

Great-Grandmother's Cookery Books.

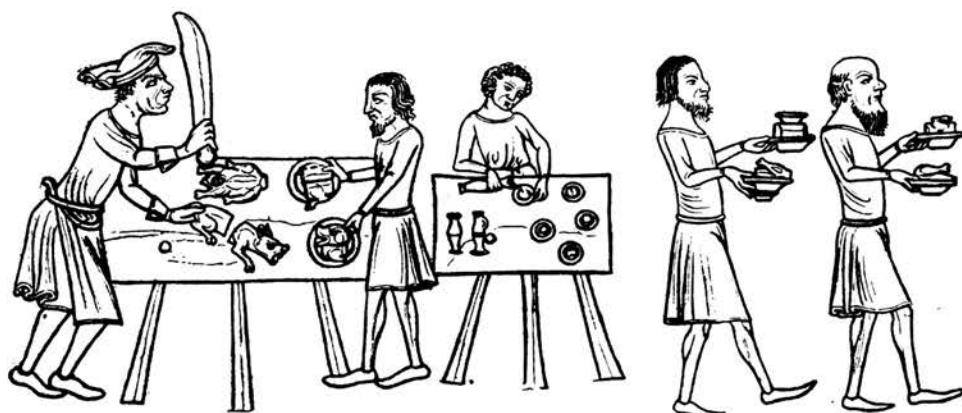
BY A. DRYSDALE-DAVIES.



MODERN cookery spells decadence. To the English housewife—to say nothing of her husband—struggling thrice daily with the banalities and ineptitudes of our half-trained twentieth-century kitchen mechanics, the culinary variety and excellence of our ancestors come as a revelation. Think of sucking-pig, salmon pie, and dormouse

although all such manuals until the fifteenth century are quite unintelligible to the modern reader. Indeed, the earliest books that may be called English only date from the latter half of the seventeenth century. Most of the scientific cookery was French, as a matter of course, and, as will be seen, the French titles became much perverted and hard to recognise, as let for lait, fryit for froide, sauke for sauce, and so on.

The cookery book of great interest which we will choose for our first illustration dates from about 1430, and is to be seen amongst the Harleian MSS. It is divided into three parts, the first, headed "Kalendare de Potages Dyuers," containing one hundred and fifty-



"PIGGE IN SAUGE"—FROM THE HARLEIAN MSS.—ABOUT 1430.

sausages for breakfast! How stale and unprofitable is the eternal dish of eggs and bacon compared with the glories of "pyke amlet" and hedgehog cream! No; we do not breakfast nowadays, any more than we dine or sup. The marvels of mediæval or even of eighteenth-century cookery are not for us. We do not deserve them, and, it may be added, Nature, with her wonderful system of compensations and balances, would not permit us to digest them.

To go back to the earliest of all the old cookery books which were wont to guide our English forbears in the preparation of their soups, meats, and pastries is to consult the "Forme of Cury" compiled by the chief master cooks of Richard II. and containing one hundred and ninety-six recipes. The first English cookery book was that of Neckham, in the twelfth century,

three recipes; the second part, "Kalendare de Leche Metys," has sixty-four recipes; and the third part, "Dyuerse Bake Metis," forty-one recipes. It may truly be said that the bulk of the recipes would astonish a modern cook.

Our forefathers liked their dishes strongly seasoned, and so pepper, cinnamon, ginger, cloves, garlic, galingale, vinegar, verjuice, and bitters appear constantly and in the most unlikely places. Naturally, pig was held in high esteem in the fifteenth century. In the accompanying illustrations we behold a rough and ready method of carving and



"HOWE TO ROST YE FOWLE AND YE SUCKLING-PIGGE"—FROM THE HARLEIAN MSS.

servng a roast specimen of the porcine tribe. Here is a recipe :—

“**PIGGE IN SAUGE.**—Take a pigge, drawe him, smyte off his hede, kutte him in iiij quarters, boyle him till he be enough, take him up and let cool. Smite him in pieces. Take a haundful of sauge, grinde it in a mortar with hard yolkes of egges ; draw it up with good vinegar, then season it with powder of peper, ginger, and salt. Then couch the pigge in dishes and cast the syrup thereupon and serve it forth.”

