoulder of mutton – Again it is unclear how the shoulder was cooked: roasted? boiled? For this feast the meat was roasted and served with a green sauce, from the *Form of Cury*. Mutton is generally not slaughtered in the early summer anymore in the UK, so I roasted 4 shoulders of lamb.



Vedre Sawse (Green sauce)

Take persel, mynt, garlek, a litul serpell and sawge; a litul canel, gynder, piper, wyne, brede, vyneger & salt; grynde it small with safroun & messe it forth

Take parsley, mint, garlic and little sorrel and sage, a little cinnamon, ginger, pepper, wine, bread, vinegar and salt. Grind it small with saffron and serve it forth.

Recipe from *Form of Cury*, in Pleyen Delit: Medieval Cookery for Modern Cooks

Capon Roasted – As chicken is already on the menu. I chose an illusion-food substitute: chickens and cockerels in pastry as part of 'pastelade'.

Pastelade – When I investigated this item it was listed in the medieval online dictionary as simply as a pastry and doesn't give any clearer indication of that might mean.

pastelāde (n.) Also **piste-**, **pete-**.

[From [OF pastel](#); cp. [ME pastil](#).]

Some kind of pastry.

<http://quod.lib.umich.edu/cgi/m/mec/med-idx?type=id&id=MED32585>

I therefore picked a recipe from the *Form of Cury* called "Crispels"

Take and make a foile of gode past as thynne as paper; kerue it out wyt a saucer & frye it in oile; oþer in grece; and þe remnaunt, take hony clarified and flamme þerwith. Alye hem vp and serue hem forth.

Take and make foil of good paste as thin as paper, cut it out with a saucer and fry it in oil or in grease. Take honey clarified and baste them and the serve them forth.

- Hieatt, Constance B. and Sharon Butler. *Curye on English: English Culinary Manuscripts of the Fourteenth-Century (Including the Forme of Cury)*. New York: for The Early English Text Society by the Oxford University Press, 1985.

<http://www.godecookery.com/mtrans/mtrans38.htm>

To incorporate the roasted capons mentioned above, I cut the pastry in the forms of chickens and cockerels before deep frying them.

I don't have a picture of the finished Crispels, however here is the pastry before frying



Second course

Venison Boiled
Goat roasted
Heron
Pigeon
Venison Roasted
Rabbit
Pety Perneux
Moved from 3 rd course – Peascod

This is most meat heavy of the courses and has been the most adapted.

Venison Boiled – As with the chicken in the previous course, this gives a clear indication of the method of cooking, I picked a stew recipe from Harleian 279.

Venyson in Broth. Take Rybbys of Yenysoun, and wasshe hem clene in fayre water, an strayne þe same water þorw a straynoure in-to a potte, an caste þer-to Yenysoun, also Percely, Sawge, powder Pepyr, Clowys, Maces, Yynegre, and a lytyl Red wyne caste þ ere-to ; an þanne latte it boyle

Venison in broth. Take rabbits or venison and wash them clean in fair water and strain of the same and into a pot and caste thereto venison and also parsley, sage, pepper, cloves, mace, vinegar and a little red wine and then let it boil.

Goat Roasted / Heron / Pigeon - As mentioned, these items were incorporated into a grand salad using, pastry outlines, to pay homage to the meat.



Here is the pastry before cooking and on the finished salads

Venison roasted – With venison already in this course I replaced it with a Marchpane in the form of a deer. I sourced a deer mould and a dragon mould that went to high table.



On a side note, a couple of heralds informed me that it didn't count as dragon but a Wyven!

Rabbit – this was moved to the 3rd course

Peascodde – this item was moved 'up' from the 3rd course. Broadly, modern tastes expect more sweet items in the last course and the peas sit well in the 2nd course. Peascodde is a very simple and tasty recipe, consisting for whole pea pods boiled and served with melted butter (what could be better!) and appears in *Le Menagier de Paris*. Peas and peapods come into season in June in England. Recipe published in *Pleyn Delit: Medieval Cookery for Modern Cooks*.

Pety Perneux – this is relatively unknown recipe, but one that should be better known, as it is very tasty. Austin indexed 2 or 3 versions of this dish. I chose one from Harleian 279.

.xx. Pety Pernautes. Take fayre Flowre, Sugre, Safroun, an Salt, & make per-offe fayre past & fayre cofynges; þan take fayre y-tryid 3olkys Raw, & Sugre, an pouder Gyngere, & Raysounys of Coraunce, & myncyd Datys, but not to smal; þan caste al þis on a fayre bolle, & melle al togederys, & put in þin cofyn, & lat bake oper Erye in Freyssche grece.

