Euriol's Book of Secrets: Introduction to Recipe Translation

Objective

The objective of this class is to provide a process to translate recipes into Modern English from facsimiles or transcriptions of extant culinary manuscripts for someone with no experience in translations.

Sources for Facsimiles and Transcripts

It is improbable for most of us to get access to an original manuscript for the purpose of doing a translation into Modern English. However, there are a number of websites that host or have links to facsimiles and transcriptions.

http://sites.google.com/site/medievalcuisine/researching-medieval-cuisine/online-resources/online-texts

http://medievalcookery.com/etexts.html

http://www.uni-giessen.de/gloning/kobu.htm

https://pantherfile.uwm.edu/carlin/www/

http://www.pbm.com/~lindahl/food.html

Translation Process Outline

1. Get an electronic transcription of the recipe
    a. If you are working from a facsimile of a manuscript, this means transcribing the recipe into an electronic document that you can use later.
        i. Friends who are scribes may be able to help you with this step
        ii. May give you the justification to learn a little about the scribal arts
2. Use a software application to do the initial translation of the transcription
    a. My preferred translation software is Google's Translate (http://translate.google.com).
    b. Many words may not be translated using the software application, but it usually gives you a good first pass with the grammar.
3. Use dictionaries or glossaries to translate the words that the translation software was unable to translate
    a. My list of Dictionaries & Glossaries I've used can be found at:
    http://sites.google.com/site/medievalcuisine/researching-medieval-cuisine/online-resources/dictionaries
    b. Consider using translations of other manuscripts in the same time period and language to validate your own translation
    c. Consider looking at the root of the words from the Latin or Germanic origins.
    d. Understand some of the scribal abbreviation conventions that were used in manuscripts and the early printed books.
4. Review your first draft of your translation

    a. Does the translation of the recipe make sense?

    b. Trust your instincts. As a cook you have practical experience in cooking recipes. If something doesn't seem quite right, it probably isn't.

    c. It is possible that errors are introduced by the transcription and this can change the meaning of the words. Check to see if there is an error in the transcription.

    d. It is possible that the software translation chose a word that is not appropriate due to the etymology of the language. Use the dictionaries and glossaries to correct software translation errors.

5. Have a friend review your second draft of your translation

    a. A bonus if the friend has some ability to speak or read the modern language you are attempting to translate.

6. Finalize your translation taking into consideration any comments from your friend's review.

Sample 1 – Translation of Recipe from Early Modern English

The 16th century saw a transition in the English language from Middle English to Early Modern English. The catalyst for this transition was the introduction of the printing press into England in the last half of the 15th century[1]. This recipe is taken from *The good Huswifes Handmaide for the Kitchin* [2]

> TAke a peece of a leg of Mutton, mince it smal and season it with cloues, Mace pepper and salt, and Dates minced with currans: then roll it into round rolles, and so into little balles, and so boyle them in a little beefe broth and so serue them foorth.

Translation

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[1] The first book printed in English was by William Caxton in 1473. [Ward & Trent, Volume II, Chapter XIII, Section 2]
[2] http://www.uni-giessen.de/gloning/ghhk/

