

Medieval Sauces

An Introduction



Taught by Her Ladyship Elena de Maisnilwarin

Medieval Cooking: Sauces

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A little background on why I'm teaching this class:

A few years ago, I traveled to the West Kingdom to take classes at their Collegium Occidentalis, which is similar to our University of Ithra. One of the classes I took was "Getting Saucy - Preparing Medieval Meals with Period Sauces" taught by Rowan of Hakesleah.

Since then, several times I have said to Her Ladyship Isobel fitz Gilbert (one of Lions Gate's cooks) "I wish someone would teach a class like that here". One day, she looked at me and said "Why don't you?"

So, here we are...

The first time I taught this class, it was all about tasting. Today's class is about preparing the sauces – we won't touch on medieval concepts regarding food preparation, presentation or precedence.

Today we'll be making Cameline Sauce, Cinnamon-Orange Sauce, Green Sauce, Pink Garlic Sauce, Sharp Pepper Sauce and Sweet and Sour Sauce. I've included two recipes for you to try on your own: Chicken Cuminey and Turkey in Murrey Sauce.

It's my hope that preparing (and tasting!) these sauces will encourage you to seek out - and use - other period sauces in your cooking.

Imagine a potluck where everyone brought period foods!

Texture

As we have several sauces to prepare in only four hours, we'll use a food processor to prepare the Cameline Sauce, Green Sauce, Pink Garlic Sauce and Sharp Pepper Sauce. While the food processor is fast – and the results are quite good – the texture isn't quite right.

When you prepare these on your own, please do take the time to press the Cameline, Pink Garlic and Sharp Pepper sauces through a sieve several times, or use a manual food mill. Try preparing the Green Sauce in a blender, or use a mortar and pestle, instead of the food processor – blenders cut with four blades, most food processors cut with two.

Vinegar

Mistress Rowenna de Roncesvalles in her Year-Long Culinary Ithra class advised that modern vinegars are stronger than the vinegars available to medieval cooks. Please remember to dilute your vinegar 3 to 1 with water.

Breadcrumbs

If the recipe doesn't specify toasted breadcrumbs, please use fresh breadcrumbs (or as fresh as possible). If the breadcrumbs are very dry, they will soak up too much liquid and can change the taste of the sauce if that liquid is other than water.

Recipes to Try On Your Own

Two recipes have been included for you to try on your own: Chicken Cuminey and Turkey in Murrey Sauce. We won't be making these in class as the sauces are inherent in the dish, rather than sauces that can be prepared separately and added later.

The Chicken Cuminey sauce is from Mistress Rowenna de Roncesvalles Year-Long Culinary Ithra class. During that class, students were each given a medieval cookbook, along with Mistress Rowenna's translation from the original language to English. Each student had to choose one recipe and prepare the dish for the class, redacting from the original and the translation. The recipe included herein is my redaction.

Sharing What You've Learned

Please feel free to share this handout with others; all I ask is that document be passed on in its entirety – all the pages with no revisions.

Sauces	Colour	Serve With	Comments
Cameline	White	Lamb Veal Pork Rabbit Beef	
Cinnamon-Orange	Orange	Chicken	
Cumin	Beige	Chicken	
Green Sauce	Green	Fish Goose Frogs legs	
Murrey Sauce	Purple/Blue	Poultry Excellent with turkey	
Pink Garlic Sauce	Pink	Roast meats Chicken Vegetables	
Sharp Pepper Sauce	Beige	Roast beef Venison	
Sweet and Sour	Red	Ham	

Cameline Sauce

as advised by Mistress Rowenna de Ronçesvalles
based on her research of many different recipes for this sauce

½ cup diluted white or red wine vinegar, extra wine vinegar to thin sauce
½ cup white or red wine
½ to 1 teaspoon cinnamon
1 cup toasted breadcrumbs
½ teaspoon ginger
¼ teaspoon pepper
¼ t cardamom
pinch mace
pinch clove
salt

Combine vinegar, wine and cinnamon. Add breadcrumbs and soak until liquid is absorbed. Pass through a sieve two or three times (three is better), until very smooth. Add remaining spices. Taste and adjust seasoning. Cameline sauce should be spreadable (like mustard); if it's too thick, thin with more wine or vinegar.