Take fair flour, sugar, saffron and salt. Make a paste and a fair coffin. Then take egg yolks, sugar, ginger, raisin of corrinth and minced dates, but not too small and then cast all on a fair boil and mix all together and in a fine coffin and let it bake in grease

After boiling, you get a mixture very similar to a modern fruit cake mix (before baking) .When baked or fried comes out incredibly tasty. I also used a bought filo pastry rather than make my own pastry (as I did with the apple pies). When I tested this recipe, the very thin pastry gave a very crisp parcel that worked better than a thicker shorter pastry.

Here is the uncooked mixture



And the finished parcels



3rd course

Course 3
Jelly - Rabbit
Quails
Samaca
Blauderellys
Strawberries

The final course is mostly a sweet course.

Jelly – Jellies, prior to modern gelatine in the 18th century, were incredibly time consuming and impressive dishes. They required the boiling of several pigs trotters, or the swim bladders of fish, to get the 'set' needed. In a modern kitchen they are considerably less labour intensive. I made the jelly in the form a rabbit, with yellow colouring, (achievable in period using saffron) and lemon flavouring. There is no extant recipe for these exact choices however the flavour was popular and achievable. The jellies were prepared in a Rabbit mould.

Here are photos of the test version I made, as I have none from the event.



Quails – this last meat in the menu was to be replaced by quail shaped gingerbread. However, on the day the gingerbread couldn't be shaped into the expected shape, as it was a looser more crumbly gingerbread than expected. However, the gingerbread was formed into balls and served.

Gingerbread in the form listed below is a common enough version, with the honey and breadcrumbs (although strangely enough this version doesn't explicitly list ginger!)

.iiiij. Gyngerebrede. Take a quart of hony, & sethe it, & skeme it clene; take Safroun, powder Pepir, & þrow þer-on; -take gratyd Brede, & make it so chargeaunt þat it wol be y-lechyd; fen take powder Canelle, & straw þ er-on y-now; þen make yt square, lyke as fou wolt leche yt; take when foulechyst hyt, an caste Box leves a-bouyn, y-stykyd þer-on, on clowys. And 3 if fou wolt haue it Red, coloure it with Saunders y-now.

Gingerbread – Take a quart of honey and seethe it and skim it clean. Take saffron, powdered pepper and add to the honey. Take grated bread and add to the honey make it so stiff that be able to be sliced. Then add powdered cinnamon and make it square like as you could cut it. Take when hot and caste box leaves about and place cloves on. And if you would like it red colour it with saunders.

The gingerbread as served:



Samaca – This is an interesting recipe and gives a nice flavourful cheese fritter. Austin's manuscripts do not include this recipe. He cites a recipe from Robina Napier (*A Noble Boke off Cookry ffor a Prynce Houssolde or Eny Other Estately Houssolde*. London: Elliot Stock, 1882). Constance Hieatt, in *Pleyn Delit*, suggests that it could be an elderflower fritter, which would tie in with season of the feast. I used Napier's version, as I cooked in July, as the elderflowers are no longer out.

To mak smartard tak wetted cruddes er they bee pressed and put them in a clothe and grinde them well to pured flour and temper hem with eggs and cowe creme and mak ther of a good batere that it be rynyng then tak whit grece in a pan and let it be hete and tak out the batter with a saucer and let it ryn into the grece and draw your hand bakward that it may ryn abrod then fry it welle and whit and somewhat craking and serue it furthe in dishes with sugur ther on.

- Napier, Robina. *A Noble Boke off Cookry ffor a Prynce Houssolde or Eny Other Estately Houssolde*. London: Elliot Stock, 1882.

To make a smartard take wetted curds and they be pressed and put them in a clothe and grinde them well to a pure flour and temper them with eggs and cow cream and there of a good batter that is be running and then take white grease in a pan and let it be hot and take the batter with a saucer and let it run into the grease and draw your hand backward that is may run abroad and then fry well and white and somewhat craking and serve it for the with sugar there on.

<http://www.godecookery.com/nboke/nboke07.htm>

Whilst testing this recipe, I used various version of "wetted curds". I tried home made fresh curd cheese, commercial cottage cheese, and commercial soft cheese. The best result came from the commercial soft cheese, as it gave a more cohesive fritter when fried.

Blauderellys - This is another interesting word, which required some research. It appears that is a variety of white apple, similar to a pippin.

blaud(e)rel (n.) Also blandrel & blauderer, -eler.

[OF blandurel]

A highly prized kind of apple.