Sample 2 – Translation of Recipe from Middle English

This recipe taken from Forme of Curye, ab. 1390 A.D. (Pages 45v and 46r). The images below are from the original manuscript as digitized by the John Rylands University Library and the 1780 printing edited by Samuel Pegge.
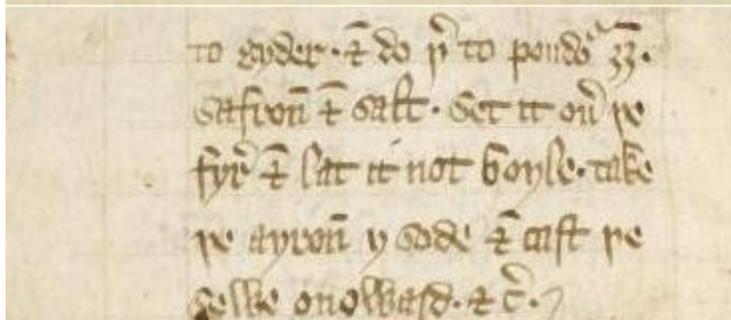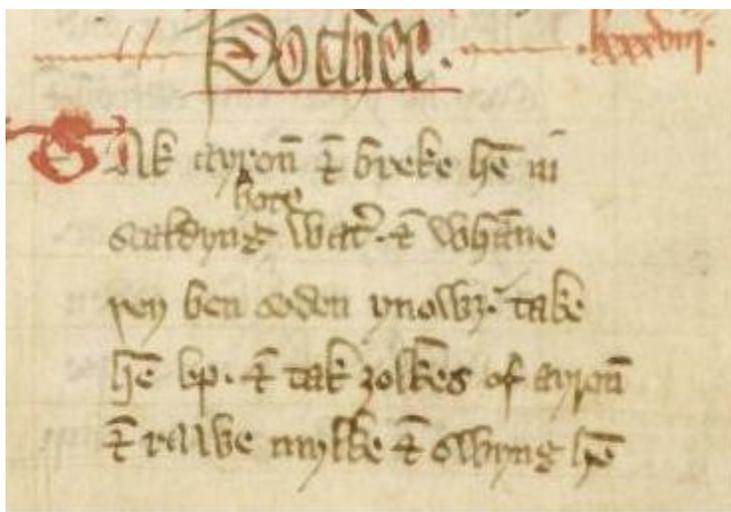
Pochee ⁱ.   **XX.**
                                          IIII. X.

Take Ayreñ and breke hem ĩ ſcaldyng hoot waſ.
and whan þei bene ſode ynowh. take hē up and take
zolkes of ayren and rawe mylke and ſwyng hem to-
gydre, and do þto powdo̅ gyng̃ ſafroñ and ſalt, ſet it
oūe the fire, and lat it not boile, and take ayreñ iſode
ȩ caſt þ few onoward. ȩ sūe it forth.

Pochee

Tak Ayroñ & breke hē in scaldyng hote waṫ and whane þey ben soden ynowȝ. take hē up & tak ȝolkes of ayroñ & rawe mylke & swyng hē to gydre, & do þ̇ to poudó ȝ̄ȝ̄ safroñ & salt set it oú þe fyr & lat it not boyle take þe ayroñ ysode & caſt þe sewe onoward. & ć.

Translation

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Sample 3 – Translation of Recipe from Early New High German

This shrimp recipe was found in <u>Ein New Kochbuch</u> by Marx Rumpolt, a 16th century collection of German recipes
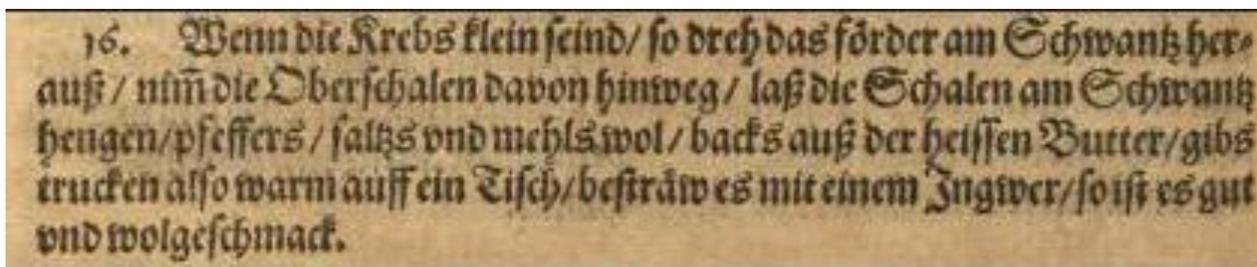
Figure 1 Image of Recipe from facsimile of Ein New Kockbuch

Wenn die Krebs klein seind/ so dreh das förder am Schwanß herauß/ niṁ die Oberschalen davon hinweg/ laß die Schalen am Schwanß hengen/ pfeffers/ Salßs vnd Mehls wol/ backs auß der heissen Butter/ gibs trucken also warm auff ein Tisch/ besträw es mit einem ȝngiver/ so ist es gut vnd wolgeschmack.