Here is a dainty dish :—

“**GARBAGE.**—Take faire garbage, chickens' hedes, feet, livers, and gysers, and wash hem clene. Cast hem into a faire potte and caste fresh broth of beef, powder of peper, canell, cloves, maces, parsley, and sauge minced small. Then take bread, steep it in the same brothe, let boyle enowe, caste thereto powder ginger, verjuice, salt, and a little saffron, and serve it forth.”

Meats little eaten at the present day are commonly mentioned in this book, such as whale, porpoise, seal, swan, crane, heron, peacock, and gulls. There is a touch of bloodthirstiness in most of the directions relating to the treatment of living articles of food, which would not commend them to a vegetarian.

“**CRANE ROSTE.**—Take a crane and cutt him in the roof of the mouth and let him blede to deth, and then scalde him and smyte his wings off and fold up his legges at the knee,” etc.

“**EGRET ROSTE.**—Breake an egret's neck or cut the roof of his mouth,” etc. Even fish do not escape without being hacked and smitten and slitted and flayed somewhat out of all reason and humanity.

One more recipe :—

“**PODDYNG OF CAPON NECKE.**—Take perceley, gizzard, lever, and harte and perboyle in fayre water. Take maces and cloves and saffron and poudere peper and salt and fill him up and sew him and lay him along on the capon backe and pricke him and roste and serve him.”

In the “Fowle Coke,” of which the title-page is here reproduced, of a somewhat later day we have a hundred and one recipes for

the boiling, roasting, stewing, and general preparation of all kinds of feathered bipeds. This dish you will seek in vain at the Carlton or Claridge's :—

“**COKYNTRYCE.**—Take a capoun, slay him and skald him, and smyte him to the waist. Also take a pigge and scald him, and draw him. Take a needle and thread and sew the before part of the capon to the hinder part of the pigge, and then stuffe him as thou stuffest a pigge ; putte him on a spette and roste him. Serve him forth with eggs and ginger and saffron.”

But it must not be supposed there is any lack of entremets and sweet things in these fifteenth-century manuals. Here is a recipe for fritters :—

“**FRETOURE.**—Take flowre, milke, and egges and grind peper and saffron and make thereof a bature. Pare apples and ster hem and frye hem uppe. Then take a little soft porke or vele choppit and spred on toppe and serve hem forthe for soperys in somere” (supper in summer).

A truly light and delicious hot weather sweet ! Here are directions for a custard :—

“**CUSTARDE.**—Take vele and smyte him in litell pieces and wash and putt hit into a faire potte with fayre water and let boyle. Then take parsley, sauge, hyssop, and cast hem into flesh when it boyleth ; then take peper,

canel, cloves, maces, saffron, salt, and a good deal of wine and let boyle. When it is cold streyne yolkes and whites of egges and put into the brothe, so many that the broth be stiff enowe. And make fayre coffins, and couch iii or iiij pieces of flesh in the coffins. Then take dates, prunes, and kutte hem ; caste thereto ginger and verjuice and salt, poure into coffins, and bake till they be enowe.”

Here is a tasty fruit tart :—

“Take figges and set hem in wyne and grind hem small, with powder peper, canell, cloves, maces, powder ginger, raisins fried in oyle, currants, saffron, and salte, and cast thereto. Then make faire lowe coffins and cast this stuffe therein. And plante pynes above. And cutte dates and fresh salmon



THE TITLE-PAGE OF A COOKERY BOOK OF ABOUT 1500.

in faire pieces, or else fresh eels, [ar-boyled in wine and couch thereon. And couche the coffins faire with the same paste, and sprinkle with saffron and almonde milke, and set hem in the oven and let bake.”

In the sixteenth century there was a classical revival, and there came various editions and adaptations of the work of the renowned Apicius Coelius, “De Arte Coquinaria,” of which we herewith give the frontispiece. One of these bears the date 1541, and amongst the dishes herein enumerated we may find hot-pots of cowheel, pickled broom buds, and Tetrapharmacon, of which latter delicacy we

are told that it was made of pheasant, peacock, a wild sow’s hock and udder, with a bread pudding over it.

