



THE ECHOES



April 2021

The Plague Goes On...

The SCA Board of Directors have made the decision to leave the choice of holding in person events up to each individual Kingdom. In An Tir in-person events are still on hold until further notice. A Seneschals meeting was held recently to discuss the matter of when our Kingdom re-opens for in-person events. Please stay tuned for updates as your faithful interim Chronicler is patiently awaiting the requested information on that, as well as notes from Summits Moot from our Principality Seneschal.

Quarterly Reports Due

Quarterly reports were due to your Principality/Kingdom officers on April 15, 2021! To date the Chroniclers of the following branches have successfully reported in: Myrtle Holt, Terra Pomaria, and Tymberhavene. If your branch does not have the office filled it is up to your branch Seneschal to submit the report.

Want to Serve Your Principality?

Several offices are currently vacant or will be seeking applicants as the officer is not renewing their term of office. The following offices are seeking applicants:

Social Media Officer

Chronicler

Administrative Projects Deputy

Calendar Deputy

If you are interested in this or any other Principality office, please send a letter of interest to the officer email on the website, as well as the Seneschal.

Pasties, the Medieval Sandwich

By the Honorable Lady Melisande de Frayne

Ed. Note: Those of us who have been in the Barony for some time have enjoyed dining on Lady Melisande's mushroom pasties. These treats are part of Starkhahn's past and (we hope) its future. A version of this article will appear in an upcoming issue of Tournaments Illuminated.

My first taste of a pasty (pronounced "PASS-tee") was at the Shakespeare Festival in Cedar City, Utah. As a new member of the Society for Creative Anachronism (SCA), my knowledge of medieval cooking was limited, but I enjoyed the taste of the pasty. It was so wonderful that I decided to learn to prepare pasties to take as "finger food" for outdoor events.

Was the pasty truly a medieval food, or a modern day ideal of medieval food, like turkey legs at Ren Faires? The invention of the sandwich is credited to Lord John Montague, the Fourth Earl of Sandwich, in 1765. But was something similar enjoyed by people of the Middle Ages? I began studying medieval cooking and was able to prepare many wonderful dishes, but research of all the medieval cookbooks at my disposal still unearthed no mention of pasties.

However, research into medieval literature did reveal the existence of pasties in the period of time recreated by the SCA. Some believe that the pasty was created by Catholic priests traveling throughout Ireland to preach the gospel. However, the first mention of pasties is in an Arthurian romance written by Chrétien de Troyes in the mid twelfth century. In the saga of Eric and Enide he wrote, "Next Guivret opened a chest and took out

two pasties."

In the mid fourteenth century, the French chronicler Jean Froissart wrote, "...with botelles of wyne trusses at their sadesles, and pastyes of samonde, troutes, and eyles, wrapped in towels." In 1600, William Shakespeare mentions the pasty in his play, *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, saying, "Come, we have a hot venison pasty to dinner."

The pasty became a staple of Cornish miners because it was portable, filling, and could be warmed on the miner's shovels using the light from their mining lamps. The pasty has a crimped edge to allow for holding the pasty by the edge, even with dirty fingers, eating the pasty, and throwing away the crust. Pasties today are prepared with a variety of fillings, but the most common "Cornish Pasty" has beef and potatoes as its main ingredients.

The pasty, or its equivalent, is still a common dish in many countries. In Spain, it is called the *empanada*, in Finland it is known as a *kuuko*, and in Russia, it is known as a *pirogue*. Chinese restaurants offering dim sum often serve curried meats in a pasty. Mexico's version of the portable pasty is known as a *tortilla*. Today, people in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan, originally settled by Cornish miners, still love the pasty so much that May 24th is Michigan Pasty Day.

Unfortunately, I still had not located any recipes for making a pasty. However, many recipes for "tarts" are documented in medieval cookbooks. If one could make a tart, similar to the modern day quiche, with a pastry crust filled with cooked ingredients, why could this not be "converted" into a pasty recipe? I then needed to document a recipe for making the crust. While recipes for tart fillings exist, most call for "turning" the ingredients into a crust and baking, without specifying how to make the crust.

Theories abound as to why there are so few recipes for pastry crusts, or for even more basic foods such as bread. One theory is that medieval cooks knew how to cook such "basic" or "everyday" foods, so these recipes did not need to be written down. Another postulates that most cooks did not bake their own

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Pasties, the Medieval Sandwich

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bread or grain-based products. Instead, they took the ground grains to a baker, who, for a fee, produced the bread in his shop. Finally, most medieval cookbooks were written by cooks who prepared foods for upper class merchants, highly-placed clergy, or nobility. These people were less likely to eat "common" foods, so the recipes that have survived are for feasts or banquets, where pasties were unlikely to be served.

I was only able to locate two recipes for crust. I found the first in Closet of Sir Digby Opened. This cookbook was written in approximately 1652, which places it slightly out of "period". However, the recipes were collected by Sir Digby over his lifetime, so it is considered by cooks in the SCA to be an acceptable primary source for medieval cooking recipes. The recipe in his collection is for a puff-pastry crust, containing eggs as one of the ingredients. The resulting crust is quite flaky, and does not work as well for the hearty ingredients contained in most pasties. I found the second recipe in The Medieval Kitchen. While this cookbook may only be considered a secondary resource, it does contain a wonderful basic pastry crust recipe. The recipe is as follows:

- 2 ¼ cups of flour
- 12 tablespoons of butter
- ¼ cup of water
- ½ teaspoon of salt

Combine all ingredients and knead the dough until smooth and elastic. Wrap in moist towel and store in a cool place for one hour. Roll out dough, place in a greased pie tin and bake at approximately 350 degrees for about 10 minutes, until partially cooked.

For the ingredients, one of my favorite pasty fillings is found in Le Menagier de Paris for a mushroom tart. This book, also

known as *The Goodman of Paris*, was written in 1393 by a wealthy Parisian merchant for his new, much younger, wife. It contains not only recipes, but instructions for the purchasing of food and entertaining of guests. The recipe is as follows:

"Mushrooms of one night are the best, and are small and red inside, closed above: and they should be peeled, then washed in hot water and parboiled, if you wish to put them in pastry, add oil, cheese and powdered spices."

My redaction:

- 8 oz. of mushrooms (your choice as to type), minced finely
- ½ small onion, minced finely
- 3 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 cup shredded mozzarella cheese
- 3 tablespoons chopped parsley
- 1 tablespoon chopped garlic
- Salt and pepper to taste

Cook mushrooms, onion, parsley, garlic, salt and pepper in olive oil over medium heat until onions are translucent. Add cheese, stir until melted, place into pastry crust and bake at 350 degrees until done, about 30 minutes. If you wish to make these into pasties, roll out your pastry dough to about ¼ inch thickness, cut to desired size in a circular shape. Place cooked filling in the middle, fold over, crimp the edges with a fork. Brush outside with a "wash" of beaten egg, place on greased cookie sheet and bake at 350 degrees until golden brown.

Remember, pasties can be filled with a variety of ingredients. Another variation is based on the Cornish Pasty, but uses turnips rather than the more "modern" potato:

Chop beef finely and cook with minced onion in olive oil. Add parboiled chopped carrots and turnips, spices to taste, about ½ cup of red wine, and 2 tablespoons of flour, allow the sauce to thicken and place inside a pasty shell.

Regardless of the filling, these portable, medieval precursors to the sandwich are tasty, filling, easy to make, and even easier to eat. Enjoy!