Translation

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Scribal Abbreviations & Archaic Characters

What do all those funny marks mean? Since the amount of paper and time used to write down a manuscript or print a book was greatly conserved in the Middle Ages and Renaissance, it was typical to see scribal abbreviations a used in order conserve space. In addition, some characters did not survey to be used in Modern English. Many of the archaic characters till appear in use in the manuscripts. Becoming familiar with some of the most common scribal abbreviations and archaic characters will aid in both transcribing and translating the recipes.

Scribal Abbreviations

Macron (̄) and Tilde (~): used to indicate that an abbreviation or a letter is missing

- niṁ → nimm
- ĩ→ in

Other symbols used to indicate an abbreviation or a letter is missing are

- wat́ → water

Archaic Character

Ash: Æ æ →ae

Yogh: 3 ʒ →y, g or z

Thorn: Þ þ → th

Long s: ſ → s

> In some texts the short s "s" will appear at the end of the word with the long s "ſ" appearing either at the beginning or the middle of the word. Examples from the sample recipe #2 are "ʒolkes" and "caſt" (yolks & cast).

Half r: ꝛ → r

Interchangeable Letter pairings

Often seen is a pairing of letters used interchangeably. Two of the most common ones are the "u" & "v" and the "i" & "j" pairings. An example from the sample recipe #3 is "vnd". In the upper right hand corner of the sample recipe #2 you will see the roman numerals "lxxxviij"; "j" is used instead of the "i" at the end of the numeral set representing the number 88.

One of the uncommon pairings I have come across is the "u" & "n". You may need to consider this pairing if the "u" & "v" pairing does not make sense in context of the translation.

Stacked Letters

A small letter stacked on top of a letter often means a letter that was omitted. However, if it is a vowel it may indicate that the vowel and an "r" is missing. For example, in the sample recipe #2 image from Samuel Pegge transcription you will see "þ̊" used to represent the word "the" or "there".

Language Family Tree

One of the challenges in trying to do a translation is unfamiliarity with how a language developed. The Language Family Tree in Figure 2 shows the origin of the major modern languages. The advantage in becoming familiar with the origin of the language is that many of the languages in the same branch of the language family tree share similar grammar structure as well as words.
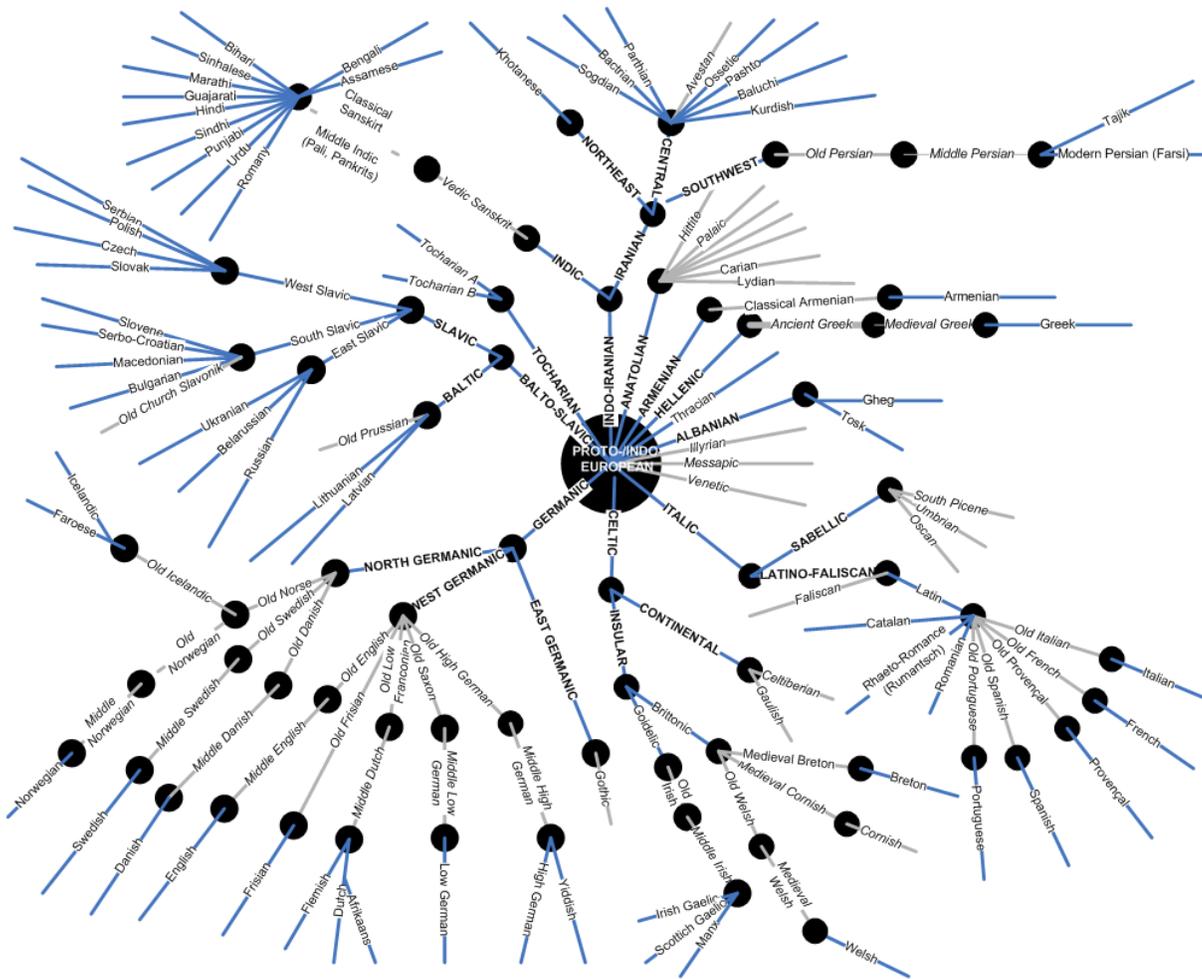