The work is divided into ten books, beginning with soups, pickles, and sauces, and proceeding through the whole art of cookery, with hundreds of recipes, the very reading of which makes one’s mouth water. For instance, who could resist “virgin sow drest with broth made of pepper, wine, honey, oyl, and stew’d damsons”? Or dormouse sausages? Of dormice we are told that in ancient times people made it their business to fatten them. “Aristotle rightly observes that sleep fattened them, and Martial from thence infers that sleep was their only nourishment. Though very costly they became a common dish at great entertainments. Petronius delivers us a recipe for dressing them with poppies and honey.” It



A SIXTEENTH CENTURY LATIN COOKERY BOOK.

Apicius, be minced over sprats. The ancients were very fantastical in making one thing pass for another, so at Petronius’s supper the cook sent up a fat goose, fish, and wild-fowl of all sorts to appearance, but still were all made out of the several parts of a single porker. “To boil fish exactly, it is necessary that they

should be cast alive into the water.” “Sucking pig should be boyl’d in paper.” “Young foxes are in season in autumn” are amongst the instructions contained in this curious work.

Then, again, we are given minute instructions for the carving of beasts whose flesh was esteemed by the ancients.

“In partes of Asia and Africa,” we are

told, “the oliphant is eaten, not as the Romans and Egyptians were wont to do, sparingly and only as pertain’d to his feete, trunk, and tayle, all of which were great delicacies, but his entire carcase is carved

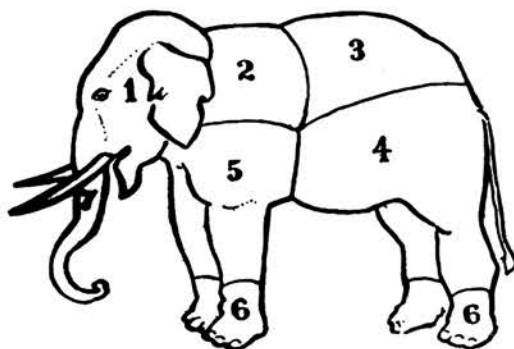
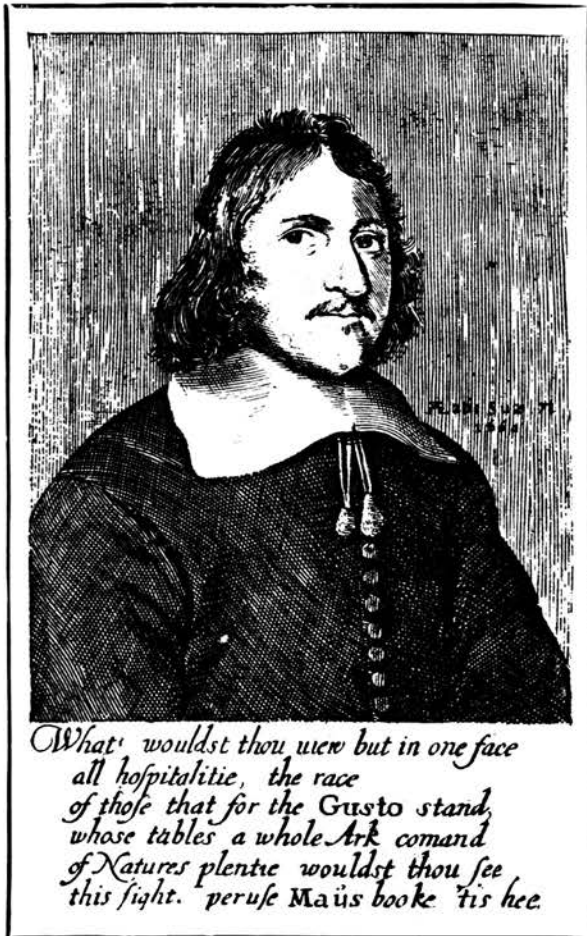


DIAGRAM FROM THE ABOVE, SHOWING THE CORRECT METHOD OF CARVING AN ELEPHANT.



FRONTISPIECE AND TITLE-PAGE OF A COOKERY BOOK OF 1685.

THE
Accomplisht Cook,
 OR THE
ART & MYSTERY
 OF
COOKERY.

Whercin the whole ART is revealed in a more easie and perfect Method, than hath been publiht in any language.

Expert and ready Ways for the Dressing of all Sorts of FLESH, FOWL, and FISH, with variety of SAUCES proper for each of them; and how to raise all manner of Pastes; the best Directions for all sorts of *Kickshaws*, also the *Terms* of CARVING and SEWING.