Notes:

- Modern vinegar is much stronger than medieval vinegar (approximately three times stronger) and should be diluted for medieval recipes.
- You may use 1 cup diluted wine vinegar instead of ½ cup each wine and wine vinegar.
- Some of the original recipes have all the additional spices, some have two or three. Adjust the spices to suit your tastes.
- This sauce is much better prepared in advance.
- Consider adding Cameline Sauce to your gravy or pan drippings for roasted meats.

Chicken Cuminey

Conminee de poullaille from *The Valais Cookbook*, c. 1275

From the cookbook: Cuisiez en vin et en eaue. Despeciés par cartiers, frisez en saing de lart; metez ung pou de pain trampé en vostre pot, coullez et metez boullir avec vostre grain; prenez un pou de gingembre et de commin desfait de verjus, moiaux de eufs grant foison, et lez batez, coullés, faillez dedanes; gardez qu'il n'arde.

As translated by Mistress Rowenna de Ronçesvalles: Cook [them] in wine and water, [then] cut [them] in quarters, [and] fry [them] in bacon fat. Soak a little bread in your pot [of chicken stock], strain [it], and boil [it] with your meat. Take a little ginger and cumin tempered in verjuice [and add it]. [Take] a great quantity of egg yolks, beat them, strain [them], and pour [them] in. Take care that it doesn't curdle.

1 chicken
bacon fat
1 cup of wine, approximately
four slices of bread, crusts removed
1 ½ tablespoons ground cumin, approximately
½ teaspoon ground ginger, approximately
1/3 cup red wine vinegar
6 egg yolks

Rinse the chicken, put it in a pot with water and wine. Bring to a boil, turn it down and let it simmer for about 45 minutes.

Take the chicken out, take some of the broth and soak the bread in the broth. Push the soaked bread through a strainer. Grind the spices with the vinegar in a mortar. Separate the chicken meat from the bones and skin, brown the meat in the fat in a saucepan. Add the chicken, spices and bread back into the stock. Bring it to a boil, lower the heat and simmer to reduce the sauce. Beat and strain six egg yolks. Temper egg yolks with hot liquid from pot, add tempered egg yolks to pot and keep on low heat until the egg yolks are cooked.

Chicken with Cinnamon-Orange Sauce

based on *Pollastro arrosto* from
“*Libro de arte coquinaria*” by Maestro Martino

2 whole roasting chickens or 10 chicken pieces

Roast the chicken pieces in a large baking dish by baking them covered in foil at 375F for 55 minutes or until the juices run clear. You may remove the foil in the last 10 minutes or so to brown the pieces if you desire.

Meanwhile, prepare the sauce:

1 cup frozen orange juice concentrate, undiluted
1 ½ cups water
3 tablespoons rosewater
6 tablespoons sugar
1 tablespoon cinnamon

Mix all ingredients. Bring to a boil and reduce, stirring occasionally until the liquid is reduced by half. This takes about an hour. Be careful not to let it boil over or burn. If the sauce begins to get slimy, don't worry; this often happens when boiling cinnamon in large quantities. Keep stirring frequently, and the texture should improve. If not, just strain the finished sauce when you're done. When the chicken is done, arrange pieces on your serving platter, and dress with the sauce. Serve the extra sauce for dipping.

Serves 10.

Green Sauce

from "Pleyn Delit", 50

2 to 3 tablespoons fresh, finely minced parsley
2 teaspoons each fresh, finely minced thyme, sage or savory
1/8 teaspoon each ground ginger, pepper
1/4 cup fine breadcrumbs or two slices diced dry bread (crusts removed)
1 tablespoon each white wine vinegar, white wine
1/2 teaspoon salt

optional: 1 teaspoon each fresh rosemary and mint, finely minced; 1 clove garlic, peeled, crushed and minced; pinch each of cinnamon, cloves , saffron; 1 to 2 teaspoon horseradish (as substitute for roots such as pellatory).

Blend the ingredients in a blender or mortar; if necessary, add more wine and/or vinegar to thin the sauce to consistency something like mayonnaise. Serve with poached, grilled, or sautéed fish, or serve with frogs' legs or goose.