Figure 2 Proto-Indo European Language Family Tree

Two branches of the Language Family Tree that are important to doing translations of European Culinary manuscripts are the Germanic and Italic branches.

In Figure 3 you will see the progression of the Germanic languages from the Pre-Roman Iron Age to the Modern Age.

	Pre-Roman Iron Age 500–100 BCE	Early Roman Iron Age 100 BCE–100 CE	Late Roman Iron Age 100–300	Migration Period 300–600	Early Middle Ages 600–1100	Middle Ages 1100–1350	Late Middle Ages[2] 1350–1500	Early Modern Age 1500–1700	Modern Age 1700 to present
West Germanic — Irminonic (Elbe Germanic)	Proto-Germanic		Primitive Upper German		Old Upper German, Lombardic[1]	Middle Upper German	Early New Upper German		Upper German varieties / Standard German
Istvaeonic (Weser-Rhine Germanic)			Primitive Frankish	Old Frankish	Old Central German	Middle Central German	Early New Central German		Central German varieties
					Old Low Franconian (Old Dutch)	Early Limburgish — Middle Dutch	Late Limburgish — Middle Dutch	Early Limburgish	Limburgish
						Early Middle Dutch	Late Middle Dutch	Early Modern Dutch	Dutch varieties / Afrikaans
Ingvaeonic (North Sea Germanic)			Primitive Saxon (Southeast Ingvaeonic)		Old Saxon	Middle Low German			Low German varieties
Anglo-Frisian (Northwest Ingvaeonic)				Primitive Frisian	Old Frisian		Middle Frisian		Frisian varieties
				Primitive Anglic	Old English (Anglo-Saxon)	Early Middle English	Late Middle English	Early Modern English	English varieties
							Early Scots[3]	Middle Scots	Scots varieties
North Germanic			Proto-Norse		Runic Old West Norse	Old Icelandic	Late Old Icelandic	Icelandic	
							Old Faroese	Faroese	
						Old Norwegian[5]	Old Norn	Norn	extinct[4]
							Middle Norwegian	Norwegian	
					Runic Old East Norse	Early Old Danish	Late Old Danish	Danish	
						Early Old Swedish	Late Old Swedish	Swedish and Dalecarlian dialects	
					Runic Old Gutnish	Early Old Gutnish	Late Old Gutnish	Gutnish	extinct[5]
East Germanic				Gothic	(unattested Gothic dialects)			Crimean Gothic	extinct
				Vandalic	extinct				
				Burgundian	extinct				