An exact account of all *Dishes* for all *Seasons* of the Year, with other *A-la-mode Curiosities*

The Fifth Edition, with large Additions throughout the whole work: besides two hundred Figures of several Forms for all manner of bak'd Meats, (either Fleh, or Fish) as, Pyes Tarts, Custards; Cheelecakes, and Florentines, placed in Tables, and directed to the Pages they appertain to.

Approved by the fifty five Years Experience and Industry of ROBERT MAY, in his Attendance on several Persons of great Honour.

London, Printed for Obadiah Blagrave at the Bear and Star in St. Pauls Church-Yard, 1685.

and consumed.” For the benefit of those who might happen to possess an elephant and be tempted to eat him a chart of carving instructions accompanies the text.

The great era of good living and good cookery dates from the Restoration, when a whole race of English master cooks arose and published their manuals. Amongst the earliest was Joseph Cooper, and after him came Robert May, whose “The Accomplisht Cook” first saw the light in 1671 and was constantly reprinted during the century. It contains a large number of original recipes, as well as numerous illustrations drawn by the author, some of which are herewith reproduced. Here is a simple recipe for a rice pudding:—

“Steep your rice in milk overnight and next morning drain it and boil it with cream; season it with sugar, being cold, and eggs, beef-suet, salt, nutmegs, cloves, dates, etc.”

The simplicity of this recipe is not obvious to us of to-day. But nothing better evinces how much the arts of the table have been neglected than the disuse of the terms of carving which old May sets forth in his book. Here are the “Exact Terms of Carving”: Break that deer, leach that brawn, rear that goose, lift that swan, sauce that capon, spoil that hen, frust that chicken, unbrace that mallard, unlace that coney, dismember that hern, display that crane, disfigure that peacocke, unjoint that bittern, untach that curlew, allay that pheasant,

wing that partridge, thigh that pidgeon, border that pasty, thigh all manner of small birds. Then follows a similar set of directions: Splaying bream, chining salmon, and culponing trout.

Here is a way “To make Minced Pyes of Salmoun”:—

“Mince a rand of fresh salmoun, very small, with a good fresh-



AN ILLUSTRATED RECIPE FROM THE ABOVE BOOK.

water eel, being flayed and boned; then mince some violet leaves, sorrel, strawberry leaves, parsley, sage, savoury, marjoram, and time; mingle all together with the meat, currans, cinnamon, nutmeg, pepper, salt, sugar, carraways, rose-water, white wine, and some minced orangado, put some butter in the bottom of the pyes, fill them, and, being baked, ice them and scrape on sugar. Make them according to these forms."

In Giles Roses's book, "Officers of the Mouth," are some amusing passages and woodcuts. Not least entertaining are the titles to the sub-sections, as, for instance: "The Dissection of a Hen in the High Dutch Fashion," "How to Dissect a Thrush," "How to Fold a Napkin like a Cocke and Hen," "How to Fold a Napkin like a Dogge with a Choller about His Neck."

"THE DISSECTION OF A GOOSE AFTER THE ITALIAN FASHION.—You may cut your goose after the Italians into a great many pieces, as well as that of the High Dutch, and follow the same order of serving it; but if you will, you may begin at the stomach and follow with the thigh, and the rest at your discretion."

Here is a pleasing little essay whose title suggests a Cockney's dissertation on Shakespeare's masterpiece:—

"THE AMLET. —Theamlet is only egges broken and beaten together and fried in a frying-pan with a piece of sweet butter."

Here, too, is a nice summer dish:—

A Book of Directions how to make preserves, and Conservees, and other Compounds. &c.

*Written the 13th day of
May Anno. Domi.
1704*

*Christian Lewis her
Book.*

TITLE-PAGE OF A QUAIN OLD MANUSCRIPT COOKERY BOOK.

"Take the best almonds and boil them with crums and verjuice. Then set a hen in the midst, or a piece of veal. Garnish with plumbs and serve."

Or this:—

"Take an eel and flea him. Open his bellie and cut him to pieces; put him into a dish with some butter, verjuice, broth, and hartichokes, and make all this boil over a chaffing-dish of coals. Season with spice."