Note: I like this sauce with parsley, thyme, sage and savory, but then I really like sage and savory. Try several variations – using the herbs that you like best. What a wonderful excuse to plant a herb garden in the spring!

Murrey Sauce

as advised by Mistress Rowenna de Ronçesvalles,
used in Lions Gate Baronial Banquet, AS XXXIII

For each 1 pound of turkey meat:

olive oil
½ onion
1 clove garlic
¼ cup white wine
2 cups blackberries
1 teaspoon cinnamon
¼ teaspoon ginger
¼ teaspoon nutmeg
1/8 cup sugar
1 cup chicken stock
½ teaspoon thyme

Sauté onion and garlic in olive oil til onions are softened, add white wine and stir to get up any browned bits. Force blackberries through strainer, removing seeds. Add blackberry pulp, cinnamon, ginger, nutmeg, sugar and chicken stock to onion mixture. Bring to a boil, then reduce and simmer til mixture had thickened and reduced. Add thyme and turkey (removed from bone). Serve hot. Reheats well.

NOTE:

While I was the cook who pre-prepared this for the Banquet, I've long since lost my notes on the preparation method. Above is my best recollection of the amounts and methods used, and was used for the "tasting version" of this class. My notes indicate that the sauce needed more onion and turkey (to make it a thicker dish).

Pink Garlic Sauce

from "The Medieval Kitchen", p 167

1 generous pound red grapes
½ cup almonds
3 cloves garlic, peeled
¼ cup fresh breadcrumbs
salt

Stem the grapes, put them into a stainless steel or other non-reactive pan and crush them thoroughly with your hands. Alternatively, you can puree them coarsely in a food processor. Bring to the boil and simmer for 30 minutes, then strain, pressing to extract the maximum possible juice.

Meanwhile, blanch almonds and dry them thoroughly. Grind them in a mortar or in a blender, along with the garlic.

Soak the breadcrumbs in about ½ cup of the reduced grape juice and, when softened, whisk until smooth; blend in the almond-garlic mixture.

Whisk in additional grape juice until the mixture forms a creamy sauce. (The entire preparation could also be done in the blender.) Check for salt before serving.

Notes

1. I get better results if I grind the garlic separately. If the garlic is mashed (like a paste), then when it's added to the ground almonds the sauce is smoother. No nasty garlic "lumps" in the lovely pink smooth sauce.
2. If the red grapes available to you aren't deep in colour, try a black grape variety instead. The sauce has more visual "punch" if it's deeply coloured.

Sharp Pepper Sauce

from "Pleyn Delit", 51

Take a bunch of grapes and put them in a mortar with a little salt; crush the fruit well, then pour off the juice; put ginger and pepper and a little bread in a mortar and grind well, then mix with the juice. (ANA 19)

1 cup white grapes

½ teaspoon salt

juice of one lemon or 1 tablespoon white wine vinegar

¼ teaspoon each ground ginger, pepper

2 to 3 slices of bread, crusts removed, diced

Crush grapes with salt and lemon juice or vinegar in a blender or mortar; strain and reserve the juice, discarding the pulp. Add bread and spices to the juice; when the bread has softened, blend. Best with cold smoked fish or sliced meats.

Notes:

1. The grapes for this sauce should be sour. If you cannot find sour grapes, add lemon juice or vinegar.
2. Freshly ground ginger and pepper will give the best results; this sauce should be "sharp" as it's name says.

Sweet and Sour Sauce

as advised by Mistress Rowenna de Ronçesvalles,
used in Lions Gate Baronial Banquet, AS XXXV

red wine vinegar
water
honey

As modern vinegar is much stronger than medieval vinegar, dilute the red wine vinegar with water - one part vinegar to one or two parts water, to your taste.

Add honey to vinegar/water mixture, until the blend of sweet and sour is to your taste.

For the banquet, and for the “tasting” version of this class, the Sweet and Sour Sauce was poured over ham steaks before they were roasted, and extra sauce was provided at the table.

Bibliography

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Mistress Rowenna de Ronçesvalles, OL, OP (Elizabeth Rowe)