<http://quod.lib.umich.edu/cgi/m/mec/med-idx?type=id&id=MED5125>

As the original feast was in early summer, these apples would have over wintered. The new season apples wouldn't be ripe for at least 2 more months. Whether these apples were cooked or served raw is not indicated. I made an apple pie, with a modern brambling apple, as it is a dry and tart apple ideal for baking. The recipe is from *Curry on Inglysch: English Culinary Manuscripts of the Fourteenth Century*, another EETS publication.

To make a tart of apples

For to make Tartys in Apples: Take good apples and good spices & figs and raisings and pears and when they are well braid colour with safron well and do it in a coffin and do it forth to bake well.

For to make a tart in apple. Take good apples and good species and figs and raisin and pears and when they are well braid., colour with saffron well and do it in a coffin and do it forth to bank well.

- Hieatt, Constance B. and Sharon Butler. *Curye on Inglysch*. New York: Oxford University Press for The Early English Text Society, 1985.

<http://www.godecookery.com/friends/frec40.htm>

The pies came out very well, each with it's own top – here is a selection



Strawberries – The final item in the menu and would have been the small wild strawberry, as the large variety we see today are a hybrid from America. The fruit could have easily have been served raw and whole. However, for the last item I have chosen to serve is as Stawberye as it is a recipe listed within the Harleian 279 manuscript.

Cxxiij. Strawberye. Take Strawberys, & waysshe hem in tyme of 3 ere in gode red wyne; þan strayne þorwe a cloþe, & do hem in a potte with gode Almaunde mylke, a-lay it with Amyndown oper with þe flowre of Rys, & make it chargeaunt and lat it boyle, and do þer-in Roysonys of coraunce, Safroun, Pepir, Sugre grete plente, poudre Gyngere, Canel, Galyngale ; poynte it with Ynegre, & a lytil whyte grece put þer-to ; coloure it with Alkenade, & droppe it a-bowte, plante it with þe graynys of Pome-garnad, & þan serue it forth.

Strawberry. Take strawberries and wash them when in season in good red wine. Then strain through a cloth and do them in a pot with good almond milk. Bind it with amyllum or with rice flour, and make it stiff and let it boil, and put currants in it, saffron, pepper, a lot of sugar, ginger powder, cinna mon, galingale. Finish it off with vinegar, and a little white grease added. Colour it with alkanet and transfer it [to a bowl](?), sprinkle with the grains of pomegranate, and then serve it.

Redaction from online - <http://coquinaria.nl/en/strawberye/>



This the completed strawberrie but before plating.

Conclusion

Where then does this leave our original question – Can you recreate an extant menu for a modern SCA feast? The shortest answer is no: we do not eat heron, which rules out duplicating the original menu. A more nuanced answer is “You can get quite close to it”. With an unlimited budget, and ignoring vegetarians and other food restrictions, you can get very close indeed. I made several changes to the menu. Of the 19 items in the original menu, I have changed 8 of them – roughly 42% of the items. I kept 11 dishes, 57% of the total, which is fairly long way from the original. Yet I feel that changes are in the spirit of feast overall.

The selection of recipes, for both changes and interpretations, mean that my version of this menu is:

1 - Geographically cohesive; all recipes bar 1 are from England

2- Historically cohesive; all recipes bar 1 date between 1390 and 1450

3 – Seasonally cohesive; the original feast was in late May / Early June and my version will be in Mid-July – around 5-4 weeks later than the original.

So overall it was an enjoyable feast to research and a joy to serve (as I stated at the start of essay) 15th century English food, from an extant 15th menu, served in a 15th Century Hall, on a site funded by the brother of man the feast was originally for.

Bibliography

Pleyn Delit: Medieval Cookery for Modern Cooks, by Sharon Butler, Constance B. Hieatt, Professor Brenda Hosington, University of Toronto Press; 2Rev Ed edition (14 Feb. 1996)

Two Fifteenth-Century Cookery-Books: About 1430-1450 by Thomas Austin (Editor), Kessinger Publishing (10 Sept. 2010)

Cooking and Dining in Medieval England, by Peter Brears (Author), Prospect Books; First Edition edition (1 May 2012)

Websites

<http://godecookery.com/>

<http://medievalcookery.com/>

<https://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/med/>

<https://archive.org/details/twofifteenthcent00austuoft> (digital copy of *Two Fifteenth Century Cook-Books*)

http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/Viewer.aspx?ref=add_ms_5016_fs001r (BL Additional 5016, aka *Forme of Cury*)

Photos

All photos Rick Williams and Jenny Sawyer