Henry Howard was the champion pyc-master of the first George's reign, and his manual, "England's Newest Way in all Sorts of Cookery," enjoyed great popularity. We have recipes for cabbage pudding, and giblet tart, and hedgehog cream, amongst other delicacies.

We have before us a neat little chap-book compiled by a careful young eighteenth-century housewife, Mistress Christian Lewis, which is full of quaint recipes inscribed by her own hand. How neatly it is done, let the accompanying excerpts show. We very much doubt if so much trouble would be taken nowadays.

It is much to be feared that the modern wine and spirit bibber would not think very

highly of some of the drinks of a century and a half ago. They seem to err overmuch on the side of economy. Thus, in "Mrs. Harrison's Cookery Book" (1760) we have the following recipe for orange wine:—

"To five-and-twenty gallons of water take fifty-six pounds of sugar, fine and powder'd,

To make a tart of Bacon.

take a pound of fat bacon, and scrape it into fair water, and let it lye one-quarter of an hour, then take three ounce of maccorones and beat them small, and take some currants Rose water, cinnamon cloves and mace, nutmegs and amber greese, - beat these well together and mix it with the aforesaid things, and make it up into puffe paste, and bake it in a dish as you do florendine, and thus - you have finished it. &c.

A RECIPE FROM THE ABOVE BOOK.

and twelve whites of eggs beaten ; stir the water, sugar, and eggs well together in your boiler cold, and when it is ready to boil skim it and let it boil an hour ; when cold stir into it a pint of ale - baum and cover it ; let it stand four days, and stir it three or four times a day, then take two small oranges and pare them nicely, with as little rind as possible."

Two small oranges to five-and-twenty gallons of water seem to promise a brew that would be spurned even by a teetotaler. But here is another :—

"TO MAKE COWSLIP WINE.—First take three gallons of spring water and put in six pounds of sixpenny sugar and make it just boil up, and so skim it clean and let it stand till it is almost cold, and take a handful of the fairest blossoms of cowslips and the juice of two lemons, and three or four spoonfuls of yeast and stir all together."

When we encounter in Mrs. Hannah Wolley's "Cook's Guide" (1664) this ominous phrase : "Take twenty good wardens and slice them," we are oppressed with visions of cannibalism—of orthodox Church officials being led passively to slaughter. But we are later relieved to discover that the wardens are only a species of fruit of the pear tribe. Why is it we do not nowadays stew soles like this ?

"TO STEW SOALES.—Take a pair of large soales, flay them, wash them, and dry them in a cloth ; flower them and fry them with beef-suet, then lay them in a dish and take some anchovies well washed in white wine ; open your soales and put the anchovies into the middle of your soales ; then put in some white wine or claret, with a good piece of butter, set it upon coales, and when they have stewed



a while thicken the liquor with grated bread, and grate in a little nutmeg and a little salt, and so serve them in."

Recipes for boar in puddings and pig-pies occur in all the books.

Here is one calculated to make the mouth of a confirmed dyspeptic water :—

"TO MAKE A PIGG PYE.—Take a pigg and scald it and slit in the middle and

take out the bones, season it with pepper, salt, cloves, and mace and nutmegs. Chop sweet herbs fine with the yolks of two or three eggs and some plump'd currants. Then lay the one half of the pigg into your pye and the herbs and currants and salt over it and some butter. Then lay the other half of the pigg on top of that, and the rest of the herbs and currants on the top with some butter and so bake it ; you may eat it hot or cold."

We venture to think there are few housewives who, if suddenly called upon, would know how to "fearce a carp." Yet it is simple enough, as we here perceive :—

"TO FEARCE A CARP.—Take a carp, flea off his skin, take out his bones, and hash his flesh very small ; then make an amlet of three or four eggs and hash this with the carp ; season with spice and pine seeds and a little thyme ; put it into the skin of your carp. Then sew up with a needle and thread, and boil him with butter, verjuice, and broth. Or you may put a few pistaches in his bellie."

Coming down to a later day, we have only room to mention the exhaustive culinary treatises of Alexander Soyer and Brillat-Savarin, the latter of which is embellished with woodcuts exhibiting dinners and diners after the most approved French fashion at that epoch ; but some of which would hardly commend themselves.



AN ILLUSTRATION FROM BRILLAT-SAVARIN'S WORK—THE MOST CELEBRATED COOKERY BOOK IN THE WORLD.