Figure 3 Historical Stages of Germanic Languages

In Figure 4 you will see the Romance Languages that developed from Latin[3]. The Romance Languages developed from the Latin spoken by the soldiers, settlers and merchants of the Roman Empire after the collapse of the Roman Empire in the 5th century.
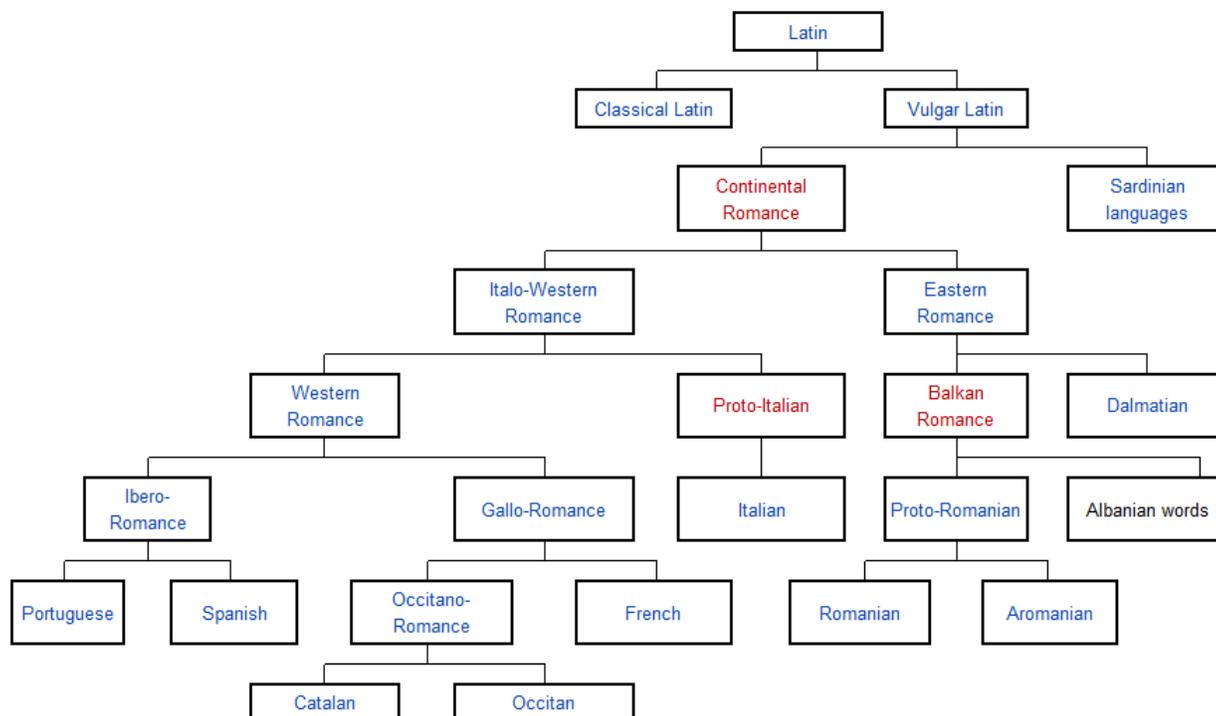

Figure 4 The Romance Languages

Additional Resources

Apothecaries' symbols commonly found in medical recipes
http://www.textcreationpartnership.org/docs/dox/medical.html

Bibliography

Ward & Trent, et al. *The Cambridge History of English and American Literature.* New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1907–21; New York: Bartleby.com, 2000 (www.bartleby.com/cambridge/). November 16, 2012.

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[3] Latin is a subdivision of the Latino-Faliscan group of the Italic subfamily of the Indo-European Language Family.